



Climbing Policy

The Malvern Hills hold many opportunities for rock climbing both on natural rock exposures, such as Ivy Scar Rock, and on rock faces resulting from past quarrying activity; Westminster Arms Quarry.

At present rock climbers are using sites on the Hills every year and MHT also receives requests from various bodies to undertake organised climbing events including on a commercial basis.

This information provides a background to the Climbing policy which can be found at the end of this document.

History of climbing on the Malvern Hills

The earliest records of climbing routes on the Malvern Hills are from 1944 and are few in number. During the 1970's, a large number of sites and routes were added. The most comprehensive guide for climbing routes on the Malvern Hills was 'West Midlands Rock' by Doug Kerr in 1995. This book is now out of print and has since been followed by a simple guide by Roger Smith (2005).

Current usage and information

The best source of information today is the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/> which provides information on the sites and their routes. A total of 11 sites are listed for climbing by BMC (see appendix 1.) across the northern hills, with 70 different routes.

As with the early climbing guides, no climbing sites or routes south of the Wyche Cutting are listed by the BMC.

Some routes mentioned in the earlier guides no longer appear to be in use and aren't listed online e.g. Upper Wyche Quarry.

A second website, UKClimbing.com also lists the same climbing sites. As well as a source of information, this website is more active and climbers are able to record their ascents and make comments on the condition of the routes.

Using the climbing records from UKClimbing.com the two most popular climbs are Westminster Arms Quarry (Westminster Bank) and Ivy Scar rock with 50 ascents and 23 ascents recorded respectively in 2016.

Across all 11 sites there were 76 recorded climbs. The actual number of ascents per year is most likely to be around 150 to account for those not recording climbs online.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue are called out at least twice per year to rescue people stuck or fallen on the rock faces although they tend to be adventurous walkers rather than dedicated climbers.

Hereford and Worcester Fire Rescue Service also use North Quarry and Tank Quarry for their rope rescue training. Permissions are sought and timings and locations are agreed prior to use. This usually takes place for one fortnight per year.

Considerations of rock climbing on MHT land

1. Access –

The Malvern Hills Acts grant people open access across MHT land on horse or on foot. Climbers therefore have a right to climb. There is no mention of climbing in the byelaws.

All of the climbing sites on the BMC website list basic information including grid reference, rock type, and ownership. Some of the sites list Malvern Hills Conservators as the landowner however not all do, and the landowner box is left blank. The Malvern Hills Trust will be working with the BMC to update this information.

2. Safety –

The rocks of the Malvern Hills are predominantly granite and diorite. Over millions of years the brittle rock has fractured meaning that many of the rock surfaces are unstable.

There is a potential risk of rock falls and landslides. These are a hazard to the climber, belayers / climbing companions and other members of the public who may be walking nearby. As the Hills and Commons are open access for walkers, members of the public could be anywhere at any time, including below rock faces.



