



Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

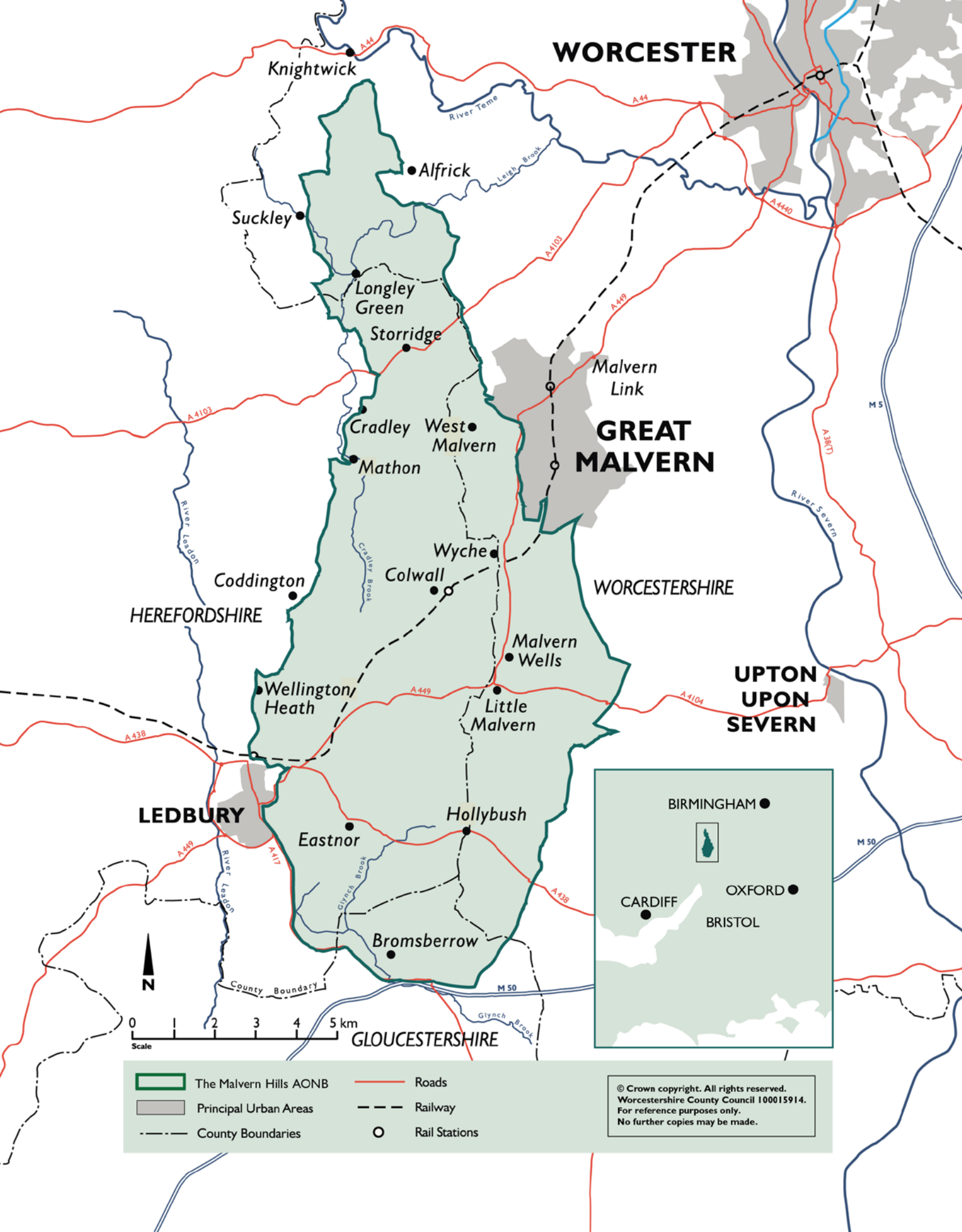
60 Trees for 60 Years

Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the
Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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Outline map of the Malvern Hills AONB



The Malvern Hills from the south west

A special anniversary 1959 - 2019

In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was passed. It provided new, much needed powers for protecting the natural beauty of some of our finest and best loved landscapes.

