

**AVON HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION**  
**(first draft)**  
**1995-8**

The character of the historic landscape of the county, both rural and urban, has been surveyed by the identification and adoption of a series of historic landscape categories or types. By this means the nature of the historic features belonging to any part of the landscape can be anticipated. The criteria used to define these categories are:

- i) **Time depth:** i.e. the date or period of origin of the present visible landscape - mainly derived from the establishment of the predominant enclosure pattern. Any category of landscape will contain features belonging to several historic periods but it has been found that such combined features in most cases follow consistent patterns which could be incorporated within the main category definitions. This particularly applies to prehistoric features: although there are no prehistoric landscapes remaining in their own right in the county, extensive remains of Romano-British field systems, barrow cemeteries, etc, still exist within later landscape patterns (other prominent prehistoric features which individually influence the character of the landscape, such as hillforts, dikes etc, have been identified elsewhere as a separate *settlement* category).
  
- ii) **Description:** this refers to the historic land use from which the present landscape is derived and therefore relates to the geophysical nature of the landscape and the natural zones identified in the county *Landscape Assessment* (described elsewhere). On a scale of intensity of land use it might range from urban settlement through to open 'waste'.

The historic landscape categorisation is therefore a survey of the existing visible landscape rather than a recreation of pre-existing landscapes. For the present, thirty two categories have been identified (defined more fully below) and arranged into twelve groups which can be briefly itemised as:

Group A	-	Common Field Systems (includes 2 categories)
B	-	Specialised common field landscapes (2)
C	-	Irregular and severalty field systems (2)
D	-	Cleared woodland (2)
E	-	Recreational landscapes (3)
F	-	Woodland (3)
G	-	Wetland landscapes and 'Levels' (5)
H	-	Enclosed heathland (3)
K	-	Enclosed downland (2)
L	-	Rough upland landscapes (2)
M	-	Utility (2)

Settled landscapes are treated as a separate group containing a further 4 categories, i.e.

1. 'Remnant'
2. 'Core'
3. 'Extended' (or 'Infill')
4. 'New'

[The importance of road communications in the creation of the historic landscape is taken for granted, being largely of ancient (at least Saxon) origin with only minor deviations brought about by the turnpike trusts of the 18th and 19th centuries, and are therefore not specifically identified. However, certain large-scale systems have been included within the above categories, e.g. modern railways and motorways in the utility category (M), or old droveway networks in heathland (H).]

The above categories may be regrouped under the following 5 headings in order to fit into the wider national context, i.e.

- |                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Arable land -  | i.) Regular; A, B(1)          |
|                | ii.) Irregular; C             |
| Grazing land - | i.) Lowland; B(2), G, H       |
|                | ii.) Upland; K, L             |
| Woodland       | i.) Cleared; D                |
|                | ii.) Uncleared; F(1), F(2)    |
| 'Cultural'     | i.) Ornamental; E(2)          |
|                | ii.) Recreational; E(1), E(3) |
| 'Industrial'   | I.) Built; M                  |
|                | ii.) Mineral; F(3), M         |

### **Historic Landscape Data - format.**

The subdivision of the county into areas according to the above categories has been mapped at a scale of 1:25000 on a GIS database obtained from original map drafts on paper plotted at the same scale. The category relating to any particular area is indicated by a colour code together with basic tabular identification (described elsewhere), so that a picture of its historic character can be obtained by reference to the detailed category descriptions included below.

### **Methodology**

The project was broken down into five phases;

Phase 1 - Owing to the specific and diverse nature of the landscape within the County of Avon, it was first necessary to identify and agree a common set of categories. Although care was taken to coordinate any such categorisation with those identified in an Historic Landscape study previously carried out for the County of Cornwall, it was evident that no system of categories was yet available at a national level, and that it would be necessary to base this project on

Avon's own resources available from various intensive studies already undertaken by the county at parish level. As an initial trial, four of these parishes were characterised separately by officers who were familiar with the given parish, from which a common set of categories could be agreed. This was extended to a further 12 parishes (scattered more or less evenly throughout the county) for which there was also in-depth information, including two urban parishes. A sufficient degree of consistency finally emerged which allowed the formulation of a set of categories which could be applied countywide.

Phase 2 - To extend the area of detailed information, use was made of the knowledge of local experts, not only by direct contact and interview, but also through discussion of various published or unpublished academic landscape studies and PhD theses. The categories formulated in Phase 1 were applied in each particular area and discussed with the expert in question. In this way a further 33 parishes were covered in detail - slightly more than one third of the total rural area of the county which consists of 133 parishes. In the meantime officers in the County Planning Department were able to cover more parishes and, more particularly, a large proportion of the urban areas which were found to require a further development of the categories.

Phase 3 - In order to ensure that at least one detailed parish or area study had been completed in each of the natural landscape zones and that a representative sample of the county had been made in the first two phases, it was necessary to coordinate the coverage of the Historic Landscape Characterisation with the *County Landscape Assessment*. The several gaps detected by this means were covered by further interviews with local experts. From hereon a close correlation was maintained between the two studies in order to fine tune their results.

Phase 4 - From the categories and information gained from the previous phases it was possible to characterise the remainder of the county by continuing as a desktop project. This involved the use of the earliest available maps (tithemaps and first edition 1" being generally the most suitable, as well as current OS 1:25,000 maps), validated against information from the County SMR. It was occasionally found necessary to refer to air photographs and, in a few instances, to make direct inspection in the field. A similar approach was used in the remaining urban areas not yet covered. The final result was found to correlate well with historical information included in a landscape survey of the Mendip area recently completed for the AONB.

Phase 5 - The final phase consisted of the written descriptions of the categories and full correlation with the *County Landscape Assessment*. Final presentation however was delayed in order to incorporate the results of the project within the new GIS system initiated by the County Planning Department under the title of Avon Environmental Geographical Information System (AEGIS).

