

## THE MALVERN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

# Discovery Walk No. 3



View of Castlemorton Common

## Commons, Churches and a Castle

### Points of Interest

- A** As you walk towards the Hills, the hill to your left is Midsummer Hill, on the top of which is an iron age fort dating from about 400 B.C.
- B** The Gullet Quarry was one of many commercial quarries on the Malverns. The Conservators gradually acquired the land to close them down and there are now none left. What was an ugly scar is now an attractive (though potentially dangerous) feature which is being colonised by birch. The stone wall at the car park viewpoint is made from Malvern Stone, probably from this very quarry. It is possible to make out Silurian limestone as well as the igneous Malvernian rocks (see the drawing under the map).
- C** To the left of the road can be seen a number of pollarded willows and poplars. Originally Castlemorton Common would have quite densely wooded. As part of Malvern Chase, it would have been managed for hunting (1100 – 1350); after that many trees were felled and the remainder were managed as a timber crop. Over time more and more land would have been enclosed.
- D** The view to the east gradually falls away to Longdon, an important estate/town in Saxon England. Longdon is surrounded by marshes and the higher ground to the west was the moor which became Morton. With the arrival of the Normans, Morton became divided into Morton Foliot and Birts Morton. When the castle was built Morton Foliot became Castle Morton.
- E** The oldest enclosures were circular (see the map) and will be Saxon or mediaeval. It is possible to make out the shapes of other circular enclosures (marked with stones). These have reverted to common land.
- F** The Malvern Hills Conservators are responsible for the open areas of Castlemorton and Hollybed commons; note the path running along the edge as would have been the case in mediaeval times.
- G** The Mill Pond has been cleaned up by the Conservators and is now a beauty spot that is home to aquatic wild life. Some of the smallholdings here were probably enclosed in the 1600s.
- H** To your left is an ancient orchard. The old cider press has already been restored and work has started on the orchard. As you climb, you will see rectangular fields to the west, which are recent nineteenth century enclosures.
- I** As you turn, note the contrast between the irregular blocks of Malvern stone in the house to your right and the timber framed house to your left.
- J** Hollybush church is a small basic Victorian Hall church and may have been built by and for the local quarrymen from the stone that they were quarrying. The stone is sedimentary, in contrast to the Malvern stone, and has been cut into regular blocks. The churchyard occupies a superb situation with sweeping views of the hills and the Severn valley.
- K** Where the enclosure juts out, there is a very narrow lane between two hedges. It has been suggested that this was a device used by the drovers to count their stock after they had come through Hollybush pass.
- L** The stone quarried here was Hollybush Sandstone. This was deposited in the Cambrian period and is the oldest sandstone in Britain. The quarries may well have operated over many centuries.
- M** This area of the common contains rough grazing which is still used. Commons are one of the oldest forms of land tenure. These commons do not belong to the public but to individuals or organisations. Commoners, who generally live nearby, have rights to graze the commons with stock. Visitors should respect this working landscape and realise that driving their vehicles over these commons is not permitted and dogs should be kept on leads.



Pollarded Black Poplars



Cider Mill

### Essential Information

Starting Point	Swinyard Car Park (SO 766382).
Alternative Starting point	SO 767368.
Map	Ordnance Survey Explorer 190.
Distance	9.2 kilometres, 5.6 miles.
Terrain	Some roads; the areas after point 3 and after the Mill pond can be boggy in winter; gradients are relatively gentle.
Refreshments	The Farmers Arms (SO 790363); The Robin Hood (SO 786380).
Car Parking	At the starting points.

When out walking, please follow the COUNTRYSIDE CODE.

Use alternatives to your car whenever possible.  
 Keep to the public rights of way and designated areas of public access when crossing farmland.  
 Use appropriate gates and stiles to cross field boundaries.  
 Close all gates that you have opened.  
 Avoid damaging or disturbing wildlife, including plants and trees.  
 Keep dogs under close control and always clean up after them.  
 Guard against all risk of fire.  
 Take your litter home and dispose of it responsibly.

Many of the commons over which this route travels are owned by the Malvern Hills Conservators. They work with the commoners, whose stock graze the common, and the AONB to maintain the open beauty of this landscape. Visitors should respect this working landscape and realise that driving their vehicles over these commons is not permitted and dogs should be kept on leads. The Conservators jointly funded this leaflet.

This is one of a series of Discovery walks in the AONB; for further details please contact the AONB. Tel: 01684 560616.

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malvern hills  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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- N** The corrugated iron building is the Coombegreen Mission Room. Dating from 1904, it is so unusual that it is listed.
- O** Birts Street contains a wealth of interesting buildings from many periods. Note the typically idiosyncratic Victorian Methodist Church and, two houses later, Providence Bungalow, which incorporates an old railway carriage. The street itself was part of an old drovers' road.
- P** The Farmers Arms public house is an inn dating from 1440. It probably catered for the drovers who were taking sheep (and some cattle) from Wales to London. Until recently, there was an outdoor skittles alley.
- Q** A sizeable motte is all that remains of Castlemorton's castle. In the mediaeval period, this would have dominated the landscape. The keep at Castlemorton figures in the fascinating book "Malvern Chase" by W.S. Symonds, who was Rector of Pendock just south of here. Symonds was a renowned Victorian naturalist and he paints a most realistic picture of this whole area during the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century.
- R** Castlemorton church is itself representative of many historical periods. The dedication to St. Gregory is unusual. The basis of the building is Norman on an older Saxon site. There was rebuilding in 1387 and the spire and woodwork are from the 1600s. The porch is from about 1450 and the base of the wooden cross from about 1200.
- S** On first impression, Frisby House is an ancient timber framed and thatched construction that would have been common here in the sixteenth century. It is a more modern imitation. Much older is Rough Chase where the building is fifteenth century or older and the genuine timber frame and cruck construction are visible. The old almshouse is a mixture of many styles from C16 onwards.
- T** The Robin Hood pub is an old wayside inn that has catered for travellers (Malvern/Gloucester) for many years. There are several others on this road.
- U** Bannut Tree House is an early example of a house by the architect C F A Voysey in the Arts and Crafts style. Note the steep roof and the attention to detail.
- V** The whole common has suffered from creeping enclosure over the centuries. Often the buildings give a clue as to the enclosure date (but there has been much rebuilding). The more circular a boundary, the older the enclosure is likely to be.
- W** There is an old orchard within this circular enclosure. The circuitous route of this part of the walk shows how most of these enclosures were random and unplanned.



Coombegreen Mission Room



Castlemorton Church

The curved timbers of a cruck framed building standing by a tree, whose curved trunk & boughs would render such crucks.



A typical 'cruck' framed House