



**MALVERN HILLS
CONSERVATORS**
managing the Hills

Pocket Guide

to the Malvern Hills & Commons



Welcome to the Malvern Hills

Between Herefordshire and Worcestershire the Malvern Hills form a beautiful, distinctive range of peaks and gullies running south for nine miles from Great Malvern to Chase End. Towering above Great Malvern itself is the Worcestershire Beacon. At 1395 feet (485 metres) it is the highest peak in the range.

Within a relatively small area of countryside, the Malvern Hills boast a number of diverse landscapes, rich in wildlife, flora and fauna. In addition to the visitors attracted by the various walks, open spaces and dramatic vistas, the Hills are a popular destination for those interested in everything from hang gliding & moth trapping to horse riding & orienteering.

The caretakers of the Hills are the Malvern Hills Conservators, a public body established by an Act of Parliament in 1884. The Hills Conservators are charged with the following primary tasks:

- To keep the land as close to nature as possible and encourage wildlife
- To secure open space for public recreation and enjoyment
- To protect those with rights as registered commoners
- To prevent encroachment

As well as answering some of the common questions posed about the Hills, this guide identifies some of the challenges faced by the Hills Conservators as they attempt to strike a balance between conserving the Hills and wildlife, and encouraging the public to use and enjoy the environment.

Who Are the Commoners?

The Hills and Commons are all that is left of the mediaeval Chase that used to stretch down to the River Severn. The land that remains still has commoners' rights attached. A commoner is someone whose property is adjacent to the common, and has the right to turn out stock (pasture), can take fallen wood (estover) or fish (piscary). To find the latest information about where animals are grazing, look online for *Stockwatch* at www.malvernhills.org.uk or in the local paper.

Why is Grazing Important?

The patchwork of different habitats supported by the Hills and Commons are the result of centuries of grazing. Due in part to the problems of traffic, dog worrying, and modern economic factors, grazing had decreased until the turn of the 21st century. As a direct result, the balance has altered between areas of open grassland, bracken and scrub. Scrub spread rapidly and bracken was too dense, so much of the grassland was lost.

In order to address this issue, the Hills Conservators, with the help of partners, re-introduced a flock of sheep and Galloway cattle to the Hills. This began to improve the condition of the turf and control the spread of trees and bushes. This demonstrates that with the help of Environmental Stewardship grants, it is possible and beneficial to graze the Hills once more. Meanwhile, on the Commons around Malvern where no grazing takes place, the Conservators' Field Staff mow the grass regularly.