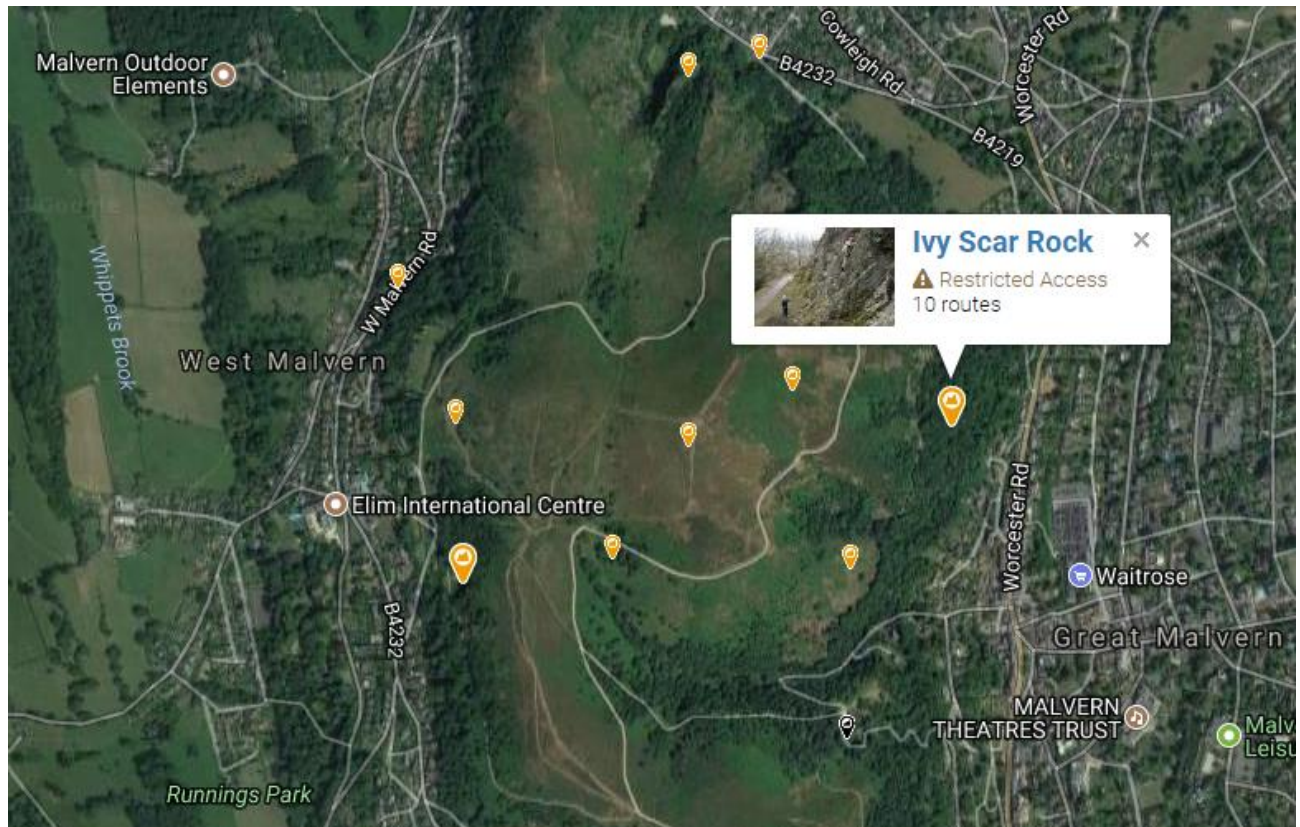
Warning sign Gardiner's Quarry

In many of the quarries signage is displayed to highlight the dangers and a number of quarries are fenced off for safety purposes. None of the 11 climbing sites listed by the BMC have safety signage or fencing to restrict access.

Malvern Hills Trust and BMC recognises that climbing, mountaineering and related activities are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own involvement.

The BMC has been contacted happy with the policy and its content.

The BMC has detailed information about each of the climbs including their difficulty and whether protection / anchors are available. It should be noted that this information may not be kept up to date and information on recent rock falls or landslips may not be recorded.



3. Habitats and species –

The rocky outcrops around the Malvern Hills are also home to a number of plants and animals dependant on the rock exposure, such as Navelwort. The Grayling butterfly - Worcestershire's rarest butterfly - relies on the rocky lichen-covered outcrops of the northern Hills. One of our nationally scarce plants, white horehound, is also dependent on quarry sites.

Nesting birds must be taken into account with several protected species nesting in the quarries of the Hills.

4. Earth heritage –

Important geological features including natural rock outcrops and man-made exposures can be found on the Hills. Many of these are sites designated as Local Geological Sites in recognition of their geological importance.

One of the main threats to the Local Geological Sites is an increase in vegetation cover which would obscure the geology and prohibit scientific studies, recreational use and reduce the rocks' ecological and landscape value. Recreational use of the

exposures for climbing is consistent with the wider objective of keeping the rock free from vegetation. However the number of climbers and the sites should be monitored to assess the impact of this recreational use.

Anchors within the rock can be used to assist climbers and provides security for roping and are present in some locations. The insertion of new or replacement anchors on sites should be agreed prior to their insertion to ensure the geology of the site is not damaged during the process. MHT are not responsible for the condition of fixed anchors or other climbing infrastructure.

5. Commercial use –

One commercial operator has a licence to use Tank Quarry for outdoor activities for educational purposes. Abseiling is undertaken here using a fixed anchor, however no climbing takes place. The organisers and leaders of these activities have a good understanding of the site and are responsible for the maintenance of climbing equipment.

Further commercial climbing activities on the Hills would dramatically increase the numbers of climbers and the use of these sites. As well as the ecological and geological impact of additional visitors, a large group of climbers could make the area very busy. Many of the climbs are short and groups gathered beneath climbs could cause an obstruction on paths for other visitors.

