

Jeskyns news

Mouse ears and Goat's beards....

July 2008

You may be wondering what that title is referring to!

Well, these are just two (Common Mouse-ear and Goat's-beard) of many wildflower species which can be seen thriving in our newly establishing meadows at Jeskyns.

Approximately 60 hectares across Jeskyns were planted with wildflower seed in 2006. The seed mix sown, containing 43 different flower and grass species, was harvested from two very special and diverse ancient meadows.



Above: Jeskyns meadows summer 2008



Above: The spectacular seed head of Goat's-beard

Yellow Rattle, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Rough Hawkbit, Cowslip and Red Clover are just some of the other wildflowers seen during a recent survey.

This survey identified the presence of 23 different species at Jeskyns already and with careful management we anticipate that more will appear over the next few years.

A local farmer has been sourced through the Defra Fresh Start Scheme to help us manage these meadows. This scheme aims to provide training and opportunities for young farmers that would otherwise be unable to afford to start farming in today's market.

The new grazier will use cattle and sheep to graze different meadows at different times of the year and he will also take hay cuts to provide winter fodder for the animals.



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



Above: Yellow Rattle, Jeskyns 2008

Managing the new meadows with this type of grazing is much more environmentally sustainable than just mechanically cutting them year after year. Grazing also encourages a wider range of wildflowers to flourish and the dung produced by the animals even provides important habitats of a wide range of insects.

Over time as the meadows mature they will provide a visual spectacle for visitors and a wonderful habitat for all sorts of birds, animals and insects. We hope you enjoy them!

Special thanks to Tim Barnes, (a Jeskyns volunteer) for providing these pictures of our wildflowers.

Gentle Giants of the Insect World

Have you noticed any strange looking groups of upended logs scattered around Jeskyns?

Have you been wondering what they are? They are called "Beetle Log Piles" and have been created by several teams of Jeskyns volunteers to provide an important habitat for one of our most spectacular insects - the Stag Beetle.

The Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) is Britain's largest native ground dwelling beetle. Male adults can reach up to 7cm and whilst their large jaws may look scary they only really use them to wrestle with other males.

Stag beetles need rotting wood to lay their eggs in. These eggs hatch into larvae, which then spend up to 7 years just munching through the rotten wood. When the larvae finally emerge as adult beetles in the summer they spend their brief lives in search of a mate to repeat the whole process.

They then sadly die before the onset of colder weather hopefully safe in the knowledge that their progeny live on.



Above: Adult Stag Beetle

Photo copyright courtesy of www.dezignia.com

So why do we need to help them? Well, the amount of suitable habitat for them has declined in recent years so that their future existence is now seriously threatened.

But you can help them by leaving any old tree stumps in your garden to rot down naturally or if you have the room by creating a log pile like the ones at Jeskyns.



Above: Jeskyns Volunteers create our first log pile

Further information about Stag Beetles and how you can help them can be found at:

www.stagbeetlehelpline.co.uk

To find out more information please contact:

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England

Green, Outstanding Attractions

Did you know that Jeskyns sits right next door to four other very special sites?

They are Shorne Wood Country Park, Ashenbank Wood, Cobham Park and Ranscombe Farm.

Working together these five sites are known collectively as the Cobham and Shorne Countryside Partnership (CSCP). Together they make up one of the largest areas of open access land in Kent, rich in wildlife and with a fascinating archaeological and cultural heritage.

One of our first exciting projects is the creation of a brand new waymarked route called the **Darnley Trail**, which we hope to open for public use in September this year.

The Darnley Trail will be a circular "core" route for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians which links all five sites over a distance of approximately 10km.



We are currently working to create a trail leaflet, which should be available, this autumn.

Your newsletter

Do you have a photograph or item about Jeskyns that you think others might like to see?

If so, let us know and we will try and get it in our next newsletter or perhaps on our website. We are also keen to hear about wildlife that you may have spotted on site. Contact us on the details below.

