

**The warning beacons of Worcestershire**

It would have been a sight to behold across the county of Worcestershire, when the beacons came about to ward off attacks from invaders from foreign lands.

By strategically placing large fire beacons on high points, a call to arms could be made much quicker than sending messengers by horse back on treacherous routes across the land to towns and cities.

The warning beacons have been around since Norman times and a network were lit across the country to warn of the threat of an imminent invasion from the Spanish Armada when they sailed up the English Channel.

The Worcestershire Beacon is the highest point on the Malvern Hills where the fire could be seen on a clear night for many miles around.

An army of farmworkers and labourers would be alerted by the beacon and with only scythe or axes for weapons, they would march to battle … sadly there was occasion when the beacon was lit only for it to be a false alarm.

During the 19th century, Beacon mania took hold and fires were lit regularly on top of the hills, often for no other reason than to settle a bet of how far away the beacon could be seen.

Needless to say, tons of wood were carried up the hills by hand so that a huge fire could be built. Sometimes the beacon fires were constructed by local companies with elaborate ones built out of railway sleepers with a chimney through the middle to ensure a good blaze.

Royal birthdays, jubilees, anniversaries and military victories were all good excuses for lighting the beacon fires and holding parties close by.

In recent times, the beacons were lit to celebrate the New Millennium in 2000, the Queen’s Golden Jubilee in 2002 and to mark 100 years since the end of World War One in 2018.

  