*Avon County Landscape Assessment*: Also in progress at the same time as the Historic Landscape project was an assessment survey of the Avon landscape by the County Planning Department (part of the the Strategic Review of the Structure Plan). A significant aspect of this assessment was the need to define the many character areas (or landscape zones) which make up the landscape of the county, based on such geophysical features as relief, geology, drainage and land use - outlined at a scale of 1:50,000.

The close relationship between the natural landscape and historic land use is well recognised, and during the historic landscape study for the County of Cornwall a method of correlation between the two was devised specifically for this purpose. In the case of Avon however, correlation could be more readily obtained by integrating the results of the historic landscape survey with the zonal information already being outlined by the landscape assessment.

By comparing the two studies, patterns of historic land use unique to each zone could be identified (frequently indicating a more definite boundary to the zones themselves), whilst the recognition of variations within these patterns provided a useful method of highlighting any suspected sub-zones. It was often surprising to observe the high degree of sensitivity developed by earlier agricultural practices in adapting to local conditions - a dependency which distinguishes the older landscape features from those of more recent times.

From this comparison, it is now easier to describe and categorize any landscape sub-zone in historical terms - an example of such a description (in the Mendips) being appended to this methodology below.

### **GIS details**

AEGIS is based on Mapinfo GIS

- using 3 layers i.e. **areas layer** (rural categories -consisting of field areas)  
**settlement layer** (all built settlements)  
**x-areas layer** (a spare layer containing important historical areas discovered during the survey but now not evident on the ground and therefore not entered on the *areas layer*)

Each category has been given a *GIS number*, separate from the *group number*. Each category can also be identified by a *colour*. These are included with the descriptions below.

## **THE CATEGORIES**

**GROUP A** - Landscapes derived from medieval (or earlier), common (or shared) field systems, generally associated with nucleated settlements.

**A1 Late medieval enclosed open fields created by local arrangement and exchange**  
[cat.no: 1 - YELLOW]

*Origin;* This is probably the category most commonly found in the county. Enclosure of the open fields by this method was already under way in the 15th century, reaching completion by the end of the 17th century. Previously however many variations of the open field system were adopted in this region, the classic form apparently only occurring in certain areas (in the more open terrain), and insufficient information is presently available to distinguish between open arable fields and the more specific 'demesne grounds', 'inlands', 'austers & overlands', 'home pastures', etc., created by earlier enclosure. Small patches of waste, or 'greens', still remaining from enclosure of the open fields have been included for the time being under category H1 (unenclosed 'heaths'), below.

*Main characteristics;* Fields are of relatively small size and regular in outline, and generally follow the natural lie of the land. Field boundaries derived from this process often preserve the outlines of the old open field-strips, with 'dog-leg' angles remaining where neighbouring strips were thrown together. The sinuous reverse-S shape of the strips, brought about by the turning of the plough-teams, are frequently preserved by the hedge lines but the 'straight-rig' strips appear to be more common. Although most signs of ridge-and-furrow have been ploughed out, they are often still visible on pasture ground, particularly on wet land where, to assist drainage, this method appears to have continued in use into the 19th century. Larger earthworks, such as old headlands and fieldways also survive, together with such unrelated features as prehistoric earthworks, windmill mounds, etc., which were incorporated into the new field arrangements. A large proportion of the hedges created by these enclosures were made up from shrubs growing wild locally (rather than by nursery plantation) and therefore generally exhibit a higher species diversity than might be expected from Hooper's rule. Dry-stone walls are also common in this county, particularly in the region of the Cotswolds and Mendips where material was readily available, but elsewhere other factors seem to have played a part in their adoption which are still not clearly understood.

*Associated features;* Particularly associated with this category is the late 18th/early 19th century isolated farmstead established after enclosure within newly consolidated land. Similarly many local field ways and lanes were laid out at this stage, distinguished from their predecessors by their straighter course and more rational design, frequently with wide grass verges. Nevertheless, the deep 'holoways' and sinuous lanes of the original routes are still a prominent feature throughout the whole county.

*Occurrence;* This category covers most the inland valley slopes, extending eastward onto the Cotswolds, and northward into the 'flatlands' of the North Avon Vale which drain into the river Frome. Of particular interest are the environs of the Chew valley to

the south where there appears to have been a 'core' area of cultivation, little influenced by surrounding Norman afforestation.

## **A2 Post medieval and modern fields adjusted from earlier (i.e. A1) enclosures**

[cat.no: 2 - PALE YELLOW]

*Origin;* Since the enclosure of the open fields in the middle ages, there has been a gradual opening up and readjustment of the initial enclosure boundaries. Although this process has accelerated in recent times, it was already under way by the mid 18th century. For this reason, the impact of modern 'prairie farming' practices is less easy to distinguish than elsewhere in the country and a more more detailed subdivision of this category will be required at a later stage. Also included within this category for the time being are examples of the reverse process i.e., the 19th century division of fields into narrow allotment smallholdings and nurseries.

*Main characteristics:* Although the county contains hardly any common field enclosures brought about by 18th or 19th century acts of parliament, similar field patterns have been produced by the local rationalisation and consolidation of land. These 'adjusted fields' also tend to be large and rectilinear, but are less 'geometrical' and better adjusted to the natural terrain. Despite extensive grubbing in recent times many very ancient hedges are still retained along unavoidable natural boundaries, and although many of the 'new' hedges were planted with quickset, others may exhibit a high species diversity, being created from those they displaced..

*Associated features;* The planting of field-corner clumps and screen brakes is a particular feature associated with these arrangements, originally having a semi-ornamental purpose. This category of landscape is therefore often found near model farms or wealthy estates where ornamental landscaping may have been carried out in conjunction with 'high farming' methods. It is this aspect of the landscape which distinguishes these farms from their 20th century successors.

