

Cleeve Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and part of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Geology

Rolling Bank Quarry is the only place in the Cotswolds where the full sequence of Inferior Oolite rocks can be seen. Fossils at Rolling Bank Quarry include oysters, from around 125 million years ago. It is a SSSI.

On the exposed rockface of Cleeve Cloud the junction between the Lower and Upper Jurassic limestone can clearly be seen, with the upper being more orange in colour. These exposures indicate quite a change in the environment around 180 million years ago, from deep sea to approximately 10 metres deep.

The Ring

(Scheduled Ancient Monument)

'The Ring' is a circular earthwork on the upper part of the scarp slope, some 50 metres in diameter. It is believed to date from the Romano-British period (the early centuries AD). Although its function is unclear it provides evidence that the Common was being used by humans at the time.

Iron Age Hill Fort

(Scheduled Ancient Monument)

Dates back to around 500 BC. Like many castles that followed centuries later, it was probably a symbol of power and wealth as much as a defensive construction. Sitting on the edge of the escarpment, it would be visible for miles around and was perhaps the seat of a local chieftain.

The Highest Tree in the Cotswolds

This lone beech tree is believed to be the highest tree in the Cotswolds at 330m above sea level. This is now the site for the Memorial Wall, where loved ones can be remembered with a commemorative plaque affixed to the stone wall.

It looks south-west to 'The Twins', the two remaining beech trees from the original 'Three Sisters'.

Unimproved Limestone Grassland

The grassland at Cleeve Common is described as agriculturally unimproved as there have never been any intensive or modern farming techniques carried out anywhere on the land.

Sites of unimproved grassland such as this are increasingly important to preserve and protect. Prior to 1935, such grassland accounted for over 40% of the Cotswolds: today the figure is only 1.5%. Cleeve Common represents a major stronghold for this threatened habitat.

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www.cleevecommon.org.uk

Photograph - Paul Watkins



Meadow pipit



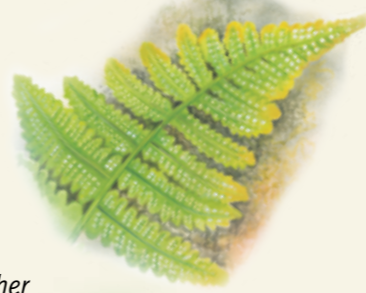
Adders live here on the Common



Birds like stonechat are attracted to gorse thickets



Gorse



Limestone fern



Heather

The Golf Course

Organised golf has been played on Cleeve Hill since 1891 when the Cheltenham Golf Club was formed. The first course was set out on the lower slopes of the Common. Courses have changed since and the latest is home to the Cleeve Cloud Golf Club.

A range of meals and refreshments are available from the Clubhouse. The course has open access for walkers but you do so at your own risk. Please beware of flying golf balls and respect the golfers' game.

The Washpool

The old stone sheep dip was built in 1897. Hundreds of sheep would have been driven down the valley to be dipped in the pool, cleaning their fleeces before shearing.

A peaceful part of the Common, the Washpool is popular with migratory birds, who stop by to refresh and feed on the berries of the hawthorn shrubs. The stream in this valley is the beginnings of the River Isbourne, a tributary of the River Avon which runs north into Winchcombe.

Quarrying

The landscape of Cleeve Common has been shaped dramatically by extensive historic quarrying. Worked right into the 20th Century, the limestone quarries provided both roadstone and building stone; All Saints Church, Cheltenham, was built using stone from Cleeve Common. Today, the old quarry faces and scree slopes provide an important habitat for many rare species, including musk orchid, red hemp-nettle and many species of moss.

The Cross Dyke

(Scheduled Ancient Monument)

The Cross Dyke is a long, ditch and bank earthwork. It runs from near the top of Rising Sun Lane diagonally up the escarpment (where it is often called 'The Staircase'), over the edge and then swings left into Dry Bottom and Postlip Quarries.

This linear ditch was built as a territorial boundary and is thought to date from the Bronze Age.

Heather Plots

The flora of Cleeve Common is made all the more interesting by the occurrence of heather. Heather grows on acidic soil and would not usually be expected in a limestone grassland sward. This unusual heath occurs where the underlying substrate changes from Oolitic limestone to the acidic Harford Sands.

The Dew Pond

The 'dew pond' is a distinctive feature in limestone uplands. Despite no running water supply it can hold water through the summer.

Wardens' Wood

Wardens' Wood came into being in the early 90's, and is named in tribute to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who planted the trees and actively help with its management. The wood has become an important area for birds.

Key:	
- - - - -	Footpath
•	Monuments
.	Bridleway