Ten years later, in 1959, the Malvern Hills was recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – a landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty were precious enough to be safeguarded for the national interest. One of 46 AONBs, it was chosen for its landscape, its wildlife and its history.

Our 60th anniversary year has provided opportunities to not only celebrate what we have but also to think about how we can keep the area in good shape for future generations to enjoy.

60 trees

Every five years the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership carries out surveys to help us understand how the AONB is changing¹. We know that we are losing trees from our hedges, parklands, fields and orchards, so, as part of its 60th year celebrations, the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Team has worked with local landowners across the area to plant 60 new trees in special places.

There are lots of challenges for landowners planting trees. Recent years have brought both drought and flooding, tree diseases, new pests and loss of markets for tree crops. We wanted to not only improve and restore the AONB landscape, but to see which trees would be most useful and resilient in the future. We will be monitoring the trees to see how well they do.

We work with a wide range of people who manage land in the AONB and the 60 trees project reflects this. Trees were planted at sites across the AONB on public, private and community land. We talked to land owners and managers to decide what should be planted where, with the AONB Partnership providing the trees and land owners helping with planting and tree protection.

1 See Malvern Hills AONB 'State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2018' www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk



New parkland tree in a historic landscape

Parkland trees

Historic parks are a much loved part of the English countryside, making a unique contribution to its character, its biodiversity and cultural heritage. The Malvern Hills AONB is home to some fine country homes and their landscaped parks are an important feature of the area. The trees that were planted, as 'eye catchers' or to frame a house or view, are often ornamental, providing the chance to show off wealth and privilege and creating idealised landscapes. Over time some of these estates have fallen into decline, not all are intact and some have lost the majestic specimen trees which were once there.

At Hope End we provided advice for the replanting of 5 parkland trees in a historic landscape setting as part of a long term vision to restore its parkland trees. The species reflect the Victorian planting on the estate and provide an opportunity to see whether these ornamental trees can thrive where native trees might not. Red Maple (*Acer Rubrum* 'Brandywine'), Red Oak (*Quercus Rubra*) Pin Oak (*Quercus Palustris*), Oriental Plane (*Platanus Orientalis x acerifolia*) and Maple (*Acer Cappadocicum* 'Crimson King') were all planted as standards and are already making their mark in the landscape.



New field tree at Little Malvern



Shade tree planted at Suckley

Field trees

Ancient field trees are a distinctive feature of the AONB's farmed landscapes. Traditionally planted in the open fields to provide shade and shelter for stock, or the last vestiges of long-lost hedgerows and copses, these scattered veteran trees are invaluable for fungi and invertebrates and have great landscape and historical importance. Modern farming methods, using large machinery in these small scale agricultural landscapes, means that many have been removed for ease of working and they are rarely replaced.

In Little Malvern 7 new field trees were planted on farmland belonging to an ancient estate. The estate is famous for its veteran limes, many of which are in decline, so 5 small leaved limes (*Tilia cordata*) were chosen for the site. These should grow to become majestic trees which are not only beautiful to look at but are also a magnet for pollinators. 2 Perry pears (*Pyrus communis* 'Butt') were also planted. Perry pear trees can live for hundreds of years, which means they provide an amazing habitat for wildlife. These new trees will help diversify the existing habitat, which is used as a feeding ground by many bats that inhabit an ancient woodland close by.

In Suckley 7 field trees were planted to provide shade and shelter in fields belonging to a small country estate. The owner had noted how important shade trees had become for his sheep and was keen to provide more. The species reflect established trees already growing close to the house; Red Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus x carnea Briotii*), Large leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), American Black Walnut (*Juglans Nigra*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), but were also chosen for their size and dense canopies. As the climate changes mature field trees are likely to become even more important in providing shade for grazing livestock.