*Occurrence;* This process is not specific to any particular area, although early enlargements tended to take place in 'cramped' locations in broken countryside. The most prominent example of this category of landscape associated with ornamentation can be found in the region surrounding Badminton estate.

## **GROUP B - 'Specialised' landscapes associated with the common field systems of category A**

**B1 Late medieval enclosure of steep-sided cultivation**

[cat.no: 3 - BLUE-GREEN]

*Origin;* During the high middle ages much marginal land on steep slopes, previously only suitable for grazing, was taken into the common field system for cultivation. Owing to subsequent changes in the pattern of agriculture most of this land had reverted to pasture when enclosed at the end of the middle ages, although some remained in open arable use into the 19th century.

*Main characteristics;* The techniques employed to plough or cultivate steep slopes during the middle ages resulted in a variety of terraces and other fieldworks which followed the natural contours. Although these terraces, generally known as 'strip lynchets', possessed the same regular outline as conventional field-strips, they produced a very different landscape and, despite enclosure, remains of their banks can still present a striking appearance today.

*Associated features;* These 'fossilised' fields are not only of archaeological significance, but their later unsuitability for arable use has ensured that this category also preserves a high proportion of unimproved grassland and botanical diversity.

*Occurrence;* The most suitable terrain for this type of cultivation is in the combes and valleys of the Broken Cotswolds on the south-east side of the county, the best examples occurring at Cold Ashton between Bath and Marshfield.

**B2 Medieval (or earlier) enclosure of rich, wet grassland**

[cat.no: 5 - GRASS-GREEN]

*Origin;* At a very early stage in the development of the common field system, a sharp distinction was made between meadowland, essential for early grass, and the rest of the cultivations and pastures. These old pasture grounds, known as 'hamms', 'hayes', 'meads', 'moors' etc., occupied the low-lying flat ground adjoining rivers and streams (to take advantage of winter flooding) or, on high ground, on the gentle slopes below spring lines. Strictly speaking, they were never enclosed (except to separate them from the rest of the common lands) and were often, like the arable lands, divided up into strips or 'doles' to be shared among the tenants, a practice which survived in certain places up to the late 19th century when they were enclosed by Act of Parliament or some similar arrangement.

*Main characteristics;* Waterside meadows are usually large, flat and open, but their size and shape is generally dictated by the nature of the watercourse and its flood plain. Spring-line meadows are less easy to detect. Other functions of the meadow frequently survive. These included the provision of material from withy- and alder-beds, and fish and wild waterfowl from ponds and decoys. However, with changing patterns of flood control and drainage, the character of many meadows (still containing a high proportion

of unimproved grass) has recently been altered by ploughing. Enclosed Common Meadows often contain old boundary stones used to mark the old strips and doles.

*Associated features;* Meadows frequently contain a wide variety of old water-management features associated with irrigation, drainage, and industry. In Avon, the classic ‘floating’ water-meadow system seems to have been rare, although several examples of a high level irrigation system have been found in the spring-line districts of the Broken Cotswolds. Common everywhere, however are remains of leats, cuts and canals associated with watermills and coalworks and, on the larger waterways, wharves, docks and railway yards. Although meadowland was generally unsuitable for habitation, it is this category which contains the principal sites of early industrial activity and is still favoured for industrial development today. In order to achieve this, recent changes in water control and flood prevention have altered the original function of the rural meadows which are now more likely to be ploughed for a crop other than grass.

*Occurrence;* The largest meadow areas in the county lie along the course of the river Avon, particularly around Keynsham and on the east side of Bath (Bristol also had a large area at one time). Smaller areas continue up the tributary valleys, sometimes with ‘pockets’ of wetland around their source, such as at Cameley, as well as Blagdon and Chew before the flooding of the lakes.

**GROUP C** - Landscapes derived from medieval (or earlier), irregular field systems, generally associated with ownership in severalty and scattered settlement.

### **C1 Medieval or earlier irregular enclosed fields**

[cat.no: 4 - PALE ORANGE]

*Origin;* It appears that in certain areas the usual medieval open field or strip system of cultivation was not adopted - a more piecemeal pattern of enclosed fields being favoured - probably at a very early stage. The occurrence of this pattern of cultivation on high and ‘marginal’ land suggests that a more ‘individualised’ approach was more practical. However, there is presently insufficient information to identify the factors which governed this process, or to what extent such lands were owned in severalty.

*Main characteristics;* Fields are generally small and somewhat irregular in shape (similar to assart patterns), creating a generally enclosed landscape with deep lanes and hedges containing a high species diversity. Convertible husbandry was probably always practised in these areas. Ancient road communications.

*Associated features;* Frequent occurrence of relict prehistoric features.

*Occurrence;* Particularly noticeable on the slopes of the Mendip scarp and Broadfield Down, but also present to a lesser extent on the Cotswold scarp.



***Possible prehistoric irregular enclosed fields:*** Associated with C1 are certain areas, possibly derived from earlier enclosure, which might warrant a separate category (i.e. C2). Particularly unusual field patterns of uncertain origin have been found in the region of Nempnet Thrubwell consisting of regular polygonal outlines. They are mainly situated on the southern sloping edge of Broadfield Down (possibly associated with woodland clearance), and occur in an 'ancient' landscape with a strong presence of relict prehistoric features,.

**GROUP D** - Landscapes derived from cleared woodland, mostly associated with categories A, B & C

**D1 Medieval enclosed fields created by assart**

[cat.no: 23 - DULL BROWN]

*Origin;* Piecemeal clearance of woodland, rough pasture and marginal waste was occasionally allowed to individual tenants during the middle ages, although the circumstances under which this could take place were specific and varied. Convertible husbandry was probably always practised in these areas.

*Main characteristics;* This process generally produced areas of small irregular fields, with associated field-names like 'croft', 'sart' &c.,. situated around the edge of the main common fields. Hedges are likely to contain a high species diversity, being almost certainly created from preexisting scrub.

