

Jeskyns news

Volunteers. A vital force at Jeskyns!

Winter 2008/09

Since January 2008 volunteers have invested a whopping 1,312 hours of their own precious time in helping us to look after and improve Jeskyns.

They have tirelessly litter-picked, planted trees, created new habitats, cleared ponds, repaired fences, pruned apple trees, mulched plants, surveyed visitors, pulled weeds.....the list is endless!

They have got muddy, wet, fit, sweaty, cold and suffered from aches and pains. But most of all they have gained a great sense of achievement and satisfaction in knowing that the time they generously invest, ensures Jeskyns becomes a vital space for people and wildlife now and in the future.

"Volunteering at Jeskyns means I get lots of exercise in the fresh air with some very nice people!"

Adrian Cheeseman, Gravesend - Jeskyns Volunteer.

Alongside the core group of individuals who make up the Jeskyns Volunteer team, many organisations and businesses have also devoted their time and energies as volunteers.



Above: Jeskyns volunteers clearing algae in the ponds

Staff from Barclays Bank and EDF donned their wellies and rolled up their sleeves to pull ragwort across site and to create new stag beetle habitats.

Young people from the Gravesham Voluntary Service Unit painted murals and mulched apple trees. Students from Wilmington Enterprise College and Northfleet Technical College got stuck into some muddy pond works and tree maintenance gaining valuable work experience at the same time.

So thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time to help us at Jeskyns. I think the following quote expresses our gratitude more eloquently than we ever could:

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless"
Sherry Anderson.

If you are interested in volunteering at Jeskyns, contact Denise on the details below to find out how.



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

Grazing Update.

Over the next few months five wildflower meadows across site will be fenced. This fencing will enable us to rotationally graze the meadows with cattle and sheep.

Why graze the meadows rather than cut them?

Grazing is a traditional and sensitive way of managing wildflower meadows. It encourages a wide variety of plants and insects to flourish. Turning our grass into meat enables a local farmer to produce local food in a sustainable way. The cattle currently at Jeskyns are traditional breed Pedigree Herefords and British Whites.



Above: Pedigree Hereford cows at Jeskyns

Will visitors still be able to walk through the fields?

The livestock will be regularly moved from field to field throughout the year. Visitors will be able to wander freely through any fields that are empty of stock but will be asked to stay out of any fields that contain stock. Locks will be placed on field gates whilst stock are in fields.

What about dogs?

When fields are empty, visitors will be welcome to take their dogs into the fields. However, we ask that dogs are kept on leads in the fenced areas at all times and that owners clean up after their pets.

Why must dogs be kept on leads in empty fields?

The fenced areas will provide great habitats for a variety of birds and wildlife. Keeping dogs on leads in these areas will offer some protection to the resident wildlife. Jeskyns is a big site and there are plenty of other areas where dogs are allowed off leads.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation.

Poo! Is it your business?

Recent visitor surveys have shown that over half of all people visiting Jeskyns are accompanied by their faithful canine friend (or friends!).

Most of these visitors are wonderful, responsible dog owners who keep their pets under close control and clear up after them. However, unfortunately a small minority are letting the side down and giving all dog owners a bad name!



Above: Responsible dog walkers at Jeskyns

Dog poo is unpleasant and can be hazardous to health and the environment. Uncontrolled dogs can be intimidating and even dangerous to other site users.

Therefore at Jeskyns, we ask that all dog owners clear up after their pets wherever they go and that they keep their dogs under close control at all times.

You can help us encourage an ethos of responsible dog ownership across Jeskyns by reporting any issues or incidents to us. Our Rangers will make every effort to identify problem dog owners and speak to them directly on site. We hold regular "Pet Pit Stops" to engage with dog owners on site. At these simple events we give out free pooh bags, dog food samples, distribute the Jeskyns Dog Code and hold competitions. Why not come along to our next Pit Stop?

Weds 18th Feb 2009 - at Henhurst Lake.

In the meantime pooh bags can be collected free of charge from our on site Rangers and the Jeskyns dog code can be picked up from the leaflet dispenser in the car park.

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 **Forestry Commission**
England

Jeskyns scoops award

The British Horse Society showed its appreciation in November by presenting the Forestry Commission with an Award for "The Public Agency that has done the most for equestrian access".

The award was in response to the provision of the five-kilometre horse trail at Jeskyns and recognised the significant contribution made by Jeskyns to equestrian access in the local area.



Above: Tristram Hilborn and Denise Culley accept the award from BHS president Desi Dillingham.

