

Malvern Group, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Thursday May 1st 2014

Jonathan Bills, Conservation Officer of Malvern Hills Conservators

The Management of the Malvern Hills

We are extraordinarily fortunate to live in an area of outstanding natural beauty. Whether we use the hills for walking, cycling, horse-riding, hang-gliding, grazing livestock, or just for admiring from our living room windows, we have a duty to look after the Malvern Hills for ourselves and for future generations.

Jonathan Bills outlined the history of the Conservators, starting in 1884 when the Malvern Hills Act established them as a body to counteract the negative impact of tourism, enclosure, and encroachment of commons. Quarrying went on for a long time after that, and was only finally stopped in 1962. A photograph taken in the 1930s showed how different the Hills looked from nowadays, with hardly any erosion on the tops, and far fewer trees.

He talked in great detail about the character of the Hills, and how decisions these days have to take into account the conflicting interests of all the people who use them. Commoners' Rights, the Highways Act, SSSI regulations, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act may all conflict. The Conservators aim to manage through partnerships with the graziers, farmers, contractors and volunteers who work on the Hills, and also with social groups like the Malvern Hills Gliding Club. At present they are developing a Land Management Plan, considering what is important and what they want to achieve over the next 30 years.

The question of the cable car was raised and those present had the opportunity to voice their opinions. In the meantime, we were reminded that the Malvern Hills Act promises to "keep the Hills open, unenclosed and unbuilt on".

The next meeting of the Malvern Group will be at 7.30 pm on September 4th, at the Lyttelton Rooms in Church Street. Harry Green will talk about Insect Curiosities of Worcestershire.

Alison Uren

