

# Earnslaw Upper Malvern Hills



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## THE VIEW FROM EARNSLAW UPPER CAR PARK

Earnslaw Upper car park stands on the eastern side of the Malvern Hills and the view looks out across the Severn and Avon Vales and up to the dramatic scarp slope of the Cotswolds on the horizon.

## LANDSCAPE OF THE MALVERN HILLS

The central core of the Malvern Hills is formed of pre-Cambrian rocks which are at least 650 million years old. Complex earth movements, linked with volcanic activity, resulted in fissures and fusion with later materials, so that the Hills are a mix of granites, diorites and volcanic rocks. Archaeological remains dating back to the early Stone Age show that the area has been a focus for human activity from the earliest times. By the Iron Age, the strategic importance of the Hills had been realised and major hill forts were constructed at British Camp and Midsummer Hill.

The geology of the Hills is responsible for their famous waters, which are renowned for their purity. Malvern water is rain water that has percolated through the fissures of the pre-Cambrian rocks to emerge as spring water.

The health-giving qualities of Malvern's waters were known from pagan times, but it was not until the mid 18th century that they were fully exploited and Malvern began its rise to fame and fortune as a spa town. Although Malvern's reign as "The Queen of Inland Watering Places" ended along with the 19th century, its legacy remains in the Georgian and Victorian buildings which still dominate the town. The route to St Ann's Well, a picturesque remnant of the days of the water cure, is signed from the Easy Access Trail which runs from the Lower car park.

## LANDSCAPE OF THE COTSWOLDS

The Cotswolds form a stone belt upland landmass, whose underlying geology is reflected in the characteristic honey-coloured limestone used to construct walls, houses and churches throughout the region. This limestone geology results in alkaline soils which support a different vegetation cover to the acid soils of the Malvern Hills. Like the Malvern Hills and the Severn and Avon Vales, the Cotswolds have a long history of settlement, from pre-historic monuments to fine country houses and historic parks.

## LANDSCAPE OF THE SEVERN AND AVON VALES

The Severn and Avon Vales are visible in the middle ground of the view ahead of you; the wide, gravel-strewn surface of the valley floor was created during the Ice Age. Bredon Hill, the whale-backed hill which stands out in the middle of the plain, is in fact a detached portion of the Cotswolds, formed of layers of clay and limestone. The Severn and Avon Rivers were particularly important for early settlement and there is evidence of Stone Age hunter-gatherers working the gravel terraces from about 9000BC. Bredon Hill was also a site for early activity, which is still apparent in the standing stones and hill forts in the area.



Exposed rock face of Gullet Quarry



St. Ann's Well

