Lickey Hills Country Park

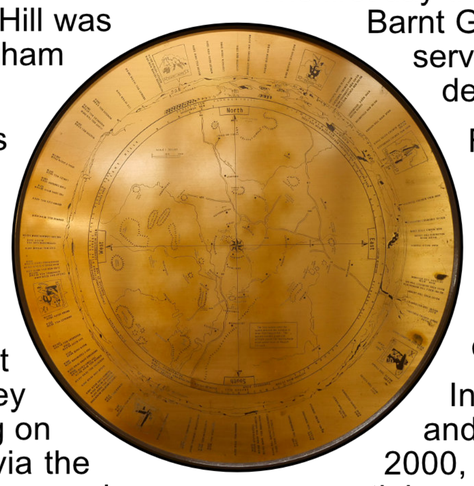
Beacon Hill

'walk softly - leave no trace'

The Country Park borders Worcestershire and south west Birmingham. The Park began life in 1888 when Rednal Hill was presented to the City of Birmingham by the Birmingham Society for the Preservation of Open Spaces.

By 1947, it had grown to its present size of 524 acres (212 hectares) through purchases of land by the City and donations of land by members of the Cadbury family. Although most of the Park is in Worcestershire, it is owned and managed by Birmingham.

The Park consists of four hills – Beacon Hill, Rednal Hill, Bilberry Hill and Cofton Hill. Beacon Hill is the highest at 978 feet (298 metres). The range of the stunning Lickey Hills is a major English watershed. Some streams rising on the hills flow to the River Rea and into the North Sea via the River Trent. Other streams flow into the River Arrow and on to the Bristol Channel by way of the River Avon and the River Severn.



The first day-trippers came on foot, by carriage and, after the opening of Barnt Green Station in 1844, by train. In 1913, a motorised bus service to Rednal started, using 10 Daimler open top double-decker buses.

From 1924, trams arrived at Rednal from the centre of Birmingham. On Easter Monday of that year they carried passengers to the Lickeys at an estimated rate of 100 per minute. By 10.30am some 10,000 people were waiting for a 'tram to the Lickeys', which had become a holiday playground for many Brummies. Trams continued to run until 1952.

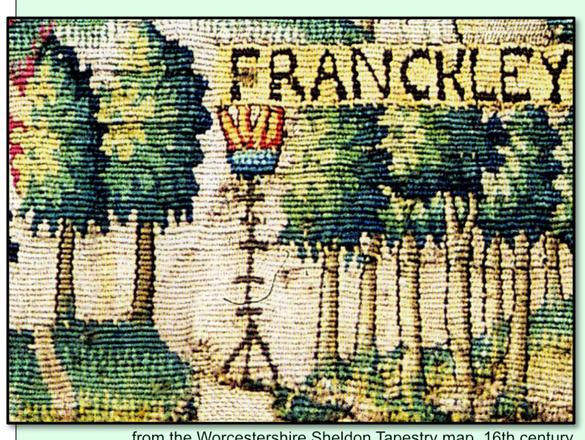
In 1971, the Park was formally designated a Country Park and the Visitor Centre in Warren Lane opened in 1990. In 2000, it was the first park in Birmingham to be awarded the prestigious 'Green Flag' – an international award that recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces.

Lickey Beacon

Hilltop beacon fires have been used as a warning system since at least the Anglo-Saxon period. In the 16th century, the beacon warning system came into full operation.

The Lickey Beacon is depicted on maps from 1590 to 1787, including on the Sheldon Tapestry Map from the time of the Spanish Armada.