*Associated features;* Frequently contain minor relict fieldworks.

*Occurrence;* Generally remain on the slopes of the Mendips, Cotswolds and Broadfield Down, where marginal woodland was most likely to occur. Like the common fields of category A, these fields also tend to be subject to 'readjustment'.

**D2 Medieval enclosed fields created by organised clearance**

[cat.no: 24 - KHAKI]

*Origin;* Apparently derived from the reorganisation and consolidation of land during the late middle ages, up to the agricultural and ownership changes of the 17th century, but rarely since then.

*Main characteristics:* The fields created by this means are generally large and regular, unlike assarted clearance (below), but still retain a relatively organic shape. Some of the field boundaries may contain remnants of their earlier woodland use, e.g woodbanks, with diverse hedgerow and ground species.

*Associated features*; Frequently retain fieldnames relating to their origin, such as ‘wood’, ‘breach’, ‘riding’, ‘stubb’, &c.

*Occurrence*; Mainly in the neighbourhood of remaining old woodland situated on the edge of the Mendips, Cotswolds, Broken Cotswolds, and Severn Ridge, but also occur in previously damp situations in the lower valleys such as the Chew.

## GROUP E - Recreational landscapes

### **E1 Post medieval fields created from enclosure of medieval parkland**

[cat.no: 25 - VIOLET]

*Origin*; During the 17th century most medieval deerparks in Avon were being enclosed for cultivation - under similar circumstances to organised woodland clearance (D2), with similar internal field patterns.

*Main characteristics*; although divided into field enclosures, the strong outlines of park boundaries are usually preserved in the form of large banks, ditches or walls, together with the roads and tracks which frequently surround it.

*Associated features*; Many internal features may also survive, such as woodbanks, coppices and pollarded trees which belonged to the inner compartments of the park, as well as such built structures as lodges and granges

*Occurrence*; Medieval parks occur in great numbers throughout the county, with a strong connection with the preexisting royal forests. They were generally situated on the more marginal ground, such as steep slopes and the boundary between cultivated land and open pasture, although a site as near as possible to the manorial centre was preferred

### **E2 Post medieval designed ornamental landscapes**

[cat.no: 26 - LIGHT PURPLE]

*Origin*; Mainly consist of the landscaped parklands of the 18th and 19th centuries which surrounded country mansions, many adapted from medieval parks. [A separate category

to distinguished this 'intermediate' parkland could be adopted at some later stage]. Also included are large scale 19th century municipal parks and gardens and modern cemeteries

*Main characteristics:* Aesthetically placed tree plantations and avenues, frequently containing (in the later examples) exotic species. Artificial lakes, cascades and other water features. Follies, grottoes, lodges, and other built ornaments and monuments.

*Associated features;* Many landscaped parks still included cultivated fields which were generally 'adjusted' from earlier field-patterns but ornamented with tree clumps and 'scattered' individual standards

*Occurrence;* Evenly distributed throughout the county, although generally sited to take advantage of varied relief and striking vistas.

### **E3 20th century leisure and sport development**

[cat.no: 27 - ULTRAMARINE]

*Origin;* The modern need for leisure amenities has led to the use of the countryside for sports centres and grounds, golf courses or, for water recreation, the development of marinas and fishing facilities.

*Main characteristics;* Generally open spaces, occasionally with some landscaping

*Occurrence;* A concentration around the seaside resort of Weston super Mare, but otherwise evenly distributed throughout the county. The margins of the Chew Valley and Blagdon reservoirs are good examples of artificial lakes adopted for leisure amenities.

## **GROUP F - Woodland, underwood and woodland pasture**

### **F1 Pre 1800 'ancient' woodland**

[cat.no: 21 - DARK GREEN]

*Origin;* Although not necessarily ancient woodland in the full sense of the term (i.e.ancient 'wildwood'), these woods were usually already in existence by the middle ages.

*Main characteristics;* Generally consist of deciduous trees rather than conifers and, in proper circumstances, containing ancient woodland indicator ground species. Not all old woods consisted of standard trees, however, and may still include areas of 'woody ground', scrub and open pasture.

*Associated features;* Often contain earthworks and other woodland management features, such as wood-banks, charcoal-burning hearths, etc. The larger woods may still

be divided by woodland drives and compartments or retain botanical evidence of the previous activities (e.g. coppicing).

*Occurrence*; Old woods have generally survived best on marginal land such as steep slopes ( particularly north facing) and damp areas. Particularly fine examples can be found at Wetmoor below the Cotswolds on the northern edge of the county.

## **F2 Post 18th century woodland planation and forestry**

[cat.no: 22 - DEEP OLIVE]

*Origin*; The large scale plantation of trees for profit (instead self sufficiency) was first adopted in the 18th century, initially to make use of open waste. At that time it also had an ornamental function which has come to be of less importance. [For this reason a further category should be assigned here at some later stage to distinguish the earlier style of plantation from areas of modern forestry management.]

*Main characteristics*; Recently planted woods are more likely to contain a large proportion of conifers, but category includes deciduous semi-ornamental brakes, clumps and coppices. Woods replanted on old woodland sites are included in this category as also regenerated rough woodland and scrub.

*Associated features*; Rough woodland and scrub frequently occupy old industrial sites and quarries, thereby preserving important industrial relics from the 19th century or even earlier.

*Occurrence*; The earlier (ornamental) style of plantation is widespread throughout the county, although there may be regional variations, e.g. beech predominating on limestone uplands. Large scale and later plantations are most likely to be found south of the river Avon on rough upland slopes such as Failand Down, Broadfield Down and the Mendip Edge.

