Recognising landforms

At first glance, topographic maps may appear confusing, as they contain a lot of information and have their own language and symbols. Contour lines on a topographic map join places that are the same height above sea level. They form patterns that show the shape of the land. By examining the contour lines and the distances between them, it is possible to identify whether the land is flat or gently sloping or has steep hills and valleys.

Contour lines represent a three-dimensional landform on a two-dimensional map. A skilled user of topographic maps can recognise the patterns of these contour lines and visualise the shapes of landform features. Some of the more recognisable landforms are shown in C.

A. PLATEAU
An extensive area of flat land higher than the land surrounding it. Contours surround an area with few or no contours.

C. DISTINCTIVE CONTOUR PATTERNS

D. ROUND HILL
A high, round piece of land. Contours form a round or oval shape.

E. RIDGE
A long, narrow piece of higher ground with sloping sides.

F. SADDLE
An area of low land between two peaks. On maps it is often the lower area between two circular contour patterns.

G. VALLEY
Low land between hills or mountains, usually with a river through it. Contours form a U or V shape. The bottom of the V or U points upstream.

H. SPUR
A finger-like ridge that sticks out from the side of a hill or mountain. Contours are U- or V-shaped, pointing away from high land.
1. Examine the table below. Match the landform in the first column with the correct description in the second column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landform</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentle slope</td>
<td>The lower area between two circular contour patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>Long, narrow piece of land. Contour heights descend on either side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spur</td>
<td>Contours form circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steep slopes or a cliff</td>
<td>Contours form a V shape pointing uphill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small hill</td>
<td>Contours form a V shape pointing downhill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddle</td>
<td>Flat area surrounded by contours that are close together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plateau</td>
<td>Contours are close together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge</td>
<td>Contours are far apart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Examine and complete the following.
(a) What type of landform is represented in AR8740 and AR8741?
   (i) Spur  (ii) Cliff  (iii) Saddle  (iv) Ridge
(b) A similar landform is located in which of these places?
   (i) AR7941 and AR7942  (iii) AR9037 and AR9136
   (ii) AR8335 and AR8236  (iv) AR9636 and AR9637
(c) What type of landform is represented by the contour pattern at AR8634 and AR8535?
   (i) Spur  (ii) Cliff  (iii) Saddle  (iv) Ridge
(d) What type of landform is represented by the contour pattern at AR9736?
   (i) Spur  (ii) Round hill  (iii) Valley  (iv) Cliff
(e) Find another similar pattern on the map and give its area reference.
(f) What type of landform is represented by the contour pattern at AR8133?
   (i) Valley  (ii) Ridge  (iii) Hill  (iv) Saddle
(g) Give area references for (i) a location on the map that is gently sloping and (ii) a location that is very steep.