

# THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER FOR THE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS  
& BOARD MEMBERS of THE MALVERN HILLS  
CONSERVATORS.



Jan 2012

**Send your news and views please to the Beacon Editorial Team at the Malvern Hills  
Conservators office, Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern, WR14 3EY:  
Rich Vale, Nicky Quinn & Fiona Macklin . Tel: 01684 892002**

# CURRENT TOPICS THE CONSERVATORS ARE DISCUSSING

*By Fiona Macklin*

## **Elections**

2011 was an election year for the Malvern Hills Conservators with a new Board elected on the 31<sup>st</sup> October. Only 2 seats were contested: Priory Ward where Mr P Watson was duly elected, and Guarlford Parish where Mr R Chamings was duly elected. An uncontested seat in Chase Ward and the subsequent by-election resulted in Mr D Street being duly elected. On the resignation of Dr B Smith, Worcestershire County Council nominated Mr P Hughes to be WCC's representative on the Board.

## **The South Worcestershire Development Plan**

Malvern Hills District Council, Worcester City Council and Wychavon District Council have jointly produced a Development Plan for South Worcestershire. The aim of the Plan is to provide long term vision and objectives for the area, and to identify locations for building development and the policies for delivering this in a sustainable way until 2030. The Plan has reached the Preferred Options stage which has identified potential sites for new housing, employment, retail and office developments. During a public consultation period in November 2011 the Conservators lodged a detailed comment to the Plan's Preferred Options with Malvern Hills District Council. The Plan is due to be adopted in 2013.

## **Inquiry Committee & Working Party**

With the conclusion of the legal dispute between the Board and the tenant of St Ann's Well Cafe, it was felt that an Inquiry Committee should be set up to look at how the dispute was handled. New Board members were selected to form the Committee so that no historical or prejudicial interests would influence the work of the Committee. The members of the Inquiry Committee are Rev'd C Attwood (Chairman), Mrs L Deller and Mrs J Campbell. Mr B Pilcher and Mr T Musgrove will be present as ex-officio members and Mr K Douglas will attend as an independent advisor. The findings of the Committee will be in the public domain. In the meantime, the Conservators have also created a Working Party to meet with the tenant of St Ann's Well Cafe on a regular basis. The members of the Working Party are Mr B Pilcher, Mr R Chamings, Mr C Rouse and Mr T Musgrove.

## **Director's Successor Working Party**

The current Director, Mr I Rowat, announced his retirement at the Board Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011. As a result of this a Working Party was formed to oversee the recruitment of Mr Rowat's successor. The vacancy is currently being advertised on various websites including the Malvern Hill's Conservators' own website under *Latest News*. If any person would like a copy of the Job Description, Person Specification and Application Form, please contact Fiona on 01684 892002 or email [fiona@malvern hills.org.uk](mailto:fiona@malvern hills.org.uk). The closing date for applications is 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

## **Annual Report**

The Malvern Hills Conservators' Annual Report 2011 is now available from Manor House. Please contact the office if you would like a copy.



## **Future Meeting Dates:**

### **Annual meeting of the Board -**

8th March 2012 7 pm at Priory Lodge Hall, Avenue Road, Malvern

**Land Management-** 2nd Feb 2012 4 pm at Manor House office

**Administration & Resources -** 16th Feb 7pm 2012 7 pm at Manor

House office

Full reports of the meetings can be viewed on the web site at

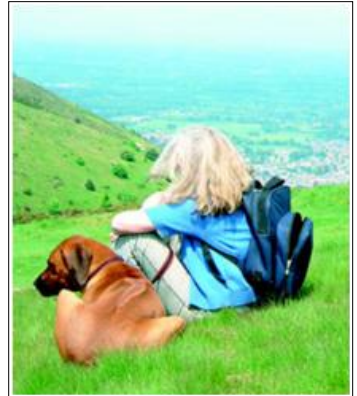
[www.malvern hills.org.uk](http://www.malvern hills.org.uk).

# YOU, YOUR BEST FRIEND AND THE MALVERN HILLS

*Jenny Grantham  
Malvern Hills Conservators*



**Dog walking has long been enjoyed by people on the Malvern Hills. We welcome responsible dog owners and would like to thank them for keeping the Hills a pleasant place for people to enjoy, wildlife to thrive and stock to graze. Here are some answers to commonly asked questions:**



## **Why are there sheep and cattle on the Hills?**

Without the grazing the Hills would look very different to what we see today. Scrub and secondary woodland would creep up the Hills making many areas impassable for you and your dog. As well as being important for people, the Hills are a nationally important nature conservation site hence the need to keep a mosaic of different habitats for wildlife. If you wish to find out where the livestock are grazing so that you can avoid them **Stock watch** is published each week in the Malvern Gazette and is on the MHC website's home page.

