



HANLEY MATTERS

the newsletter of
The Hanleys' Village Society

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FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

26 March 2010

Please note that the talk by Anthony Deakin on the story of Lea & Perrin has had to be postponed.

In its place there will be a talk by Tim Bridges about the role of the Victorian Society with particular regard to Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Village Hall, 7.30 pm.

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS



Pre-dating the National Trust, the Malvern Hills Conservators are one of the oldest conservation bodies in Britain. At a meeting in November, Ian Rowatt, who has been involved with the Malvern Hills for 35 years, outlined their work.

Founded in 1884 when the first Malvern Hills Act was passed to prevent further enclosure of common land, the Conservators initially had 500 acres to manage. Today they take care of more than 4500 acres of countryside and continue to acquire core areas of land on the hills.

They have a Board comprising 29 members of whom 11 are directly elected by parishes and 18 are nominated by district or county councils. Their four main concerns are to: a) prevent encroachment and enclosure, b) keep the hills open for walkers and horseriders, c) conserve the character of the existing landscape, and d) protect the interests of the commoners who still have the right to graze livestock.

Stockman Matt Gardener looks after the sheep and cattle that keep the tops of the hills clear of vegetation and prevent root damage

to ancient monuments, such as British Camp. Other types of active management include coppicing, tree felling, maintaining hedges and tracks and clearing glades.

The Conservators employ a staff of 14 and have more than 60 volunteers, who help at weekends pulling up saplings and helping to spread sites for wildlife.

And something to look forward to: people who love the hills and reach a special birthday, like 90 or 100, can sometimes persuade the Conservators to take them up to the Worcestershire Beacon in a 4x4 vehicle, while their family walk up.

Malvern Hills Facts

The Malvern Hills range runs for nine miles from Great Malvern to Chase End and contains over 100 miles of paths and bridleways.

The hills contain no fossils because they were formed before life on earth.

The highest peak, Worcestershire Beacon, is 1395 feet high.

More than one million people visit the hills each year.

British Camp was built around 2000 BC.

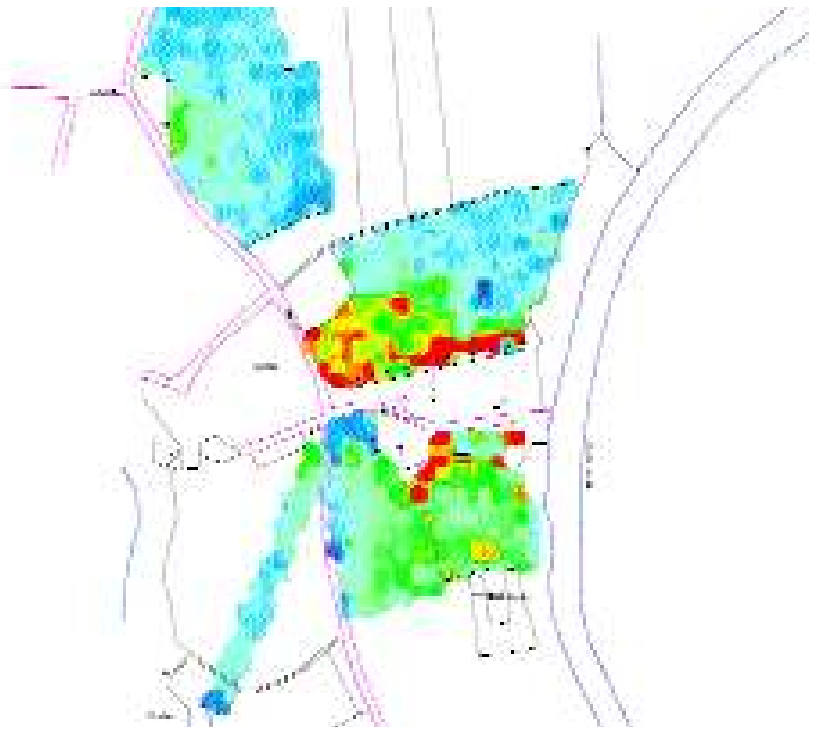
WARTIME HOSPITALS

Following the popular appearance of their wartime US ambulance at our last local history Open day, Martin and Fran Collins made a return visit in January to talk about the five hospital units that the Americans built and shipped to the Malvern area in 1943.

There were two in Blackmore Park and others at Merebrook, Wood Farm (now Malvern golf club) and Brickbarns Farm (St Wulfstans nature reserve), all staffed by American doctors and nurses. Stripped out Liberty bombers were used to bring in everything they needed from the USA, from toilet rolls to light bulbs, making the hospitals self-sufficient for the last two years of the war.

Patients arrived by air from Pershore airfield and by train from stations at Hanley Road and Peachfield Road. Each hospital had over 1000 beds: two general units in Blackmore Park and three specialising in different types of treatment - burns and plastic surgery at Merebrook, neuropsychiatry at Brickbarns and neural surgery at Wood Farm.

The talk brought back many memories among the audience. There was a man who remembered regularly scavenging the rubbish tip in Upton for valuable materials thrown away by the Americans. At the age of 15, Marjorie Hawker worked on a surgical ward at Blackmore and had an ambulanceman boyfriend. When Martin and Fran Collins were researching their latest book*, they discovered that he was still alive at 85 and put the two of them back in touch. Marjorie has now been invited to visit him in North Carolina.



GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AT QUAY LANE

As part of the Society's Heritage Lottery grant, Stratascan have carried out a magnetic susceptibility survey of 34 hectares (84 acres) of land on either side of Quay Lane between the main road and the river. The red areas on the above map indicate the highest levels of magnetic disturbance. Interestingly, nothing was revealed in the field behind Hanley Castle post office or along a diagonal test strip across the large field south of Bowling Green Lane to the castle mound.

This broad survey was followed by a more detailed gradiometry sweep of six areas totalling 4 hectares (10 acres) that identified a significant level of archaeological activity, particularly in the small field known as Longcroft, north of Quay Lane. A number of ditched enclosures are visible, some suggesting a fortified farmhouse. Other features may be caused by kilns, hearths and furnaces.

Derek Hurst of the Worcestershire Archaeology Service says the survey shows several areas where excavation could reveal evidence of Roman occupation and he would like to see short trenches dug across eight sites. The problem is that all these areas are under intensive cultivation until Autumn 2012, with only a day or two between harvesting and replanting.

Given the time needed to carry out properly supervised trench excavations, that leaves test pits in people's gardens as the only prospect of immediate archaeological work. It is proposed, therefore, to dig nine test pits this year in gardens identified as the most promising sites, and a further nine next year. These pits would be 1 metre square and would disturb the gardens for a few days in November.

Anyone who thinks their garden might reveal interesting information about the past and is willing to have a test pit dug by the archaeology service should contact the Secretary.

* *Return To Duty* by Fran & Martin Collins, 2010. Published by Brewin Books, £10.95.