

Your countryside

The newsletter of the Conservation and Ranger Team
 • Helping people shape the future of where they live •

Hedge Trees in Northern Shropshire

Take a wander to the top of one of north Shropshire's hills such as Corbett wood and view the countryside and it becomes apparent that the majority of trees in that landscape are found in hedgerows, they define our countryside. For over a generation now we have managed those hedgerows with tractor mounted hedge cutters, without which many more hedgerows would have been grubbed out. Unfortunately however, the mechanical hedge cutter has been a little too efficient and as a consequence we now have an ageing population of hedgerow trees with few saplings able to reach maturity. Over the last 30 years, several million hedge trees have been lost from our countryside. Nearly a third of those that remain are over a century old.

In 2004 the Tree Council launched the national Hedge Tree Campaign at the House of Commons. The northern Shropshire Tree Warden scheme is now recognised as a national leader in this campaign with findings being fed back into the national picture. Particular credit needs to go to organic farmer Mr David Bevan of Criftings, who has personally campaigned on this issue for years. Over the last four years the scheme has engaged with landowners

to tag hedgerow tree saplings with a small blue tag, additionally free trees have been offered. Since 1999 the countryside service has distributed nearly 75000 trees in northern Shropshire. In recent years the Highways department has funded the Free Tree Scheme, these trees have been provided to landowners for repairing small sections of hedgerow with the understanding that a tree such as an oak or an ash be planted also and protected until mature. Last year the demand was high with over 50 landowners receiving free trees.

Anyone wishing to apply for free trees in northern Shropshire needs to contact Shaun Burkey before the end of the year, tel: 01691 624448, and for south Shropshire, John Blessington on 01743 252569. Northern Shropshire Tree Wardens and the Free Tree scheme have played a significant role in influencing national policy, including a recent review of the national Habitat Action Plan for Hedgerows. The national champion for Hedgerow Trees is Jon Stokes, Director of Rural Programmes for the Tree Council. Jon has been instrumental within the Defra



Former hedgerow with only the trees remaining.

Photo by Rob McBride

National Biodiversity Group for Hedgerows, "the group are looking at the future for hedgerow trees and it is hoped there will be good news in 2009". Jon Stokes.

Hopefully we will see greater protection and investment in our hedgerow trees, the consequences of this should not be underestimated in terms of our landscape and the biodiversity found there-in. Northern Shropshire Tree Wardens, volunteers and farmers that got involved with the hedge tree campaign can feel proud that their efforts have influenced national policy and will ensure the long term health of our hedgerow trees and the defining influence they have in Your Countryside.

Shaun Burkey

Conservation & Community Officer

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*Your
countryside*



Conservation & Ranger Team Events and Tasks November 2008 - April 2009

Lyth Hill Countryside Heritage Site, Bayston Hill

2nd Saturday of the month in November, December, February and March. Practical conservation work in the company of Harvey Morgan, Countryside Ranger. 10:30 start, meet at the View Point car Park, booking advisable, call Harvey Morgan on 01691 624448.

Nesscliffe Countryside Heritage Site

1st Sunday of the month Practical conservation work in the company of Lynne Dean, Countryside Ranger. 10:00 start, meet at the Pine car park.

Hedgelaying 1 day courses at Colemere

With professional hedgelayer, Alan Housman Saturday 10th January and Saturday 24th January, starting at 10:30 am Booking essential, call Shaun Burkey for further details on 01691 624448.

Volunteers Big Christmas Bash

Sun 14th December 2008, 10am to 4pm. Come along to Colemere for a day of Rhododendron bashing to enhance the native flora and fauna of the Colemere Countryside Heritage Site. We will be having a bonfire with baked potatoes and mince pies provided. Countryside Rangers will be joining the fun to supervise the work and answer your questions. Bring along your own packed lunch. Please let us know if you're coming by giving us a call at the Countryside Service office in Ellesmere on 01691 624448.



The Green Man - Sweeney Hall, Oswestry

Access and Conservation at the Moss



Clive doing the 'tool talk'

In August Shropshire Outdoors organised a workforce of enthusiastic volunteers to help improve access at Brown Moss. Brown Moss Countryside Heritage site, south of Whitchurch is designated as a Special Area for Conservation under the European Habitats Directive for its rare wetland species. The site is so internationally important that it is also designated a Ramsar site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature Reserve. Brown Moss is managed by Shropshire County Council's Ranger Team. With help from Conservation & Community Officer Clive Dean, volunteers cleared scrub along the trail network and joined forces with the Access Maintenance Team to construct a bridge in a particularly boggy area! As this was their first visit to the Moss, volunteers also did some wildlife detective work and explored the site with the help of Countryside Ranger, Sian Edwards.

The volunteers from Harleys and Wayfarers day services are keen to visit the site again. This month the team will install more



Not a bent nail in sight!!

boardwalks and new finger posts, as well as continuing to keep the scrub in check.

Funded by Big Lottery, Shropshire Outdoors promotes health and well being by enabling individuals to access and enjoy the countryside.



Newt hunting

For more information on the project contact Joe Penfold, Shropshire Outdoors Project Officer on (01743) 255015.