**GROUP G** - Landscapes derived from enclosure of wetlands and coastal 'Levels'. Mainly scattered settlement pattern except for occasional nucleated settlements on isolated hard outcrops or on inland margins. Roads follow ancient causeways connecting areas of firm ground or old droveways which once connected the marshy areas of open common. Also included are a few large areas further inland of similar waterlogged land (or 'moors') - to distinguished them from meadow landscape of B2.

## **G1 Ancient unenclosed coastal 'Warths', beaches and cliffs**

[cat.no: 10 - DEEP GREEN-BLUE]

*Origins*; Warth is a local term for that part of the shoreline having non-agricultural use. Also included in this category are a few small areas of peat moor and saltmarsh which remain unenclosed.

*Main characteristics;* Much of the Severn shoreline consists of estuarine silt, particularly north of the river Avon. South of the Avon sandy beaches interspersed with cliff outcrops are more frequent.

*Associated features;* The Severn coastline contains many important remains of historic maritime and military activity, particularly associated with the port of Bristol. Inland features partially reclaimed by the sea also survive.

## **G2 Medieval and post medieval enclosure of the coastal clay belt**

[cat.no: 8 - LIME GREEN]

*Origins;* The coastal clay belt, lying behind the shoreline and created from estuarine silt deposited by the Severn flooding in recent geological times. Except for occasional incursions of the sea, this belt could be 'reclaimed' and brought into agricultural use without too much difficulty.

*Main characteristics;* Traditionally known as the 'hamms', this category consists of a regularly organised alignment of field strips with a strong presence of relict ridge and furrow, often protected by old 'sea-walls'. Despite such features these areas were notable as pasture grounds similar to riverside meadows, sometimes with a common system of sharing by lot or 'dole'.

*Associated features;* Still contains a low intensity of settlement, except for early sites established on outcrops of firm ground which often served as ferry crossings, such as Aust and Ingst.

*Occurrence;* Runs almost continuously along the coast north of the river Avon, but only a few isolated areas are present to the south near Weston super Mare. Now much covered (in the north) by industrial and port development and (in the south) by 'sea-side' accommodation

## **G3 Post medieval (15th - 17th C) irregular fields enclosed from anciently reclaimed inland moors**

[cat.no: 7 - PALE PINK]

*Origins;* Certain areas of dryer land lying behind the seashore, similar to the clay belt, were brought under cultivation by a piecemeal process. Appears to have supported convertible husbandry in severalty.

*Main characteristics:* Small irregular field pattern, similar to woodland assart, with old winding lanes. Contains relict ridge and furrow and other drainage patterns derived from earlier activity.

*Associated features;* The settlement in these areas appear to have grown from within scattered 'islands' of cultivation, some sites growing into core settlements. The most prominent feature of this category however is the number of small scattered settlements joined by a network of winding lanes.

*Occurrence;* The most prominent area lies around Kingston Seymour and the mouth of the Congresbury Yeo and, further inland, the 'island' areas of Nailsea, Claverham and Brinsea. North of the Avon is a similar area called Hallen Marsh.

#### **G4 Post medieval (15th - 17th C) organised enclosure of anciently reclaimed inland moors**

[cat.no: 6 - PALE GREEN]

*Origins;* Much of the inland moor and marsh enclosed at the end of the middle ages was reclaimed organised community action (similar to the standard common field organisation) rather than by the more individualised process of category G3. This appears to have been necessary in the more intractable parts of the peat moors and saltmarshes, leaving the lowest area in the centre unenclosed (category G5).

*Main characteristics:* Mainly strip-field pattern of hedged enclosure with relict ridge and furrow.

*Associated features;* Virtually no settlement in these areas.

*Occurrence;* Surrounding the peat moors and saltmarshes in category G5.

#### **G5 Post medieval (18th - 19th C) parliamentary enclosure or reclamation of inland peat moors and common saltmarshes**

[cat.no: 9 - SKY BLUE]

*Origins;* The last areas of open pasture and uncultivated moor and marsh was reclaimed and enclosed by parliamentary act during the late 18th and early 19th centuries

*Main characteristics:* rectilinear field patterns, consisting of parallel drainage ditches and rhines.

*Associated features;* Virtually no settlement. Marshland features such as decoy pools &c. Diverse and specialised flora and fauna

*Occurrence*; The Kenn and Tickenham Moors comprise the most prominent area south of the Avon. Smaller areas towards Weston super Mare have gradually disappeared under industrial sites and airports. A further area still exists in the Gordano Valley. To the north, there are examples at Swanmoor near Easter Compton and around Great Leaze Rhine near Duckhole.

**GROUP H** - Landscapes derived from heathland known as 'heaths', 'commons', or 'greens', much of which once constituted the Forest of Kingswood of which Kingswood Chase was a remnant.

### **H1 Ancient unenclosed commons**

[cat.no: 17 - DEEP BROWN]

*Origins*; Remnants of rough grazing left over from large scale enclosures

*Main characteristics*: Fairly large areas of open heath such as Siston Common are now rare and most only consist of small greens and roadside strips. In settled areas, enclosure of the larger commons may still remain open in altered form as sport and leisure areas. The small patches of waste still remaining from the enclosure of other categories such as common fields (A1) and downs (K1) are also included in this category for the time being.

*Occurrence*; Small patches can be found anywhere throughout the county, although 'village greens' occur only infrequently. The larger examples are most common in the Kingswood area, such as Siston, with a concentrated group of greens (Viney Green, Emersons Green, Lyde Green, Oakley Green) associated with old droveways in the Mangotsfield area.

### **H2 Medieval and post medieval organised enclosure of open heath**

[cat.no: 18 - PALE LIME GREEN]

*Origins*; There appears to have been a progressive clearance and enclosure of open heath following the disafforestation of Kingswood in the 13th century, but the pattern of development is still not clear.

*Main characteristics*: field patterns similar to woodland clearance (D2) but on a smaller scale and following the outlines of the original boundaries of the heathland. 'Islands' of open common linked by droveways were left behind from this process, later enclosed by parliamentary act or local jurisdiction.