View Indicator, Beacon, Lickey



from the Worcestershire Sheldon Tapestry map, 16th century

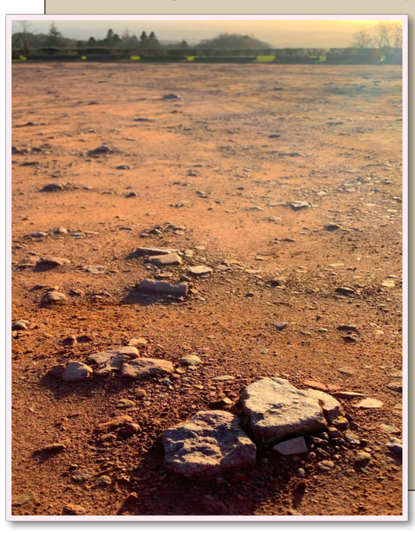
Celebratory Bonfires

Beacons became redundant when modern communication systems developed. The sites were perfect for building massive bonfires for celebrations. There were bonfires in 1887 & 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, in 1902 for the Coronation of King Edward VII and in 1919 for Peace Day after the First World War.

There was a royal bonfire on Beacon Hill in 1953 to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Geology

The rocks on the Lickey Hills range in age from around 485 million years to around 250 million years old. Five geological periods of time are represented: Ordovician, Silurian, Carboniferous, Permian and Triassic. Superficial material on the Hills – clays, silts, sands, gravels, pebbles – was deposited during the last Ice Age in the Quaternary geological period.



Around 299 million years ago in the Permian period, the higher part of Beacon Hill was formed of a sedimentary rock called Clent Breccia (see photo left). It is composed of rock fragments stuck together by clay. The variable size of the fragments, together with their angular nature, show that they were not carried very far before being deposited by the water as it flowed into an area of lower flat land.

More details on the Bilberry Hill geology board, www.ehtchampions.org.uk or this QR code:

AROUND & ABOUT

The Beacon is ideal for the important activities of kite flying and sledging. There are spectacular views of the surrounding area and out across the City of Birmingham. The toposcope (shown top centre) in the castle gives a graphic display of what can be seen.

The original castle was built to commemorate the 1907 gift of Beacon Hill to the City of Birmingham by the Cadbury family. In 1988, to celebrate the Park's centenary, the castle was rebuilt by government youth training scheme members.

During World War II, the Royal Engineers built a number of buildings on top of Beacon Hill. These were used by Air Raid Wardens and Royal Observer Corps aircraft spotters who activated air raid sirens.

At the other end of Monument Lane is an obelisk erected in 1834, by the Worcestershire Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry in memory of their commander the sixth Earl of Plymouth. This monument gives the road its name.

NATURE NOTES

Raptors, have distinctive claw-like talons and are better known as birds of prey. Here you are most likely to see kestrels that hover (hence their other name windhovers), and buzzards that that soar high above on thermal air currents.

Buzzards are larger with an average 4'6" (1.4m) wingspan. They scavenge and prey on anything from worms to rabbits. Listen out for their shrill cat-like mewing.

The Park contains fragile ecosystems – home to thousands of rare and protected species of flora and fauna.

We wish to protect the Country Park for you and future generations to enjoy.

Kindly play your part by respecting these rules.

LITTERING is anti-social, encourages vermin & can kill wildlife	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** please take your litter home or dispose of it in our bins
BBQs & FIRES are a major fire risk, damage heathland & grassland	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** do not light barbecues or fires inform staff urgently if seen
UNCONTROLLED DOGS can disturb, injure & even kill wildlife	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** keep under control at all times & on a lead in busy areas
DOG WASTE is a threat to human health & wildlife habitats	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** pick-up and dispose in the bins provided *or* take home
CYCLING & HORSE RIDING can be dangerous, disturb wildlife, erode paths, archaeology & habitats	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** please stick to designated bridleways - see map
REMOVING FLORA plant, fungi & wood removal damages biodiversity & spreads disease	**HOW YOU CAN HELP** do not remove anything irreplaceable - ask if in doubt

To report an incident – contact 0121 454 7810

ECO-friendly frame made of recycled plastic

Digital Map and more info HERE thelickeyhills.uk

map on reverse

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