

## **Visit to Pipers Hill Common, near Hanbury, and Hanbury Hall parkland, Worcestershire, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009.**

Meet at the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust headquarters. Lower Smite Farm, just N of Worcester at 10.30 am to be taken by coach to Pipers Hill (there is insufficient parking there for a lot of cars). After studying that site we shall walk to and through nearby Hanbury Hall Park. Coach will take us from there back to Lower Smite Farm. Bring packed lunch!

Pipers Hill Common was purchased about ten years ago by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust because it had long been known as an important site for fungi. Also it contained many ancient trees (oak and sweet chestnut) and awareness of their importance was rising. At the time very little information was available about its saproxylic invertebrates. Surveys have since shown that over 200 trees show signs of aging and decay ("ancient trees") and that the site is of national importance for saproxylic invertebrates. Historically Pipers Hill was a grazed common and an 1860 account describes it as an open bushy place with scattered old trees. Grazing gradually ceased and the site became invaded with trees, especially beech which appears to have grown from seed. The rapidly growing young trees soon over-topped the ancients and many of these became badly shaded by 2000. Management in recent years has been to gradually open up space round the old trees (haloing) before they died and to let in warmth to a dark, rather dank, woodland. This work is continuing. A somewhat unexpected, although actually a predictable problem, has arisen recently. Following the influx of light a brisk growth of bramble and especially young ash is threatening a duplicate past problems of shading the old trees – we are at risk of creating a coppice-with-standards wood!

The obvious answer to this is grazing animals but Pipers Hill is a public place and many people walk there so the erection of fences is unlikely to be popular! Also the site is prone to vandalism, fly tipping, attempts at off-roading and so on. And of course there has to be enough for the animals to eat.

The purpose of this visit is to show what has been done so far and to ask for comments and ideas for future management. John Smith has been involved since the beginning of the Trust's ownership in plotting the trees and initiating parts of the survey work and he is currently undertaking some historical research. He should be present on the visit to speak on this. This important site presents some interesting problems for future management to secure the future for the ancient trees and their inhabitants.

Hanbury Hall Park (owned by the National Trust) contains many old trees. The Worcestershire Ancient Tree Project has records of over 100 trees, mainly oaks. Some of the land is worked by tenants so best practice management for the trees has been difficult but improving recently. Locally it is an important site and a classical parkland.

### Contacts:

Harry Green 01396 710377 mobile 07778 198476 email [zen130501@zen.co.uk](mailto:zen130501@zen.co.uk)

Becky Lashley, Worcestershire Ancient Tree Project Officer 01905 759759 (Worcestershire BRC)  
[becky@wbrc.org.uk](mailto:becky@wbrc.org.uk)