The autumnal beauty of Brown Moss

Ellesmere Receives a Special Visitor / Knowing Your Shropshire Trees



Cormorant & Great White Egret at Ellesmere.

Photo by: Jim Almond

Special Visitor!

This Great White Egret (the size of a Grey Heron) turned up at The Mere towards the end of August and stayed around for over two weeks. Although quite widely distributed around the world, these birds do not normally occur in Britain except by accident.

This is only the third ever to appear in Shropshire! If you look closely, you will see that it had colour rings on its legs. Although we are still awaiting confirmation, we think that this bird was ringed as a nestling in the Loire Estuary in France in May of this year. We hope it's found its way back safely.



Hazel leaves and buds

Shropshire Trees

Hazel (Filbeard) - *Corylus avellana*

Growth rate: Fast

Ideal Conditions: Most Soils / Shade tolerant

Wildlife / Landscape Value: Excellent food source for insects, dormice and squirrels. An understory shrub in open woodlands.

Uses: Used since prehistoric times, the pliant hazel rods have been woven into a variety of useful products such as wattle and daub, Welsh coracles, fencing. Extensively coppiced over large areas. Used also for water divining.

Height at maturity: 9 metres / 30 feet.

Shropshire Name: Filbeard



Close up of Catkins.



Close up of a Hazel leaf.

Rocking around Llanymynech - Stories, Ponds, Tramways and Drama



In the limelight - Thomas Savin sends his workers to the seaside.

The quarry faces of Llanymynech resounded once more with explosions this summer. Detonations were a noisy feature of the stunning 'In the Limelight' community play which celebrated the intertwined stories of Llanymynech rockmen, a Victorian entrepreneur (and bankrupt) - Thomas Savin, and poor Ned Pugh trapped under the Hill for 150 years with only fairies and his fiddle for company.

The play, written by Llanymynech author Neil Rhodes and performed by a cast of over sixty local people, was commissioned as part of the Limeworks Heritage Project and entertained large audiences over four evenings in July. These audiences found themselves moved physically, spiritually and though time. The action took place around the site culminating at the Hoffmann kiln and drew on such tragi-comic ironies as the story the quarryman caught poaching and sentenced to seven years hard labour...breaking rocks.

The ambulatory story telling theme was maintained at the Llanymynech Family Day in September. After a duck treasure hunt in the morning and a picnic lunch, Dickon Faux-Nightingale entranced a pied piper-like following of children and adults with an epic rags to riches tale that made use of different settings to bring the narrative to life.

This event was organised by the LLIMEYS – the recently formed Friends of the Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area.

The LLIMEYS have also initiated an archaeological excavation to reveal part of the complex layout of tramlines at the base of the 'English' incline, where rock laden trucks were disengaged and returning 'empties' were engaged with the cables running up and down from the brake drum house at the top, near the quarries. As an added bonus the area, which was a local eyesore, has been cleared of rubbish and some unstable trees near the road will be removed.

The Heritage Area is valued not only for its industrial remains but also for its natural environment. A group of civilian Ministry of Defence Workers from Copthorne Barracks in Shrewsbury was looking for a suitable venue and task for a team building exercise. Organiser Mary-Jane Harvey identified the Llanymynech Limeworks, with its recently converted stables as an attractive proposition. The group's task was to clear two overgrown ponds and to create 'pond dipping' platforms for local children. The chosen two days in September were blessed with glorious weather and fifteen inexperienced participants emerged muddily as skilled pond engineers and



In the Limelight finale

with enhanced relationships between senior and junior tiers of their team. To complete the 'win-win' picture Llanymynech now has excellent and contrasting pond dipping facilities in both a shaded and an open pond.

The Heritage Area already features accessible paths and gates but thanks to the Shropshire Access Partnership and Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund there will be improvements to the canal towpath, a new platform to allow visitors of all abilities to view the larger, and recently cleared out, draw kiln and additional rest benches and way markers to ensure that circular walks are available for everybody.

The Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Project ends in December but this is just the completion of one chapter in a lively and ongoing story.

For further information contact Peter Dunhill (Community Project Officer) or Lynne Dean (Countryside Ranger) on 01691 624448

Family Friendly Walking Guides



Do you have a young family?
Do you like walking in the countryside?
Do you want to know exactly what you're letting yourself in for to fit it into a busy schedule?
If the answer is yes to any of these questions then you need the Family Friendly Walking guides.

Families with young children are being encouraged to get out and about this autumn by visiting one of ten Shropshire Countryside Heritage sites for which family friendly walking leaflets have been produced. These bold and colourful walk guides are specially designed to appeal to families with young children. They are informative and fun with maps and written directions to help families easily find their way. Most of the routes are circular and vary in distance from 1 to 3 miles. They start from countryside sites that have parking and many of the routes are pushchair friendly.

Countryside Heritage sites in Shropshire are actively managed by the Countryside Rangers for the benefit of the public and for wildlife. Visitors can experience a wide range of places for quiet recreation, exploration and relaxation; from the limestone hills and heritage of Llanymynech to the Shropshire lake-district and attractive formal gardens

of Ellesmere. Twelve Countryside and Heritage sites leaflets are available for; Ellesmere, Nesscliffe, Rectory Wood & Field near Church Stretton, Llanymynech, Battlefield north of Shrewsbury, Brown Moss near Whitchurch and Colemere.