Photo copyright: Matt Fowler

The BHS presented 23 awards to individuals or organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to the BHS's work, at the event at Saddlers' Hall in the City of London.

"Horse riders are welcomed at Jeskyns but it is always great to get recognition for our efforts – so thank you very much!"

Denise Culley, Jeskyns Ranger

The horse trail at Jeskyns will soon join up with a further 10km of horse trail. This new trail is called the Darnley Trail and will link Jeskyns with four other local sites: Shorne Wood Country Park, Ashenbank Wood, Cobham Park and Ranscombe Farm. It is hoped to have this trail open in the New Year.

Congratulations to Sue Quarendon (BHS volunteer co-ordinator for Northwest Kent) who also received her 30 years long service award at the same ceremony.

The British Horse Society is a registered charity founded in 1947. Further info can be found at www.bhs.org.uk

Visitors give Jeskyns the thumbs up!

During 2008 over 200 visitors to Jeskyns completed feedback forms to tell us why they come to Jeskyns and what they think of it.

The feedback received is generally very positive and it is great to hear that Jeskyns is proving such a popular venue for so many people. Some of the key findings from the surveys included:

- 98% visitors to Jeskyns described their visit as "Very Enjoyable" or "Enjoyable".
- Almost two thirds of respondents visited Jeskyns more than once a week.
- Almost half of all respondents came to Jeskyns to walk the dog and a quarter of respondents came to Jeskyns for general exercise.
- Other reasons for visiting included cycling, entertaining children, horse riding and as part of an organised group visit.

Many respondents also kindly took the time to leave comments and suggestions on the feedback forms.

"We consider ourselves very privileged to have such a nice area on our doorstep!"

Mr R. Everett, Riverview Park, Gravesend.

- 15% of respondents requested that toilet facilities be provided.
- 4% of respondents requested that refreshment facilities be provided.
- 4% of respondents requested the provision of more dog waste bins.

So what happens next?

The findings from these surveys will be fed into the annual review process of the Jeskyns Management Plan (next due September 2009).

In the meantime we will continue to collect and assess feedback from visitors as part our ongoing site management and monitoring regime.

If you would like to complete a feedback form, or want to see a full copy of the 2008 feedback report, please contact us on the details below.

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 **Forestry Commission**
England

Wildlife watchers wanted.

Are you a keen bird spotter or nature enthusiast? If so then we want to hear from you!

Jeskyns is not just popular with visitors of the human kind; all sorts of birds and animals are making it a their home. With your help we want to find out exactly which species are doing just that.



Above: Kestrel - a common visitor to Jeskyns

Sightings over the last year have included the following birds, animals and insects:

- Brown hare
- Kestrel
- Little Grebe
- Common newt
- Stone Chat
- Harvest mouse
- Skylark
- Corn bunting
- Roesel's bush cricket
- Common Hawker

You can let us know about your own wildlife sightings at Jeskyns by completing a wildlife reporting form. Email the Jeskyns Ranger for one. This form will ask you to complete the "Four W's":

1. **Who?** - your name and contact details.
2. **What?** - identify what you saw as best you can.
3. **Where?** - mark the location on a Jeskyns map if you cannot describe in words.
4. **When?** date, time, weather conditions etc.

If you are something of a wildlife or bird expert and would like to volunteer as a regular Jeskyns Wildlife recorder then please contact us, we can provide maps, recording sheets and further information.

If you are keen to learn more about wildlife and nature then why not join one of our wildlife walks in 2009? Dates and details will be confirmed shortly so please check the Jeskyns website "Get Involved" page for up to date information.



Above: Brown hare "*Lepus europeus*" sightings at Jeskyns were reported in August 2008.

Got something to share?

Have you an article or photograph you would like to share with us in the next newsletter?

In this newsletter **Gravesend Cycle Touring Club** would like to let you know that they have just published their spring runs list for 2009. Copies can be found at www.westkentctc.org.uk. Or why not join them at their Mid Week Day Ride which is held every Wednesday at 10am from Cobham War Memorial?

Shorne Woods Country Park has a host of events happening over the next few months, here are just a few of them:

- Feb 14th - 22nd - Half term activity trail available from the visitor centre - £1.50.
- March 10th - A wheelie good walk! Pushchair friendly guided walk, 10am-11.30am - FREE
- March 21st - Mother's Day Craft Workshop, 10am-2pm - £3.50.

For further details call 01474 823800.



Lastly, thanks to **Tim Barnes** for this fabulous picture. Taken last April - but if the weathermen are right we might be seeing more of the same at Jeskyns this winter!

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