**Do I need to keep my dog on a lead?** You do not need to keep your dog on a lead but you do need to keep it under control at all times. A dog's natural instinct is to chase so if in doubt keep your dog on a lead. Byelaw 31 states that no person shall cause or allow a dog to chase, hurt or worry any cattle, sheep or any other animal present on the Hills.



**Do I have to pick up after my dog?** We do ask that for the enjoyment of all users of the Hills you do pick up after your dog. As well as being an unpleasant nuisance, it represents a health hazard for people and animals, as dog excrement carries bacteria that can cause blindness in children and stillbirths in sheep. Please use the bins provided, as kindly demonstrated by Sam.



**“Sheep Safe”  
Dog Training  
Course**

**£60 for six two hour  
classes starting 2pm,  
Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**



**What should I do if my dog chases after a sheep or wildlife?** A dog’s natural instinct is to chase and when in this frame of mind it becomes very difficult to get a dog to obey commands. Sadly, sheep have been injured and killed by dogs over the last few years on the Northern Hills leaving orphaned lambs and unnecessary distress. If your dog does chase after a sheep please let us know as soon as possible so that the sheep can be treated by a vet immediately. Incidents of worrying are now being reported to the police (Unless the owner contacts the grazier or the MHC office) as sheep chasing is an offence under the Dogs (Protection of Live-stock) Act 1952.

# SCRUB MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SOUTHERN HILLS AND CASTLEMORTON.

*By Rob Havard, Conservation Officer.*

## **Introduction.**

The Malvern Hills is one of the only sites in the West Midlands that has a significant area of acidic wildflower grassland. The Malvern Hills are notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England mainly due to this large



*Figure 1: Harebells on the Malvern Hills.*

area of locally rare habitat. In and around British Camp there are other interesting features including volcanic intrusions creating a mosaic of both lime loving and acidic wildflowers in one place. This is an almost unique flora within the UK.

The “wax-cap” fungi on the Hills also boast one of the longest species lists in the UK making it nationally important for this feature. In addition to this the Southern Hills

are important for breeding birds such as Meadow Pipits and Linnets while on Castlemorton Common there are good populations of warblers such as Chiff-Chaffs, Black Caps and White Throats. The Grayling Butterfly is found in lower numbers than on the Northern Hills and clearance of rocky areas help in this regard. Wildlife is not the only interest feature in this area, the archaeology of the Southern Hills is in many ways its dominant feature with the two imposing hill forts on British Camp and on Mid-Summer Hill. Castlemorton Common also boasts the only lowland mire of its type (M23b a wet/damp grassland habitat) in the County of Worcestershire. The common has over 500 species and sub species of vascular plants and it is important that these are maintained in populations and extent.

## **Restoring Grassland on the Hills.**

The majority of the work on Broad Down and Ragged Stone Hill is to restore the extent of Acidic wildflower grassland, while also focusing on some of the Warren House volcanic area where there is the maximum plant diversity.

Ragged stone is particularly important for the lichen communities found on the very thin soils and is also home to the rare striped winged grasshopper that needs the dry grassland for its survival.

### **Conserving Archaeology on the Hills.**



This winter there will be significant clearance work on Midsummer Hill to expose the ancient ramparts and over the course of the next few years to make them visible in the views to the Hills. Most of this work is straightforward clearance work but there are some magnificent ancient trees and old pollards including Oak, Beech, Maple, Crab apple and Thorn. The best of these have been marked for preservation to provide some bal-

ance in the clearance work. A small area of re-growth on British Camp that has been previously cleared 10 years ago is due to be cleared again. There is also a small area of tractor flail work to be done on the top of the monument as the National Trust (who usually do this work) were not able to get to the site this year.

### **Opening up the important grasslands on Castlemorton Common.**

Last year there was a significant level of scrub clearance carried out with the tractor flail. Although the re-growth from this clearance work has been minimal by cutting this back again, it will make sure this is permanent and it will be a much quicker job this time around. There are some areas close to streams and on the edge of the mire grasslands that are being cleared to let some light in to the streams and expand the grassland areas. Increasing the light to the stream banks will encourage bank side and aquatic vegetation which in turn helps to improve water quality.

### **Method**

The trees/scrub will be cleared with chainsaws and brush-cutters. All brush arising from the work will be burned in small piles to limit the damage to the SSSI grassland or where appropriate chipped and spread into existing scrubby areas. All timber will be removed from site either immediately or later in the summer if it is considered that ground conditions would be better in a drier season –Decision to be made on a case by case basis.



### Caption Competition.

A staggering response to the caption competition saw entries double from the last one we ran. It was difficult to choose between the two entries but Colin Hagger won (again) with..

