

Jeskyns news

A step back in time...

Winter 2009/10

Those visitors to Jeskyns who have fond childhood memories of scrumping will no doubt enjoy a visit to the newly planted orchards at Jeskyns.

Planted with over 2,500 fruit and nut trees, these orchards are destined to grow into a special place, reminiscent of the traditional Kentish orchard that was an iconic and common feature of this landscape 50 years ago.

"A man is old when he can pass an apple orchard and not remember the stomach ache." James Russell Lowell.

The apples, pears, plums, walnuts, cobnuts and cherries that make up this orchard are going to grow into large trees - up to 25 foot each. Underneath them, flower rich grassland forms a dense, sweet smelling carpet. This combination of large fruiting trees and rich diverse groundcover will, in time, prove irresistible to a myriad of insects that, in turn, will attract a range of birds and mammals.

The apple trees are a particularly impressive collection, consisting of 765 different varieties, some of which were first cultivated as long ago as the 16th Century.



With evocative names such as Scarlet Croften and Golden Bounty, one can almost picture the blushed skins and imagine the taste of these old apples, many of which were developed by Henry the VIII's own fruiterer - Richard Harris.

In a few years time however, our trees should be fruiting and visitors will no longer have to just imagine, they will be able to pick and taste these old apple varieties, straight from the tree at Jeskyns!

"Kent, sir - everybody knows Kent, apples, cherries, hops and women"
Charles Dickens, Pickwick Papers.

The orchard at Jeskyns is a living collection. It is a tangible, touchable snapshot of our Kentish heritage, a glimpse of a bygone era.

Over time it is going to grow into a very special place at Jeskyns. A refuge for nature and a place where people can relax and play. Somewhere to experience the simple but sadly uncommon pleasure of picking and eating fruit from a tree. We hope you enjoy it!



Jeskyns Grove



Jeskyns Woods



Jeskyns Meadows



Jeskyns Orchards



Jeskyns Glades

To find out more information please contact:

Jeskyns Ranger, Forestry Commission
care of: Shorne Wood Country Park, Brewers Road, Shorne, Kent, DA12 3HX
Tel: 01474 825118 E-mail: jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns

 **Forestry Commission**
England

Naturally Active

Do you fancy getting fit in the outdoors? Then why not dust down those wellies, dig out your kagool and become part of the Naturally Active Project?

The Naturally Active Project, led by the unerringly enthusiastic Mr Simon Platt, works across Dartford and Gravesham. They are often seen running activities and walks at Jeskyns as well as other neighbouring countryside sites.



Above: Asian walking group at Jeskyns

Join the group and you could find yourself rambling through the countryside, flying a kite with the kids or planting trees. They do everything from, playing disc golf and running treasure hunts, to specific conservation work in the community.

Over the autumn, as part of the Naturally Active Project, Jeskyns has been host to the project's Monday Health Walk Team, a walking group from Dartford Sikh Temple, members from the Home Start charity and pupils from Thamesview School.

So if you live in Dartford or Gravesend and would like to get fit, get out and about in the countryside, meet new people and have fun, then get in touch.

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Dog Developments

In the last issue, we wrote about the high number of dog-related complaints and incidents that we are, unfortunately experiencing, at Jeskyns.

We welcome visitors with dogs at Jeskyns and recognise that the vast majority are very responsible and considerate. However, the two main issues of "dogs not being adequately controlled" and "dog fouling" remain ever present.

In response to the summer newsletter article many of you contacted us with some very useful suggestions and comments. We have carefully considered all this feedback and have now confirmed our proposals. Visitors can therefore expect to see the following developments taking place on site in early 2010:

1. New Dog Control Areas

- The car park will become a "dogs on leads" zone.
- A new fenced "dog free zone" picnic area will be created around the tree house.
- All six fenced grazing meadows will become year round "dog free zones" (whether stock is present or not).
- The sandpit play area will remain a "dog free zone".