*Associated features*; (requires further study)

*Occurrence*; Mainly surrounding or adjoining the main region of enclosed heathland [H4] running northward from the river Avon at Oldland to Heath End near Cromhall

**H3 Medieval to post medieval allotment enclosure**

[a possible future sub-category of H2]

*Origins*; There appears to have been a later subdivision of open heath into small plots belonging to smallholdings, but this process is still not clearly understood.

*Main characteristics*: characterised by a patchwork of small square fields. These plots often became filled with housing associated with the establishment of cottage industries linked with Bristol in the late 18th /early 19th centuries.

*Associated features*; (requires further study)

*Occurrence*; Particularly noticeable on the fringes of Bristol such as Stoke Gifford, Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne

**H4 18th - 19th century enclosure by local and parliamentary act**

[cat.no: 20 - DEEP ORANGE]

*Origins*; Large areas of heathland remained as open common grazing until enclosure in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

*Main features*: Rectilinear field pattern, generally on a small scale, often filled with later housing development. The irregular outline of the original common before enclosure can frequently still be recognised, with 'funnel' entrances and scattered small settlements around the margins.

*Associated features*; A most important aspect of this category is the role of the coalmining industry which was carried on since earliest times in these areas before enclosure. Although there are remains of a few of the larger 19-20th century collieries, the many small early pits disappeared at an early stage, and their widespread presence can only be detected from settlement patterns and other indirect means. Also remaining are road communications often derived from extensive unenclosed droveway systems linking the open commons.

*Occurrence*; The main region of enclosed heathland runs from the river Avon at Oldland northward as far as Heath End near Cromhall. A small but interesting extension exists to the south of the river around Pensford and Compton Dando which also included coal mining activity. The most extensive region of enclosed droveways existed between Westerleigh and Frampton Cotterell.

**GROUP K - Landscapes derived from high sheep pasture and open downland.**



**K1 Ancient unenclosed commons**

[cat.no: 12 - COBALT BLUE]

*Main characteristics:* Now only consist of a few small isolated roadside greens, which are indistinguishable from the wastes and greens in category H1 and therefore included under that category for the time being.

**K2 Post medieval (18th - 19th C) parliamentary enclosure**

[cat.no: 11 - TURQUOISE]

*Origins;* Consists of open downland enclosed by parliamentary act in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

*Main characteristics:* Large rectilinear fields, generally bounded by dry-stone walls rather than quickset hedges.

*Associated features;* strongly associated with relict archaeological features, with surviving ancient lines of communication along drove routes. In recent times has become suitable (in common with other flat upland landscapes, see L2 below) for airfield sites and military installations, with many remains from WWII.

*Occurrence;* Mainly on the Cotswold plateau, but also on Failand Down, Broadfield Down and the higher parts of the Broken Cotswolds

**GROUP L** - Open rough upland pasture and scrub, but sometimes indistinguishable from the downland categories of Group K.

**L1 Ancient unenclosed**

[cat.no: 16 - DARK BLUE]

*Associated features;* Prominent remains of prehistoric activity, early settlement and cultivation, together with important mining and quarrying features.

*Occurrence;* Only a few areas of this type of landscape can be found within the Avon area, the best examples lying along the margin of the Mendips.

**L2 Post medieval (18th - 19th C) parliamentary (or similar) enclosure**

[cat.no: 15 - EMERALD]

*Origins;* Most remaining areas of rough pasture was enclosed as a result of the policy for Improvement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, either by parliamentary act or by local jurisdiction.

*Main characteristics;* Large rectilinear field patterns, generally bounded by dry-stone walls rather than quickset hedging.. In many instances, such as the Mendips, these late enclosures were not a success in agricultural terms and therefore made little alteration to the original unenclosed landscape.

*Associated features;* Many areas still contain important relict archaeological features. Ancient road communication and drove routes survive together with new roads laid out during enclosure. In recent times has become suitable (in common with other flat upland landscapes, see K2 above) for airfield sites and military installations, with many remains from WWII.

*Occurrence;* Mostly on the margins of Mendip, but also in certain rocky outcrops on parts of Broadfield Down, the Failand and Gordano Ridges and the Severn Ridge

**GROUP M** - Large scale utility landscapes. This category refers mainly to industrial sites of the 19th and 20th centuries. It was found that surviving sites of earlier date are invariably too small to be discernible at the project scale of 1:25000, and their influence is better indicated as a characteristic of other landscape categories. Similarly, it is not possible to distinguish between abandoned 19th century industrial features and their modern successors, both generally occupying the same site. It would however be useful at some later stage to divide this group into two categories in order to distinguish between built sites and those created by mineral extraction, as indicated below;  
[cat.no: 28 - BLUE-GREY]

- M1 Built** (i.e. manufacturing, commercial, communications, military, public services) includes large scale communications such as railways, canals, motorways and airports. Public services include power station, sewage works etc.
- M2 Mineral extraction** (i.e large mines and spoilheaps, quarries).

## SETTLED LANDSCAPES

The settled landscapes have been characterised at two different scales, giving two levels of detail:

- at 1:25,000 for the **rural** settlements. These appear with the rest of the rural landscape characterisation (although plotted on GIS as a separate layer), and include farms, hamlets, villages and small towns

- at 1:10,000 for the larger **urban** settlement of Bath, providing an extra, more detailed, characterisation with a resulting larger number of categories. A similar study was completed, on paper, for Bristol.

The settlement categories have been defined in the same way as the rest of the landscape i.e:

**Time depth:** Three basic periods of historical development have been adopted, with further subdivisions in the case of a large urban settlement such as Bath.

**Description:** mainly refers to buildings and their attached courts, gardens, crofts etc. based on a generalised combination of remaining fabric and boundary outlines. With the more detailed urban categories however, more ‘archaeological’ emphasis was necessarily given to boundary outlines and town plan. .