These leaflets have been funded by the project Walking for Life! and Natural England's Open Access Land grant scheme and are available from Visitor Information Centres for a small charge: they are also available for free as a downloadable version, please visit:

www.shropshire.gov.uk
and enter 'family friendly walks' into the search box. To discover more of Shropshire's landscape and to find out more about its people, nature and history go to: www.discovershropshire.org.uk



For further information please contact the Countryside Access Team at the Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND. Tel: (0845) 678 9000

Frogs, toads and newts love Brown Moss. Every year in early spring they have a big outdoor music event called Glastonboggie Festival.



Discover History in the Shropshire Countryside



How Nesscliffe hillfort may have looked over 2000 years ago. Illustration: Phil Kenning www.kenning-illustration.co.uk

Countryside Heritage Sites. That is the general phrase we use to label the 16 sites we look after, but what does that mean to you? Most people probably think about open green space, wildlife habitats and landscape features such as hills or lakes. Of course, all of this is valid but there is so much more on so many of our sites. With 7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (nationally protected historic treasures) and a host of other significant features, a visit can really take you back centuries, even as far as the Stone Age! Here is just a taster...

Let's start with our industrial heritage. Once described as "one of the most important lead mines in the kingdom" Snailbeach is the best preserved collection of mine buildings in the country. Further south along the Stiperstones you'll find The Bog Mine with the very informative Visitor Centre.

Head west to the Welsh borders and Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area will give you the complete story of lime production including the hugely impressive Hoffmann Kiln with its 42.5m / 138ft chimney which is taller than Lord Hills Column in Shrewsbury. And then there are the spectacular sandstone quarries at Corbet Wood and Nesscliffe.

For those into our past conflicts, there is Battlefield Heritage Park, the site of the bloody Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, the banked earthworks from a Norman Castle at Ellesmere, and, bringing us up to more recent times, Stanmore Countryside Heritage Site which was developed on the site of a former RAF Training Camp. Going right back into prehistory, you can sample the Iron Age at the Hill fort on Nesscliffe Hill. Enjoying the views from the summit of Grinshill (not strictly one



Kynaston's Cave at Nesscliffe

of our sites but part of the Grinshill and Corbet Wood Local Nature Reserve) you are actually standing on the site of a hunter-gatherer camp from the middle Stone Age. We know this from the flints that have been found there.

A stroll through a Georgian designed landscape can be enjoyed in Rectory Wood or if it's 15th Century Highwayman you're into, visit Kynaston's Cave at Nesscliffe. Then there is Thomas Telford's Cantlop Bridge and the Medieval Fishponds by Battlefield Church.

There's far too much to tell you here. Please visit the website: www.shropshire.gov.uk/countryside.nsf or www.discovershropshire.org to find out more.

Gareth Egarr

Countryside Heritage Sites Manager

One Council - One Countryside / New Staff



Its becoming recognised as one of the biggest changes in history for local government in Shropshire. The move to a single unitary council for Shropshire will raise a considerable amount of debate and questions, concerns and even some excitement. What will it mean for those of us who care for and help manage the countryside of Shropshire, well initially not a lot but ultimately we could see some very positive change. With the amalgamation of six local councils comes the obvious benefits of:

- stronger strategic leadership
- greater local decision making
- savings to the Shropshire taxpayer
- improved services

As a Conservation and Community Officer I am really quite excited about

the prospect of working closer with other departments and services from the districts in what will be known as the Outdoor Recreation Service. There is an opportunity here for communities to have a direct say in the management and enhancement of countryside sites and green spaces right across the county. This will enable us to draw in additional funding to benefit biodiversity and people alike, helping people shape the future of where they live. Gareth Egarr, Sites Manager, based in Ellesmere, commented upon the future of the service by saying, "pooling all resources and experience from across Shropshire's Countryside and Environmental Services for site management will enable a greater number of options resulting in stronger and more effective management and consistency of care".

In recent years there has been a real shift in devolving decision making power to local communities, through parish plans, establishing Neighbourhoods of communities and through projects such as Parish Environmental Action. In terms of the countryside and our influence upon it we would like to support greater interaction by residents, understanding issues of biodiversity and sustainability and realising the massive role local communities can make in defining and caring for their own countryside.

Shaun Burkey

Conservation & Community Officer

In mid-July, Neil Robinson joined the Countryside Service Conservation and Ranger Team as Estate Worker. He will be working with the Rangers and volunteers on the upkeep of the Countryside Heritage Sites throughout the county.

His recent experience in conservation includes volunteer work for Natural England at Fenn's and Whixall Moss Nature Reserve, and also with

Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Before moving to Shropshire 5 years ago, he was working in the Court Service in West Yorkshire. When asked about the change in career direction, he said, "The move to Shropshire provided me with the opportunity to swap black gowns and courtrooms for waterproofs and the outdoors and achieve my goal of working in the environment sector."



Neil Robinson, Estate Worker.