New hedge and tree at Batchcombe



A new hedgerow Oak, Castlemorton

Hedgerow trees

Hedgerow trees are a distinctive feature of much of the AONB landscape. Some of these trees are survivors of old woods which have been cleared for agriculture, others were planted and managed as pollards², providing fodder for livestock and wood for people. Hedgerow trees are no longer used as they once were and consequently these trees are disappearing. A 2012 survey in the AONB found that of 195 isolated hedgerow trees recorded, only 0.5% could be described as 'young'. Without the recruitment of a new generation the value of hedgerow trees for wildlife and landscape character and the link they provide to our past will be lost.

Near Castlemorton Common 8 oaks (*Quercus robur*) were planted into an old hedgerow to provide some continuity with the few ancient hedgerow oaks which can still be found here and from which the local area takes its name. These majestic trees can live for hundreds of years but have recently been threatened by tree disease; 2 Perry pears (*Pyrus communis*) have also been planted to help test their resilience and durability compared with the oaks.

In the Batchcombe Valley near Storridge a new hedge was planted to connect an ancient semi-natural woodland with an existing roadside hedgerow in the bottom of the valley. Such 'connecting' hedgerows are a characteristic feature of this landscape and help wildlife to move more safely through the area. 5 hedgerow trees; 3 Small leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), 1 Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and 1 Oak (*Quercus robur*) were planted as 'standards'³ to provide variety in the new hedgerow.

2 Pollarded trees have their tops and branches regularly cut back to encourage dense leafy growth. Historically used for fodder and wood, pollarded trees can often live to a great age.

3 Standards are tall, clean stemmed upright trees, often planted as specimen or feature trees.



Spring blossom on new orchard trees at Colwall

Orchard trees

The Malvern Hills area is famous for its wonderful orchards but we are losing trees as many reach the end of their lives and are not replaced. Long lived traditional orchards are havens for wildlife and give the area its distinctive orchard character, as well as playing an important part in local customs and traditions. Surveys estimate that up to 90% of traditional orchards have been lost as the market for crops has declined and as elderly trees are not replaced⁴ but more recently there has been a revival of interest in orchards and in old fruit varieties, which are much more resilient to disease than modern varieties. Planting local varieties also means that they are better suited to the climate and soils of the areas where they were bred.

Working with Colwall Orchard Group we planted 16 young trees in both private and community orchards. Local varieties were chosen, including the apples Herefordshire Russet, Fiesta and Charles Ross, Adam's Pearmain, Bosbury Pippin, James Grieve, King Acre Pippin, Sandlin Duchess, Charles Ross, Colwall Quoining, Genet Moyle, Charles Ross, Crimson Quoining, together with Foxwhelp (cider apple), Black Worcester Pear and Williams Bon Chretien Pear.

4 Data from research carried out since 2007 by the People's Trust for Endangered Species www.ptes.org.uk



Black pear trees at Malvern Wells



Wildlife improvements, Malvern Wells

Public open space

Research shows that trees are good for us⁵. As the biggest plants on the planet, they give us oxygen, store carbon, stabilise the soil and provide homes and food for an amazing array of plants, fungi and wildlife, but they can also play a huge part in our health and wellbeing. Research shows that within minutes of being surrounded by trees and green space people's blood pressure drops, their heart rate slows and their stress levels can reduce. Being outside and connected to trees is good for our physical and mental health.

Within the AONB are many small areas of public open space, often close to houses and providing opportunities for people to experience nature on their doorstep. Planting trees in these areas means that local people can enjoy them close to home and help us to take care of them.

Trees were planted on the boundaries of two small open spaces in Malvern Wells. Both areas are being managed as wildflower meadows and the trees are part of wider work to improve the area for wildlife whilst providing space to play. Local residents helped to choose the species; Holly (*Illex aquifolium*) Weeping Willow (*Salix x sepulchris chrysocoma*), Bird Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*) and Black Worcester Pear. The species were chosen for their wildlife value, for their appearance and for their ability to withstand the rough and tumble of children playing in and around them. We want the next generation to be able to get up close to trees and enjoy them.

5 See research evidence from NHS Forest which looks at links between health and the Environment. <https://nhsforest.org/evidence-benefits>

The following bodies provide core grant support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership:



Malvern Hills AONB Partnership
Manor House, Grange Road
Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3EY

Email: aonb@worcestershire.gov.uk

Web: www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk