



## 4.1 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 not 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.

## 4.2 Other Technical Terms

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

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

**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.

**Bronze Age** (c. 2,500 – 750 BC) 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 alkaline soils.

**Calciphile** refers to plants that grow well on chalky or alkaline soils.

**Camber, cambering** a downward bending or draping over of a hard horizontal rock stratum at the edge of its outcrop. It is caused by the downward flow of an underlying clay layer, the plastic properties of which are particularly susceptible to solifluction and periglacial disturbance. It is particularly common in the Cotswold valleys where the overlying component Oolitic rocks have draped over the valley edges and collapsed into landslips owing to the incompetence of the underlying Lias Group clays.

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

**Combe** a topographic term used in place names which in the chalklands of southern England, refers to the head of a dry valley which terminates in a steep sided amphitheatre. It is also applicable to the limestone topography of the Cotswolds.

**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.

**Cornbrash** name applied to the uppermost member of the Bathonian stage of the Middle Jurassic formation in England. It is an old English agricultural name applied in Wiltshire to a variety of loose rubble or 'brash' which, in that part of the country, forms a good soil for growing corn. The name was adopted by William Smith for a thin band of shelly stone which, in the south of England, 'breaks up in the manner indicated'. Although only a thin group of rocks (10–25 ft.), it is remarkably persistent; it maybe traced from Weymouth to the Yorkshire coast. The Cornbrash is a very fossiliferous formation; the fauna indicates a transition from the Lower to the Middle Oolites, although it is probably more closely related to that of the beds above than to those below.

**Delve** a local Cotswolds term denoting a shallow surface quarry within the Oolitic Limestone, mainly occurring within the high wold and dip-slope.

**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 that cause degradation of the earth's surface.

**Diamicton** technical term for boulder clay comprising 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.

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

**Freestone** name given by Quarrymen to stone that is free from shell fragments and inclusions. Its 'clean' properties ensure that it can be finely dressed and is good for ashlar and decorative detail. Freestones can be easily sawn or carved when fresh but when weathered are hard and durable. If carelessly dressed or badly laid, Freestones can be subject to flaking.

**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 that inhibits the binding action of dyes. Fulling involves pounding the cloth to mat the fibres together and cleansing with Fuller's Earth 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.

**Fuller's Earth** a greenish-grey material resembling clay and having good absorbent properties. Sediments are linked to volcanic activity and are rich in material containing silica. It is said that the Knights Templars, a religious military order, living at Barton near Guiting Power in the 13th century, discovered that Fuller's Earth was suitable for removing the oil and grease from fleeces. The cleaning process was known as 'fulling' and contributed to the success of Cotswold wool sold in Europe.

**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.

**Gully, gulling** term to describe a fissure that opens up in the surface rocks owing to tension as a result of a camber.

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

**Head** a slope deposit comprising an accumulation of solifluction debris of periglacial origin, together with more recent hillwash material.

**Hercynian** mountain building episode of Carboniferous/Permian times.

**Holocene** term used to describe the whole of recent life and referring to all of the time which has elapsed since the Pleistocene. It is one of the two epochs that make up the Quaternary. The date of the beginning of the Holocene is generally agreed to be 10,000 BP.

**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** (c. 750 BC – AD 43) 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.

**Jurassic** the middle period of the Mesozoic era, preceding the Cretaceous and succeeding the Triassic and named after the Jura Mountains of central Europe. It commenced about 195 million years ago and terminated 135 million years ago during which time dinosaurs reached their maximum size. Rock strata consist of varying thicknesses of clays, limestones and some sandstones that were deposited in fluctuating shallow seas, interspersed with periods of estuarine and fluvial tile deposition. The principal divisions present in the Cotswolds are (in ascending order) Lias Group (clays and limestones), Inferior Oolite (limestones, clays and sandstones) and Great Oolite (limestones).

**Lynchets** are created either unintentionally by ploughing or intentionally in the hilly landscape to create terraces suitable for farming. They were often formed in areas where there was pressure to use even steeply sloping land for farming. Lynchet patterns can be seen in the landscape on steep slopes where they are preserved in areas of permanent pasture.

**Mesolithic** (c 8,000 – 4,000 BC) 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.

**Mesotrophic** water containing a normal amount of nutrients.

**Metallurgy** science of extracting and working metals.

**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** (c. 4,000 – 2,500 BC) 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.

**Oolite** a sedimentary rock made up essentially of ooliths; spherical rock particles formed by the gradual accretion of material around an inorganic (e.g. sand) or organic (e.g. shell) nucleus. Ooliths are small and their appearance has been likened to fish roe from where their name is derived.

**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 (land or selion), 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. Ridge and furrow type landforms are also evident in water meadow landscapes and areas where steam ploughing was employed. Good examples survive where the open arable fields became permanent pasture following the black death in the 14th century and when arable land was enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Elsewhere, the act of enclosing the land, subsequent consolidation of the strips and continued ploughing for arable production, obliterated the patterns of ridge and furrow.

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

**Underfit or Misfit stream** a term given to streams that are disproportionate in size to the valleys they occupy.

**Uniclinal Shifting** the tendency of a river within a region of gently dipping strata to gradually migrate in the direction of the dip resulting in an asymmetrical cross profile to the river valley.

**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.

**Pedology** the scientific study of soils.

**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 Cainozoic. This was the era that saw the appearance of mankind. It comprises two epochs, the Pleistocene and the Holocene and deposits consist largely of alluvium, tufa, head, head gravel and river terrace deposits.

**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).

**Ridge and Furrow** see definition of Open Field System.

**Riparian** riverbank habitats.

**Sanfoin** Eurasian perennial herb having pale pink flowers and curved pods; naturalised in Britain and North America grasslands on calcareous soils; important forage crop and source of honey in Britain. Its introduction as a fodder crop in the 16th century was important to the wool trade as it made it possible to provide fodder for livestock while building up the nitrogen content of the soil, making it possible to carry increasing numbers of sheep on a given area of land.

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

**Selion** the smallest unit of measurement – a fraction of a furlong or of an acre – for ploughing in the arable fields of the open field system. The oxen ploughed the land in a circular motion, ending with a central ridge. The boundaries of selions were often marked with stones or balks. The name acre was also used for a selion. The word comes from the French sillon, a furrow.

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

**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 infills cavities.

**Turnpike** a gate across a highway preventing passage until a toll has been paid. Turnpike roads were administered by turnpike trusts that 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 desert 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 that 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 them 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.

### 4.3 Abbreviations

**AOD** Above Ordnance Datum

**AONB** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**ASNW** Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

**AW** Ancient Woodland

**BP** Before Present

**BAP** Biodiversity Action Plan

**SAC** Special Area of Conservation; prefix 'c' : Candidate;  
prefix 'p': Provisional

**GIS** Geographical Information System

**SPA** Special Protection Area

**SSSI** Site of Special Scientific Interest



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