2. Dog Training Area

A new fenced dog training area will be created. This will enable dog owners to practice their recall technique and general dog control in a safe fenced area.

3. New Guidance for Visitors with Dogs

A new information leaflet and suite of posters will be produced and widely distributed. These will show the location of the dog control areas and demonstrate clearly the responsibilities of dog owners and other visitors.

We hope that these measures will assist in ensuring that Jeskyns remains a welcoming place for all visitors, with or without dogs, and will help alleviate some of the conflicts that we are currently experiencing.

To find out more information please contact:

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Horses and Hounds

Jeskyns is a great place for both horse riding and dog walking. However, conflicts can occur if either party does not show due consideration and courtesy to the other.

It is important to remember that in the wild, horses and dogs are not natural partners. We humans therefore, need to understand, accept, and learn to handle the major differences in the nature of these two animals if they are to get along without argument or accident!



Above: A dog walker keeps his dogs on a lead as the horse riders pass at a slow pace.

No matter how well trained, dogs and horses can be unpredictable. Even the best-tempered dog can be excited by the presence of a large four-legged creature. At best, the inquisitive dog may want to investigate the horse closer, at worst he may even make chase.

Similarly, even the calmest of horses can become spooked and may instinctively kick out and/or take flight. The potential result could be serious injury to either horse or dog, their associated humans or anyone else who happens to be in the way!



The horseshoe symbol on the left denotes a horse trail on site.

Dog owners should be extra vigilant for horses in these areas.

By being aware of the potential for conflict and by showing respect for others, all visitors can help ensure that their visit to Jeskyns is a safe and enjoyable one.

We therefore ask that visitors with either horse or hound, observe the following guidelines:

Dog Owners:

- Always be vigilant for the presence of horses, especially on the marked horse trails.
- If you see a horse and rider approaching, promptly get your dog at your side and clip him onto his lead.
- Stand to one side so that the riders can pass with their hooves well away from your dog.
- Make eye contact and smile, so riders can see that you are being safe and considerate.

Horse Riders:

- Always be vigilant for the presence of other site users, including cyclists, children and dogs.
- Be prepared to stop until a dog owner has put their dog on a lead.
- Once safe to do so, pass at a slow walk.
- Thank considerate dog owners for showing courtesy and respect.



Though perhaps not natural partners in the wild, with appropriate training, dogs and horses can develop a healthy, mutual respect.

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Digging Deep

The past six months has seen many events and activities at Jeskyns, but perhaps the most enjoyable ones are those where a little money is raised for local good causes.



Above: The Macmillan Coffee morning

In September, on an unseasonably warm and sunny morning, **£392.42** was raised at our Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee morning.



Above: Family complete the "Amazing Dog Fact Hunt" at October's Pet Pit Stop.

Then at our last Pet Pit Stop in October, despite the somewhat less favourable weather conditions, you again bought coffee and biscuits, helping us raise **£85.10** for the Retired Greyhound Trust!

Thank you to everyone, who put their hands in their pockets to help raise these funds and also to all the wonderful Jeskyns Volunteers without whom, we couldn't run these events.

Visitor Gallery

Thank you to everyone who continues to send us photographs for our visitor gallery situated on the back of the notice board in the car park.

We love receiving your photographs so please keep sending them in. If you have a photograph you would like to share with us, please email it to:
jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.



Thank you to Tim Barnes for the photograph above of one of the Jeskyns wildflower meadows with Ashenbank Wood in the back ground.

Coming Up

Pet Pit Stops - 10am to 4pm

Stop by for a coffee and a chat with the Ranger in the marquee by Henhurst Lake. At the same time pick up a free doggy bag and a treat for your pet.

- Wednesday 30th December 2009
- Wednesday 17th February 2010
- Wednesday 14th April 2010

Guided Walks - 10:30am - 12noon

- Tuesday 19th January 2010
- Thursday 18th February 2010
- Friday 12th March 2010

Led by the Jeskyns Ranger. Dogs welcome on leads. Please book walks: 01474 825118

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