The categories of **rural settlement**, with their subdivided **urban** equivalents are as follows:

1. **‘Remnant’** This category covers early settlement sites, now abandoned, which are still prominent in the landscape, mostly in the form of earthworks. Most are prehistoric, but Saxon and Medieval sites are also covered. Whilst many prominent *individual* features such as hillforts, dikes etc may not be regarded as settlements in the strict sense of the term, they are included within this definition in order to distinguish them from such *extended* features as RB field systems, barrow cemeteries etc. which fit better within one of the landscape categories.  
[cat.type: C - RED (outline)]
2. **‘Core’ settlements** These consist of present settlements identifiable on late 18th or early 19th century maps. They generally still preserve medieval or even earlier outlines, with building fabric mainly originating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

subdivision of this category for Bath includes:

Pre-1700 ‘Core’  
1700 to 1776 ‘Early Georgian’  
1776 to 1830 ‘Late Georgian’

[cat.type: C - RED (solid)]

3. **Nineteenth century (‘Extended’ or ‘Infill’)** Generally following old (pre-1800) boundary outlines, a practice which extends into the early years of the twentieth century.

subdivisions for Bath include: 1800 to 1830 ‘Regency Georgian’  
1830 to 1904 ‘Victorian’

[cat.type: E - DEEP PURPLE]

- 4. Twentieth century ('New' or 'Modern')** Development generally disregarding earlier outlines. Subdivisions: 1904 to 1960 'Early 20 C.'  
1960 to date 'Late 20 C.'

[cat.type: M - PINK]

## **APPENDIX**

### **Glossary**

- Assart** - Enclosed fields created by individuals or small groups by the piecemeal clearance of uncultivated ground (usually woodland or scrub, as apposed to pasture), generally by licence from the manorial owner.
- Convertible** - Convertible husbandry refers to the continuous alternation of fields between arable and pasture use.
- Demesne** - That part of the common field system in the direct and private ownership of the lord of manor.
- Enclosure** - Any physical barrier (hedges, walls &c.) set up between areas of land which may previously have been undivided or only having divisions identified by lines of site (boundary stones &c.) or non-stockproof landscape features (open roads, &c).
- Severalty** - land owned privately and not as part of the common field system

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### **Slides** - extracts from the Avon Historic Landscape Categorisation

The accompanying slides show four areas of particular interest in the historic landscape of Avon. The slides were not processed digitally from disk, but are photographic copies of print-outs by an A3 ink-jet colour printer on high quality paper at 720 d.p.i.

To assist identification, they are supplemented with a duplicate set of slides of the same areas showing basic modern settlement and communication detail within the national grid. Also included is a slide of the colour key to the categories. The colour system adopted for the key is aimed to reflect and contrast the character of the landscape categories, but is not regarded as final.

The following titles for the selected areas have been adopted;

North Somerset Levels  
 Broadfield Down  
 Kingswood 'Fringe  
 Cotswold Edge

#### **North Somerset Levels**

This area is that part of the coastal wetlands bounded by the downland of Failand (to the north, towards Bristol), Broadfield Down (to the east), and the Mendip Hills (to the south), the southern coastline being covered by modern development around Weston-super-Mare.

From this slide the different modes and periods of reclamation and enclosure of the wetland landscape (expressed in paler colours) can be clearly identified. It shows, for example, that the coastal strip along this part of the Severn estuary was reclaimed at an early stage in a piecemeal way, with a large number of scattered settlements - the more intractable and uninhabited peat-moors &c. behind the coastal belt being only gradually reclaimed and enclosed by the more conventional nucleated settlements that surrounded the levels on the foot of the high inland downs.

#### **Broadfield Down**

Broadfield Down is an area of high land looking over the North Somerset levels to the west, being separated from the Mendip Hills to the south and Failand Down to the north. The eastern end of the Down is terminated by Dundry Hill overlooking the outskirts of Bristol (intruding from the north) and the reservoir lakes of the Chew Valley and Blagdon to the south.

The slide shows the various processes of enclosure of the Down (shown by the dark colours), varying from forestry plantation to the development of Bristol airport (grey area in the centre). It also shows well the relationship of downland slopes and scarps with parklands and ornamental landscapes.

### **Kingswood ‘Fringe’**

This area, to the northeast of Bristol reaching almost to the Cotswolds, and extending towards the River Avon to the south, was once part of the Norman Forest of Kingswood. Although disafforested at an early stage, was only gradually enclosed, hence the frequency of such names containing the words ‘Green’, ‘Common’, and ‘Heath’.

Of particular interest was the identification of a network of droveways linking the patches of unenclosed heath which are still discernible in the landscape. The larger heaths can still be made out, having been the site of early coal mining and other industries and, more recently, modern housing development (the grey areas towards the northwest). As a region of communication, it also contains modern railway and motorway routes (e.g. crossing the prominent area of enclosed medieval parkland to the southwest), although an earlier Roman Road is no longer visible.

### **Cotswold Edge**

Centred on Marshfield and the line of the western facing scarp of the Cotswold plateau, this was the first area to be digitised as a pilot study for the GIS system. To the south is the region of ‘broken Cotswolds’ containing the deep valleys descending towards the river Avon near Bath. At the foot of the scarp, which once constituted the eastern boundary of the Kingswood Forest, is a line of old villages with their fields on the foothills facing the Severn Estuary to the west. The plateau behind the scarp, once open sheep downs, still forms the eastern boundary of South Gloucestershire with Wiltshire.

A characteristic of the scarp are the numerous medieval and 18th c. landscaped parks which lie along the slope facing the Severn, accompanied by various prehistoric enclosures at the summit. The plateau area, characterised by the many drystone walls belonging to the late enclosure of the downs, contains those typical Cotswold village landscapes identified within the Cotswold AONB.