Orienteering at Jeskyns

Orienteering is a challenging outdoor adventure sport enjoyed by people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

In its simplest form, orienteering consists of navigating on foot between points on a pre-defined course drawn on a map. The aim is to navigate round all of the points in the correct order and in the fastest possible time.



Above: One the orienteering marker posts at Jeskyns

Dartford Orienteering Klubb (DFOK) which has been in existence since the 1970's, has installed a great new permanent orienteering course at Jeskyns.

People wishing to try out the course can purchase a map from Shorne Wood Country Park (cost £1 each). The course is suitable for all abilities and is available all year round.

To find out more about DFOK and orienteering contact 0208 856 6929 or www.dfok.co.uk

Please note that maps are the copyright of DFOK and Ordnance Survey. No copies may be made. Competition groups or groups of more than 4 people will require permission from Jeskyns staff. DFOK can make copies available for larger groups at a reduced rate.

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What's on?

Want to know what's going on at country sites in the local area? Find out here:

Jeskyns

6th Aug - Jeskyns Discovery Walk FREE

Join the site Ranger on a guided walk to discover how Jeskyns has been created and to glimpse an insight into what it might look like in 100 years time!

Contact the Ranger on the details at the bottom of this newsletter to book a place or find out more.

13th Aug and 5th Sep- Pet Pit Stops FREE

Visit us at our Pet Pit Stop at the Henhurst Road Car Park anytime between 9am and 5pm.

A great opportunity to pick up free dog food samples, poo bags, give us your feedback and water your pooch!

Shorne Wood Country Park

19th - 20th July - National Archaeology Weekend

Living history with canons, crafts and combat. Free children's activities on the Sunday.

For more info call 01474 823800

12th, 13th and 14th Aug - Dragonfly Club

12pm-3pm. Children's nature activities.

To book a place call 01474 823800

19th Aug - Forest Crafts for Kids

10am-12pm. To book a place call 01474 823800

20th Aug - Marvellous Mini-beasts

11am - 12pm and 1pm - 2pm

For more info call 01474 823800

13th Sep - Music and Merriment

5.30pm - 9pm. Relax with your family listening to music played by local folk bands.

Adults £6, children £3. Book in advance.

Tel: 08458 247 600

27th & 28th Sep - Kent Goes Wild

The biggest celebration of wildlife recording in Kent. Come and discover how to find, identify and record

wildlife sightings in your local area.

More info: www.kmbrc.org.uk

18th Oct - Fungi Walk

10.30am - 12.30pm. Discover the fantastic range of fungi that grow in Shorne Woods Country Park.

For more info call 01474 823800

24th & 25th Oct - The Shorne Scream

Dare you venture into the woods in the dark?

First trail leaves at 7pm.

For more info call 01474 823800

16th Nov - Nature Conservation Day

1pm - 4pm. Range of activities.

For more info call 01474 823800

Ranscombe Farm (Plantlife)

27th July - Guided walk

4-mile walk from Ranscombe to the Darnley

Mausoleum to find out more about the restoration work being done on the Mausoleum.

3rd Aug, Sunday - Guided Walk

The history and local lore of Ranscombe.

Led by local resident and volunteer warden, Ken Law who has fascinating stories about the farm and village collected over the last 50 years. FREE

24th Aug, Sunday - Guided Walk

Archaeology and heritage of Ranscombe.

A look at the recently excavated well (or is it a dene hole?), 4th century pottery finds, Saxon wood lynchets and ancient boundary trees with volunteer wardens Paul Harrison and Dave May. FREE

To book a place

Contact Ranscombe Warden, Helen Morley for meeting times and venues

Tel: 07983 578201 / 01474 824180

Email: helen.morley@plantlife.org.uk

Most walks are around 3-4 miles, may involve kissing gates, unmade paths and steep hills and last around 2 hours.

Ashenbank Wood **(Woodland Trust)**

2nd & 3rd of Aug - Weekend Work Party

Rhododendron bashing. Any additional helpers gratefully received!

More details:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Tel: 01476 581111

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