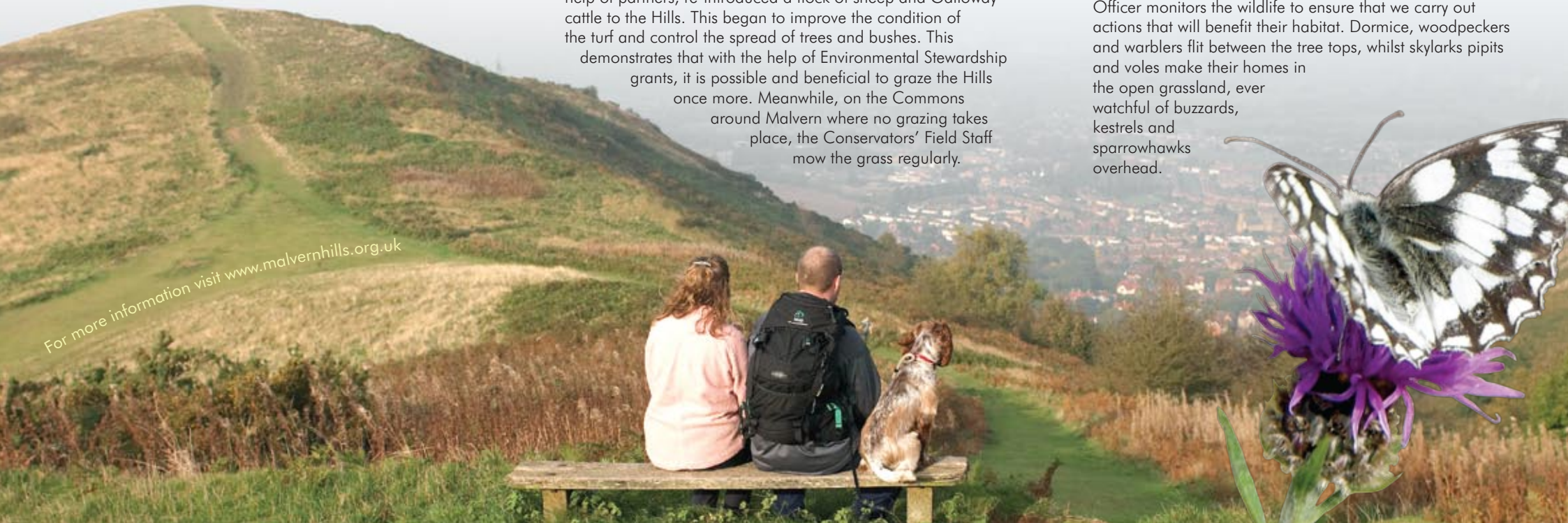


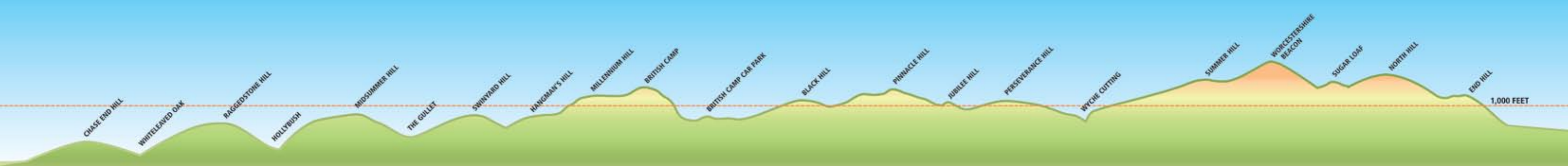
What Wildlife Can be Found?

All the Hills and Commons are of high nature conservation interest. Today the Malvern Hills Conservators employ field staff and a stockman to carry out the myriad of practical tasks. The delicate balance is thus maintained between the wooded slopes and the open hillside. A Conservation Officer monitors the wildlife to ensure that we carry out actions that will benefit their habitat. Dormice, woodpeckers and warblers flit between the tree tops, whilst skylarks pipits and voles make their homes in the open grassland, ever watchful of buzzards, kestrels and sparrowhawks overhead.



For more information visit www.malvernhills.org.uk





The Malvern Hills & Commons

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Although the Hills themselves have been well protected since the first and subsequent Acts of Parliament, it was realised by those who cherish the landscape that the wider hinterland needed additional protection. The government body responsible for landscape (now called Natural England) took forward a designation of 105 square kilometres. Although not directly owning any land the AONB Partnership is able to influence the decisions and planning to help conserve the landscape.

A walk to British Camp



Working Commons

Castlemorton Common is one of the areas in the Malvern Hills where grazing still takes place. On some of the other Commons the Hills Conservators have to mow the grass to keep it in check.

Looking over the Commons



FASCINATING FACTS

The Malvern Hills are made up of some of the oldest rocks in Britain. They contain no fossils because they were formed before life on earth. Since Victorian times the Hills have been popular for fresh air and exercise as well as providing spring waters to affect water cures. The water is still available for collection at various points around the Hills (find Hayslad on the map).



Where Can You Park?

First time visitors to the Hills will find it easy to park at British Camp or one of the car parks along Jubilee Drive (B4232). However, these do get full over busy weekends. Try and find West of England Car Park just south of West Malvern, which is rarely full. If you're looking for a gentle walk, Earnslaw Car Park offers level walking on an easy access trail to a hidden lake. Many of the paths on the Hill were laid by the Victorians. These contour paths provide level walking, and with the work that's currently being undertaken, provides glimpses of restored views over the town and surrounding countryside.

For a more challenging walk, leave your car in Great Malvern and approach the Hills through Rosebank Gardens, up the 99 steps, past St Ann's Well and on to the Worcestershire Beacon. St Ann's Well and Café provides refreshments!



It's Hard to Get Lost!

Wherever you are in the Hills, you'll never be far from civilisation. Malvern is a great place to visit, with a Victorian Spa, Malvern Priory, the Elgar Memorial; and of course plenty of shops and cafés!

Great Malvern, gateway to the Hills



Who Has Access Over the Hills?