**'The Conservators Limbo Dancing competition started at a very easy height'.**

## CONSERVATION DAY ACTIVITIES.

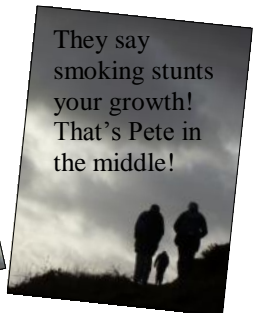
*By Nicky Quinn & Rich Vale*



**Pinnacle Hill** - 14th Oct & 25th Nov.  
The ongoing battle against the birch. We carried on with the clearance of the regrowth above the path, returning on a beautiful day in November to burn it all.



They say smoking stunts your growth!  
That's Pete in the middle!



**Gullet Quarry Butterfly Site - 28th Oct.** Clearing small trees and bramble to encourage wild flowers and benefit rare butterflies including fritillaries.



**Park Wood 11th Nov** - The original plan today was to do some more coppicing under the guidance of Dave Jackson, but due to the dry summer a number of the newly planted trees had died so Dave decided to replace these instead. We also had a fire to clear some of the bigger brush piles that were lying about.



**Mill Pond Orchard 9th Dec** - Wade Muggleton from WCC Countryside centre guided us through Orchard Management and pruning techniques. And Tony showed us how to walk on water!



**Blackhill 1st Oct & 23rd Dec** - This is a new site for the volunteers, clearing scrub, bramble and small trees from SSSI grassland. Two very different days. The 1st of October must have been one of the warmest on record which left everyone flagging around lunch time. It was far too dry for a fire so we went back to clear up in December and got absolutely soaked. The Christmas drink and chips at the Wyche Inn more than made up for the soaking though.

**British Camp Glow worm Site 5th Nov** - Another new site and more slashing and burning. This time we were improving the habitat of the glow worm which can be seen in good numbers along the grassy banks of the reservoir. The best time to see glow worms is during the evenings in June and July.



**I wish I was a Glow worm  
A glow worm's never glum  
How can you be grumpy  
When the sun shines out yer bum?**

Thank you Mr O'Brien.

**Gullet Road Flush 3rd Dec.** - Another lovely day as you can see from the photo. We were cutting back small trees and bramble and smashing bracken back then dragging it all off the hillside. This should improve the site for many plant species. We were joined by a group of students from Worcester University. They also joined us for a festive drink and a bowl of chips at the Marlbank. Students, drink, they didn't take much persuading!



# A FINAL WORD....

*By Ian J S Rowat*

How do you sum up 13 years of your working life in a couple of paragraphs? I have been very fortunate to work with some very able people both on the staff and on the Board. The Annual Reports highlight the achievements of over a decade of working together; needless to say the one I am most proud of is the reintroduction of grazing back onto the Malvern Hills. Less tangible is the friendship and esteem that the organisation is held in by the visitors and those that live on and around the Hills. Those that truly get to know the organisation will be aware that we have been very approachable and always polite. Replying to requests promptly and treating all with respect has been a hallmark of Hills Conservators' staff.

Do I have any funny stories? Well certainly I have had strange requests, an e mail just saying "How do I get there?", in spite of the above I was tempted to say "It depends where you are coming from." I once received a poem from a tree and the tree was not even one of ours.

What do I take personally from the job? It has taught me a lot in the challenges it has thrown up and growing into the role, as well as improving my spelling that will help me on the next chapter of my career. I am fortunate in that I am not just slipping into comfy retirement but my services are needed as the Welsh Government appointee on the Brecon Beacons National Park and with the National Trust shaping their outdoor agenda. I am honoured to be Vice President of the Civic Society. I will be leading guided walks with the Malvern Walking Festival and as a walk leader for Ramblers Worldwide Holidays intend to visit all those mountain areas that I adore before running out of puff.

May I wish the Malvern Hills and all those associated with them all the best for the future and I am sure that you along with the 30, 000 residents will be able to tell the new Director how the job should be done.

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

*Fiona Macklin*

*Administration officer and Secretary to the board.*



Fiona grew up on a smallholding near Builth Wells but emigrated to Brisbane, Australia as a teenager. She studied Administration and Art History before specialising in Museum and Gallery Administration. After operating her own business for a number of years dealing in antique maps and prints, Fiona then worked for the Queensland Art Gallery while also running a farm on the Sunshine Coast growing avocados and blue-

berries for the export market. On returning to the UK, Fiona joined the Imperial War Museum as Manager of the Cabinet War Rooms where she oversaw the construction and creation of the new Churchill Museum. Fiona has also served in the Territorial Army (Military Intelligence Corps MI9) and has published a book on the RAF. She is currently researching and writing a major work on Northern Europe during WW2. Fiona left IWM to join the Natural History Museum as Facilities Manager where she worked closely with the Zoology Dept, in particular the Bird Group. On moving to Herefordshire Fiona joined Madley Environmental Study Centre where she ran an Environmental Education Programme before briefly working on a project for Herefordshire Council prior to joining MHC. Fiona is a keen walker and has excellent field skills which were put to the test when she completed a solo expedition to walk coast to coast across Iceland. Fiona's interests are Natural History, Military History and Rottweilers!