

JESKYNsnews

June 2007

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Jeskyns Discovery Day

Following a long wet winter, a dry spring and a whole lot of work, Jeskyns will be welcoming everyone with a special Jeskyns Discovery Day on Saturday July 7th 2007. Join us for this special free event and find out for yourself just what the new Jeskyns is really like.

There will be lots going on but here are just a few ideas:

Why not try out one of our 3 different waymarked trails, view our newly created traditional orchards or simply have a relaxing picnic next to the new Henhurst Lake?

Children can have a go at a range of environmental activity workshops, climb to the top of an exciting tree house or test their skill on the sand pit assault course.

Wheelchair users, buggy pushers and cyclists of all abilities might want to test run the 7km of newly created all ability paths.

Nature lovers will enjoy watching the insects in the Jeskyns Glades wildflower meadow or undertaking a spot of "twitching" in the Jeskyns Grove farmland bird feeding area.

If horse riding is your thing, why not come and try out the new 5km circular horse trail?

There will also be woodcraft demonstrations, a range of stalls and of course plenty of opportunities to meet the Rangers, ask questions and pick up the latest site leaflets and maps.



Rainbow over the new tree house.

So come along and introduce yourself to the new Jeskyns, after all it is a space for everyone to enjoy!

The event will be run from 11am to 4pm. Admission and activities are free. Dogs are welcome but must be kept under close control. Please park in the new car park area at the top of Henhurst Road. If you have specific access needs please contact us for further details.

For more information please contact:

Jeskyns Ranger, North Kent Project, Shorne Wood Country Park, Brewers Road, Shorne, Kent DA12 3HX
Tel: 01474 825 118 Email: jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk Web: www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns

Trails get the thumbs up!

Adele Sutherland and her family from Chalk, have been trying out the new trails around Jeskyns on their bikes.

“We think they are fantastic. It is really great to have somewhere so close where the whole family can go for a cycle ride together” said Adele.



“On many other sites the paths are too rutted, steep or hard and the little ones cannot keep up with the rest of us. But here, even the youngest ones can keep going so we can all ride together! We hope to keep visiting again and again.”

Have you got a story about how you are enjoying Jeskyns now? Send us some details and if possible a picture and we will publish the best in the next issue.

Jeskyns Research

“And now for the science bit ...concentrate!”

Three innovative research projects are taking place at Jeskyns. They are being undertaken by Forest Research who are world leaders in the research and development of sustainable forestry and are Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree related research.

The first experiment is to observe how well biodegradable mulch mats actually breakdown in a woodland environment. Mulch mats are squares of material, which are placed around the bases of newly planted trees to stop the tree being swamped by grass in its early years. However, in most

instances mulch mats are made of plastic and can therefore take years to breakdown. This experiment will assess how well the new biodegradable mats perform in comparison to the plastic ones and how long they do actually take to biodegrade.



Above: soil samples are extracted for water testing.

The second project has seen three plots of woodland trees planted to demonstrate how Climate Change may impact upon our native woodlands.

The first plot has been planted with seeds from native trees sourced from the local area. The second plot has the same species of tree we have locally (such as Oak and Birch), but the seeds have been sourced from hotter, drier climates such as France. The third plot is planted with trees that are not native species and which are much more used to growing in hotter, drier climates. As the trees grow, we will be able to compare the plots to see how well each of the different types of species are coping with our climate. For more information on how the Forestry Commission is looking at Climate Change, log onto:

www.forestresearch.gov.uk/climatechange

The final experiment aims to discover the impact of tree planting and grassland establishment on groundwater quality at Jeskyns. Soil cores have been taken to a depth of 10m from the forested and meadow areas of the site. Water extracted from these samples will be analysed for fertilisers and pesticides resulting from the previous agricultural land use. The same process will be undertaken in approximately 5-10years, and the two sample batches can then be compared to measure differences in water quality and quantity.

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Power Kiting

Dave and Martin from Hever Farm, Gravesend have been practising their “power kiting” at Jeskyns recently.



Above: Dave with his power kite.

As Dave skilfully brought his kite back down for a soft landing he told us: “To fly these kites you really need a big open space and lots of wind, so Jeskyns is perfect for us, especially with it being so close!”

He continued: “Flying these types of kite gives you a real physical work out, like going to the gym but much cheaper and more enjoyable!”

Dave informed us that power kites are made from high performance fabrics and are based on an aerofoil design much like an aeroplane.

Well it certainly looks like good fun, so happy kiting Dave and Martin!

Wildflowers at Jeskyns

Most people (and wildlife!) would agree that there is nothing quite as lovely as a wildflower meadow. We probably all have memories of them as children, but sadly the English meadow is becoming something of a rarity.

While over half of Britain is grassland, 95% have been “improved”, meaning that land manager aims for a thick sward of fast growing, usually single species rye grass which is then heavily grazed. The other 170 or so native grasses don't get a look in meaning that a great many plant and animal species also suffer as a result.

Here at Jeskyns, we have just planted one of the largest meadowlands in Kent – spanning almost 60 hectares.

Over 30 different types of wildflower and grasses collected from the ancient Sudborough Meadows (another Forestry Commission site) were sown last autumn.



Above: Ashton Wold– this meadow was sown with the same seed that has been sown at Jeskyns.

These will not flower until 2008, but in the meantime they need careful management to ensure that existing seeds and weeds in the soil do not swamp them. Therefore, in this first year, regular cutting of the meadows during their growing season (April – early July) will be undertaken. This will enable the new seed to become established.



Above: The Common Blue butterfly is a regular visitor to wildflower meadows.

We hope that as these meadows mature they will provide a valuable habitat for many types of wildlife including birds such as the Meadow Pippit and Skylark and for butterflies such as the Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Marbled White and Meadow Brown. In time they will also reward visitors to Jeskyns with a real visual treat and wonderful wildlife watching opportunities.

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What's in a number?

Most visitors to Jeskyns agree that a lot has been achieved in quite a short space of time and while statistics can sometimes seem a bit meaningless, we have picked out the hopefully more interesting ones for you here.

150,000 trees and shrubs have been planted (Approximately – any volunteers to count and check these numbers are most welcome!)

2,504 traditional orchard trees have been planted. (Potential largest apple pie record breaking attempt for the future?)

6.8km of all accessible paths have been laid. (That's just over 4miles to most of us!)



Above: 5th Gillingham Scout Group, were one of 14 uniformed groups who planted trees at Jeskyns.

13 local schools and **14** uniformed children's groups have been involved in the project as a whole.

(Thank you to all the coach drivers who put up with children with very muddy feet!)

5556m² of new ponds have been created. (Dogs and many birds are already enjoying these!)



Above: Attendees at the Community Tree Planting Day, ready for action!

765 people planted a tree (or ten!) somewhere on site. (Not including our contractors, though they did a great job!).

145 tonnes of rubbish were removed and safely disposed of from two old chalk pits. (Over 700 tyres, 3 whole cars and many washing machines made up some this bulk).

We hope that these statistics give you a good snapshot of the amount of work that has been completed over the last two years. Any suggestions for some new ones to achieve for 2007/08 will be warmly received!

What is Jeskyns?

If you have just picked up this newsletter and haven't a clue what the Jeskyns project is about, then this paragraph is for you!

Jeskyns is a new 370-acre (150-hectare) Community Woodland and Greenspace. It has been created by the Forestry Commission with funding provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government for public enjoyment.

From Monday 2nd July 2007, the car park (located at the top of Henhurst Road) will be open to the public between the hours of 8am and 7pm (this will change throughout the year depending upon available daylight hours).

Why not come and take a look?



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