The Malvern Hills Conservators are governed by five Acts of Parliament. The first Act of 1884 enshrines the right of access on foot and historically on horseback to all the common land under the Hills Conservators' jurisdiction (as shown on the map overleaf). This is supplemented by the right-of-way network that superimposes footpaths and bridleways over the land, hence the added right for cyclists to use bridleways. Three full-time wardens and voluntary wardens patrol the area to oversee the byelaws and help visitors with their enquiries.

How Many People Visit the Hills?

Over one million people visit the Malvern Hills every year. To make your visit more of an adventure, you could park in Great Malvern and take the bus to the Hills, enabling you to take a linear walk back to your car. Alternatively, take the train to Colwall and wander back.

The Tourist Information Centre in Malvern has a great selection of leaflets, and more information can be found at www.malvernhills.gov.uk.

No Problems... Just Challenges!

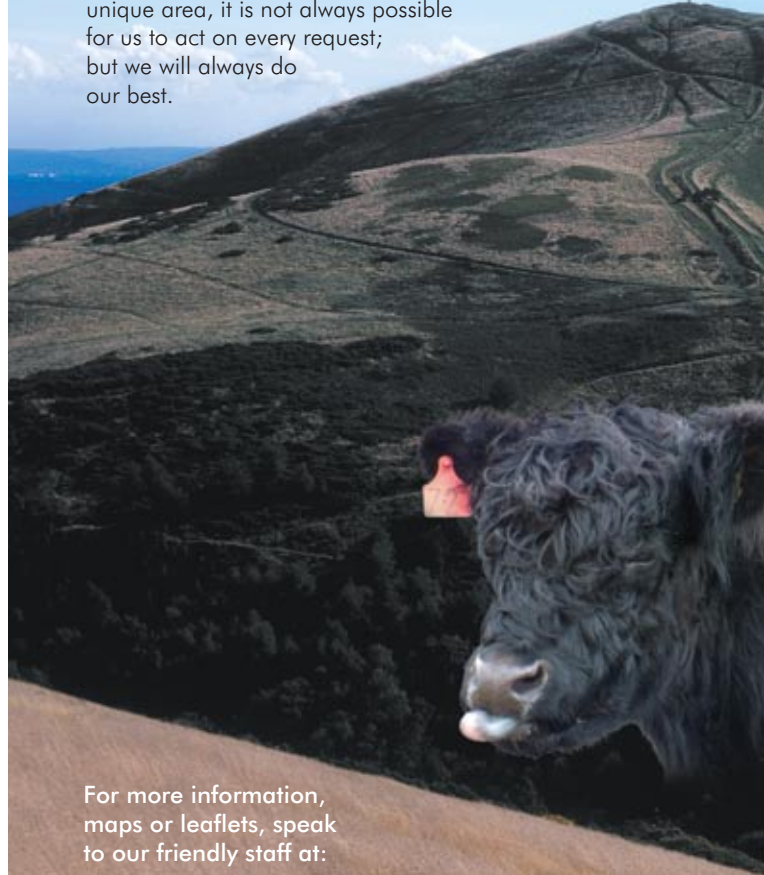
The most complaints the Hills Conservators receive are reserved for man's best friend, although to be fair it isn't the dog's fault! Dog mess is unpleasant for all, so we request that all dog walkers take bags for disposal. The other main complaint we receive is about mountain bikers who don't keep to the bridleways (marked on OS Maps), or who travel at speed.

There will always be challenges to face, and they are always easier to overcome with the support of, and in partnership with, our guests. So we extend a warm welcome to all the visitors to our Hills and Commons; please make the most of this wonderful place and enjoy your precious leisure time.



Our Future Challenges

The management of the Hills is a balancing act between acting in the interests of visitors and conserving this ancient landscape and its wildlife. Whether or not we are succeeding is for you to judge. Please help us by giving us feedback about your experience or concerns. Because there are many competing factors in managing this unique area, it is not always possible for us to act on every request; but we will always do our best.



For more information, maps or leaflets, speak to our friendly staff at:

Malvern Hills Conservators
Manor House
Grange Road
Malvern
Worcestershire WR14 3EY

E-mail us at conservators@malvernhills.org.uk
Telephone us on 01684 892002
Visit us online at www.malvernhills.org.uk
Charity No.515804

© Malvern Hills Conservators February 2009
Printed on paper 80% recycled, 20% sustainable forest stock
Design by Tinstar Design Ltd 01590 679490 www.tinstar.co.uk