Further commercial climbing activities will not usually be considered appropriate other than in exceptional circumstances. Climbing activity organisers must get in touch with MHT to discuss proposals before consent is granted.

Current MHT management of the activity

In previous years MHT have asked climbers to call the office to alert us to their presence on the Hills. This allows the wardens to respond quickly should an incident occur.

To maintain climbing routes, climbers may 'clean' the route. This would involve removing vegetation from handholds/fooholds. Climbers should contact MHT for permission to clean routes to ensure rare or scarce habitats are protected and not removed.

To insert permanent anchors (new or replacement) into the rock would also require prior permission.

Climbing Policy

This policy provides information on best practice for climbers on the Malvern Hills.

1. Climbing is permitted on the Malvern Hills and Commons at the sites listed on the British Mountaineering Council Website www.thebmc.co.uk
2. The Malvern Hills Trust (MHT) is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained on the British Mountaineering Council website, nor does it represent that that sites listed are safe for climbing.
3. The Malvern Hills Trust recognises that climbing, mountaineering and related activities are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own involvement.
4. All climbers must have public liability insurance (minimum £5 million)
5. Climbers wishing to use the rocks on the Malvern Hills should make a courtesy call to Malvern Hills Trust (01684 892002) to alert staff of their presence in case of incident. MHT will also be able to advise climbers of any issues that may affect access (e.g. management works, recent rock falls, presence of protected species)
6. All climbers should follow the BMC code www.thebmc.co.uk. In particular the following should be noted:
 - a. Check the Regional Access Database (RAD) on www.thebmc.co.uk for the latest access information.
 - b. Park carefully in designated car parks.
 - c. Climbing can be dangerous – accept the risks and be aware of other people around you.
 - d. Respect the rock, local climbing ethics and other people including other climbers and other visitors to the Hills.
 - e. Do not disturb livestock, wildlife or vegetation; respect seasonal bird nesting restrictions.
 - f. Keep dogs under control at all times; don't let your dog chase sheep or disturb wildlife
 - g. 'Leave no trace' and take all your litter home with you
7. Cleaning routes should only be done with prior permissions from MHT.
8. The insertion of new or replacement permanent anchors must only be done with prior permission from MHT.
9. The inclusion of new routes and or new/climbing sites on land under the jurisdiction of the Malvern Hills Trust must have prior permission from the Trust.
10. No commercial or group (7 or more participants) climbing activities may take place on the Hills without prior permission from the Trust.

Adopted - 09/11/2017

Beck Baker

Community and Conservation Officer

Appendix

Climbing location name (BMC)	Grid reference	Quarry or natural exposure	Condition / Access	Points of interest
Reservoir Wall	SO769469	Quarry	Good access to the wall. Wall is clear of vegetation.	Local Geological Site
Clock Tower	SO770469	Quarry	Moderate access to the wall, some vegetation at base. Vegetation, mosses and lichens on wall.	
Broomhill Quarry	SO764466	Quarry		Local Geological Site
Table Hill	SO764463	Quarry	Good access to the wall although is occasionally fenced within compartment with no gate access. Wall is clear of vegetation.	
De Walden Rocks	SO771464	Natural exposure	Access to the wall is good. Wall is clear of vegetation.	Rare or scarce species including Grayling butterfly
North Hill	SO770464	Natural exposures	Clear access to the wall as area is grazed. Wall is mostly clear of vegetation with some fine grasses and mosses present in places.	
Ivy Scar Rock	SO773463	Natural exposure	Access to wall is good. Both areas on the exposure are clear of vegetation.	Rare or scarce species including Grayling butterfly
Nameless Rocks	SO771460	Natural exposures	Access to wall is difficult as is thick with scrub and regrowth. Wall is mostly clear of vegetation.	
The Nose	SO772462	Natural exposures	Access to wall is moderate through scrub and young	

			<p>trees although sheep tracks allow some access.</p> <p>Wall is mostly clear of vegetation.</p>	
Westminster Arms Quarry	SO765460	Quarry	<p>Access to the central and southern sections of the wall is good. Scrub obscures the northern section of wall.</p> <p>Central and southern sections of wall are clear of vegetation however the northern section has some vegetation cover.</p>	Local Geological Site
Rushy Valley	SO772452	Natural exposures	<p>Access to the wall is good.</p> <p>Wall is mostly clear of vegetation with some areas of bramble.</p>	Local Geological Site