

Green Ring 3 south Character Assessment

Location

In the south-east of the parish, much of this area is known as Gorsty Knoll: an open area of mesne with scattered houses, leading to both sharp and less sharp transitions into forest on the east and valleys to south and east. Situated on the carboniferous limestone, it has springs and wells which reach down to the aquifer. All of which made it a key location for the development of mining, quarrying, railways and ironworks. All such activity has ceased, but the industrial archaeology of the area is of national importance.



GRS1 Cycle track to Parkend via old railway line

Otherwise, the Green Ring 3 lies off the main circular road from Edenwall and Coalway linking to Milkwall. Narrow lanes with grass verges have drainage ditches alongside. Unmetalled Forestry tracks, cycle tracks and walking tracks take irregular routes, often based on heritage. The Forestry Commission manages much of the area.



GRS2 Open mesne leading to circular road to Milkwall

Landscape

Gorsty Knoll is hilly with several valleys, some sloping steeply and with steep dips into old quarries/mines and workings. The slopes trend to the south, into woods and trees interwoven with tracks and green spaces.

GRS3. Most is open, accessible heathland with forest tracks and paths.

In the north, this is predominantly a green open space based on an early mining/quarrying landscape, with very little current human influence. Significantly this ancient heavy industrial heritage has grown into one of the greenest and most valuable habitats in the parish.



The tranquil diversity of landscape shows a range of interesting historic, archaeological features., alongside a wide range of flora and fauna

Much is meend with gorse, bracken, rough grasses and amongst it harebells, orchids and more.

To the east and south, trees and forest form an intense green backcloth: that might be coniferous larch/ spruce or mixed, deciduous and shrub.



GRS4 Hummocks of past workings covered by meend



GRS6 Beeches in the south, on the valley side



GRS5. The look of the landscape changes radically with season: the colour of trees and ferns, wild garlic and some bluebells give groundcover in spring& summer in deciduous woodlands. Sheep

roam freely in Forest fashion.

One specific area of mesne is designated the Gorsty Knoll Conservation Area, where the Forestry Commission selectively cut the undergrowth and have constructed hurdles for moths and butterflies as well as adder hides. Glow worms have frequented this area for many years. There are a range of birds, both linked to woodland and open grassland, deer, boar, lizards and more in the vicinity.



GRS7 Conservation Area

There are a couple of fields with the odd barn, fences, walls and hedges, but they are small and irregularly placed, mainly used for horses or some sheep grazing.

A stream runs alongside the cycle track; there are some lower ponds and wet ditches. Aaron's Pond is a constructed source for the old ironworks. There now, bullrushes thrive with yellow flags and more water-loving plants, dragonflies and other pond life.

Some of this area is over the watershed so that trend is toward the Severn, but pumping takes it to the Wye.

Heritage

There are key sites of national industrial archaeological importance in this area (some Scheduled Ancient Monuments). The early iron industry in the Forest is considered to date back to the Romans, but **these** sites are linked to the Mushet family. These early developers in the iron industry benefited from both the local forest and its use for charcoal, and the local iron ore found among the coal measures. Given the lay of the land, coal here was mined through levels dug into the hillsides (only later were vertical shafts used).

David Mushet built a brickworks here, of which sections still exist. The tram road further down the slope is also linked to this.



GRS9. Tram Road, showing stone settings for the rails



GRS8. Entrance to coal level, centre left, now disused and made safe

Dark Hill, with Aaron's pond was where Robert Forester Mushet developed the process of smelting to gain steel from iron. The Bear is considered to be a good example of the furnace residue. Later he built the Titanic Steel works.



GRS 10. Sculpture and Dark Hill ironworks

Settlement character

Most buildings lie on or close to the metalled access lanes which are winding and interlinked. This results in a scattered, irregular layout mainly of 19/earlier 20C generally traditional cottages with porches and chimneys. These often have both front and back gardens. The more modern properties have smaller gardens. There is no obvious centre. The road joining the Arcs is the main routeway into and out of the area.

Styles vary, as do materials, but older buildings tend to be semi and detached houses using stone and slate (though often rendered) whereas the more modern infill tend to brick and have varied designs and especially roof shapes.

Some of these are bungalows; one house is 3 storey.

Parking is frequently on plot, although there is some on forest waste. That on the higher mesne is used in winter snow as many houses are lower than the entrance road

Pylons, masts and wires intrude on the edge of settlement



GRS11. Conservation bottom left; hummocks of old workings, detached cottages to rear and one example of modern individual design



GRS12. Winding lane with older houses

Boundaries vary with walls, hedges and fences evident
A small mobile home site is on the boundary with Milkwall

A number of footpaths and tracks are used by walkers and cyclists to link into longer distance routes as well as for a short journey. It is an attractive and peaceful valley route out of the area toward the Severn/ A48

Key views

- **In from Ellwood road**
- from cycle track and Ellwood Rd toward Dark Hill
- out over Milkwall
- out over golf course toward Coleford



GRS13. view In from Ellwood Rd



GRS14. Out toward Ellwood, Yorkley,



GRS15 Over the golf course toward Coleford

Key features

- **Archaeology:** see below
- **Open mesne and priority habitat**



GRS16. SAM Dark Hill ironworks



GRS17 Colour works to right of centre and view over Sling



GRS18. Titanic Iron and Steel



GRS19.Aaron's Pond: formerly used for the ironworks

Green Ring 3 South

Positive features and special qualities

- high quality natural landscape
- high status heritage
- predominantly green area, based on past mining/quarrying landscape, with little current human influence
- much Forestry Commission land and management
- quiet rural gateway to Coleford by cycle/walking and a varied approach to services

Negative features and detracting elements

- litter left by visitors and thoughtless dog walkers
- Fragility of landscape to change

Looking ahead

Links into numerous themes:

- archaeology and restoration; NB of national/ world status
- tourism;
- education
- green infrastructure and ecological conservation

The issue here is how to balance the potential conflicts between heritage tourism and its potential for the economy and the industrial heritage and nature conservation.

It is likely that carefully controlled and monitored, low-level encouragement of local tourism through themed trails and/or markets is the way forward. One possible method might be through developing walking routes with local partners or entering into **Walkers are Welcome**.