## **EXAMPLE OF LANDSCAPE SUB-ZONE CATEGORISATION**

(3 sub-zones of MENDIPS - zone 9)

**Sub-zone 9.1** Mendip Scarp (also referred to as ‘Eastern Mendip’) - lying along the northern edge of the Mendip plateau between East Harptree and Rickford.

Most of the scarp slope is characterised by the irregular field outlines which originated during the middle ages from the piecemeal clearance of woodland and rough scrub. These ‘assart’ fields (cat.**D1**) are usually fairly small but in a few places, particularly around Blagdon, they have been enlarged and ‘redesigned’, in line with more modern practice (cat.**A2**).

Nevertheless, fairly large remnants of the original woodland have survived in the woods of Swancombe, Merecombe, Ubley and Compton Martin (cat.**F1**). An older wood probably also served as the basis of Blagdon Park (cat.**E2**), although parklands (cat.**E**) do not generally occur in this sub-zone, being a feature of the valley below the scarp.

The base of the slope is marked by a line of ancient core villages (set.cat.**C**), linked together by the ancient course of the A368 road. These villages still provided the best sites for the farmsteads established after the middle ages, and very few settlements occur on the slope other than encroachments and allotments (set.cat.**E**) at the top of the scarp adjoining the open grazing on the summit.

The line of the summit, now marking the county boundary, was previously the northern edge of the ancient open rough pasture and ‘forest’ (cat.**L1**) which once extended southward over the *High Mendip* plateau (sub-zone 9.4). Many of the present roads up to the summit originated as droeways onto the open pasture, their old outlines, ‘funnelling out’ onto the high ground, still visible in the adjoining hedgerows.

**Sub-zone 9.2** The Dolebury, Burrington & Banwell Ridge (‘Central Mendip’) - consisting of the western extension of the *Mendip Scarp* (9.1) between Rickford and Banwell, joining up with the *Western Mendip* (9.4).

The character of the *Mendip Scarp* changes abruptly at Lower Ellick, where it continues westward as a steep ridge broken by gaps at Link, Churchill and Sandford. From earliest times the all-round access and good field of view from the ridge has provided quite different land-use possibilities. The summits, still remaining as rough open grass (cat.**L1**) typical of *High Mendip* (9.4), contains a variety of prehistoric hillforts and related earthworks (set.cat.**C**, Remnant), while the fields around the Banwell ridge also possess outlines derived from a deer park (cat.**E1**) belonging to the medieval bishops of Bath and Wells. The odd country house with extensive tree plantations (cat.**F2**) which now cover most of these slopes represents the continuation of this last tradition since the 18th century. For this reason the influence of the early village settlements (i.e. Churchill, Burrington and Banwell, cat.**C**) which line the base of the northern slope is less marked than in sub-zone 9.1 to the east.

There is therefore few remains of assart (cat.**D1**), and only at the western end, above Banwell, are there extensive later field patterns (cat.**A2**), with a few others apparently originating from woodland clearance (cat.**D2**).

**Sub-zone 10.1** The Lox Yeo valley (part of zone 10, the LOWER VALLEYS)

Behind the *Mendip Ridge* (9.2), to the south, is the low-lying and fertile Lox Yeo valley - surrounded by the main High Mendip plateau (9.3). Although Winscombe lies more or less centrally in this zone, most of the other villages and farms are sited around the base of the surrounding plateau. The valley provides a natural corridor through the Mendips, crossed by road, railway and, more recently, motorway (all cat.**M**) - with accompanying linear developments (set.cat.**M**), particularly in the area of Woodborough and Sidcot.

Nevertheless, most of the valley still retains the old patterns of open field strips (cat.**A1**) and meadow grounds (cat.**B2**) associated with the core village settlements (set.cat.**C**) of Winscombe, Barton, Christon and Loxton. Lower down the valley to the south, towards the Somerset Levels, similar patterns to B2 appear to have originated from medieval reclamation (cat.**G4**).

### **Sub-zone 9.3** High Mendip (part of the main Mendip plateau)

Although this sub-zone surrounds much of the Lox Yeo Valley (10.1), only a few parts at Barton Hill and Winterhead Hill lie within the county boundary. These parts however are typical of the rest of the plateau, being now mostly covered by the grid pattern of drystone walls brought about by the enclosure of the rough open pasture by act of parliament in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (cat.**L2**), with very little settlement. A few examples of assart (cat.**D1**), cleared woodland (cat.**D2**) and recent plantation (cat.**F2**) do however exist in the field outlines around the edge of the valley.

### **Sub-zone 9.4** Western Mendip - the outlying plateau extending from Banwill Hill to the coast.

Most of the summit of this plateau is covered by the grid pattern of drystone walls typical of the rest of the Mendip plateau, from parliamentary enclosure (cat.**L2**). Nevertheless, the impact of enclosure here was superficial, and extensive traces of Romano-British fieldworks are still visible, so that this area may well be regarded as a prehistoric or 'ancient' landscape.

The steep northern slopes are still extensively covered with old woodland (cat.**F1**), a feature which appears to have been common on the eastern slopes running down into the Lox Yeo Valley. The latter also contains much recent woodland (cat.**F2**), but the field outlines suggest extensive clearance of old woodland (cat.**D2**), probably in the 17th or 18th centuries.

On the more gradual slopes to the south, the field outlines retain the pattern of common open fields (cat.**A1**), enclosed during the middle ages. These belonged principally to the core village settlement of Breadon (set.cat.**C**), at the base of the slope overlooking the Somerset Levels. Many other, smaller, early settlements and farms line the fringes of the levels to the south, but the line of villages along the base of the northern slope (i.e. Hutton, Oldmixon and Uphill) have become engulfed by modern development (set.cat.**M**) extending from Weston super Mare along the many road and railway routes (cat.**M**) across the plateau.



