

BEACON HILL WOOD

Beacon Hill Society Newsletter

March 2006



www.beaconhillsocietymendip.org.uk

Dates for your Diary:

Archaeological Investigations; starting Monday 27th March to Saturday 1st April.

Looking into Quern Stone production and the Fosse Way through Beacon Hill Wood.

Beacon Hill Society 2006 AGM; on Monday 24th April 2006 starting 8.00pm.

Your chance to have a say at the Kings Arms, Leg Square, Shepton Mallet

The business part of the AGM should again be a relatively brief affair, but giving an opportunity for members to comment on the Society and discuss how it might develop. Following this there will be presentations on the various projects where much progress has been made over the past year or so. These include further Archaeological Investigations, the Education Pack and our very own Website.

We hope you like our new website; the address is www.beaconhillsocietymendip.org.uk or www.bhsm.org.uk for short.

The website, funded from the Somerset Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (SALSF), has been developed by Richard Dixon.

Those who don't have a computer might like to try the facilities offered by the local library.

Unlike a book, this website should not be viewed as a finished and final product. There are many different facets to the wood, with a lot more still to be found out and told about the area. New, or updated, information regularly comes to light and it is intended that this will be added to the site, as and when details become available.

It is your website so your comments and contributions, to make it as comprehensive as possible, will always be welcome. Do get in touch with the Society as above, or via the link.

Archaeology

As part of our ongoing research into the history of Beacon Hill Wood, further archaeological excavations are being planned for the end of March. You will find on the website, and in our last newsletter (Dec'05), a report on the excavation of an old quarry where material for quern stones was extracted. The next stage will be looking at an area where we suspect the Romans set up a workshop to trim these stones to size and give them their final shape. We will also be looking again for evidence of the actual route the Fosse Way through the wood.

This work will be carried out over the last week of March, before the brambles get going in earnest but hopefully past the coldest days of winter. The area, under the western scarp is sheltered from the worst of the weather; another reason why it is thought the Romans may have set up their workshop here.

This project, led by Peter Leach, is also being funded by SALSF. We hope you find an opportunity to come and see what is going on; we will be on site from about 10.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday. And if you would like to help with the excavation you will be most welcome to come and join us; just give me a call.

Education Pack

The finishing touches are being put to the Education Pack which has been commissioned by the Woodland Trust and funded by a grant from the Local Heritage Initiative fund.

While the Pack is designed to be used by school groups and youth organisations, it will be found that families, and even adults, will get a lot of information and fun from it. It includes a wide range of materials on the geology, archaeology, history and wildlife of the wood.

There are notes for leaders, information sheets, photographs, drawings, copies of early maps and worksheets, including delightful 'I Spy' sheets. These materials will encourage children to explore, to observe and think about what they see, to make connections, and to enjoy the wood. Once finalised, the Pack will go on the various websites; it will also be available free on CD, or as paper copies, from the Society and Woodland Trust.

Undesirable Activities

Those who visit Beacon Hill regularly cannot but help notice that the area has again been visited by lads on 'scramble' bikes; ruts are appearing under the trees, over the barrows and round the easy going path. This activity seems to be a regular feature each year during school holidays and needs to be nipped in the bud each year before real damage is done.

The Society has made contact with PCSO Paul Emery who is attached to Frome Police Station and has been assigned the duty of controlling unauthorised motorcycle 'scramble' activity where it occurs locally; disused quarries, green lanes, woodland etc. He has been equipped with a 'trail' type motorcycle, sponsored by the SALSF, to facilitate this.

Paul Emery offered to extend his patrols to Beacon Hill Wood and respond to any bike activity he saw there. He would also be liaising with the local police to address the problem.

Anyone becoming aware of inappropriate scramble bike activity could immediately try to contact him on his mobile 'phone no 07810 791305, or, if he is off duty, on the usual police contact number 0845 4567000. Paul has an office 01749 840156 where a message can be left. Noting the registrations of suspicious vehicles and/or taking photographs might also be a help.

Anyone with useful ideas, on how these lads might be persuaded to practice their skills in more appropriate areas, is invited to get in touch, or bring their suggestions along to the AGM. I hope to see you there.

Peter Banks (hon. sec.)