

environmental
partnership
in
action

The Greensand Trust

April-June 2011

Greensand Highlights

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Rushmere was officially opened on Saturday 16th July 2011 by joint owners the Greensand Trust and Central Bedfordshire Council.



Rushmere official opening ceremony
www.greensandtrust.org

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Preparation for opening of Rushmere

The Greensand Trust and their volunteers, Central Bedfordshire Council and contractors such as Kehoe have put in an enormous amount of work into preparing Rushmere for the public.



New routes for cycling, horseriding and walking have been opened.

Greensand Trust rangers and volunteers worked tirelessly to install kissing gates, remove barbed wire fencing from the old boundaries between Stockgrove and Rushmere, install waymark posts and much much more!



In early May whilst the Rushmere entrance barriers were being installed it was noted that a nearby tall poplar tree was in a dangerous condition.

The tree had a kink about half way along its trunk and bracket fungus was growing indicating rot on the inside, so it had to be felled. A pair of Jackdaws had other ideas and was raising a family in an old woodpecker hole so the felling and the opening of Rushmere was postponed.



Within 48 hours the top of the tree was blown off in the strong winds. The Jackdaws were unharmed as they were nesting further down the tree.

A couple of weeks later the tree was surveyed in the evening to see if the Jackdaw family had left. No sign of the Jackdaws but out of another nearby woodpecker hole there emerged 15 Noctule bats!! The tree is still there but it has been tied to nearby trees to make it safe. The tree will be felled in the autumn once we are sure the bats have left.

Rushmere gets ready to open



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Preparation for opening of Rushmere

Toilet facilities and a visitor information area have been put into the 1960's bungalow which was originally part of the private estate.



The front of the bungalow during building works



To the rear of the visitor centre the slope and valley will be left as a conservation area.



Front of bungalow now; new glass doors have been installed to create an atrium and visitor information area



Next spring you will be able to watch herons in the sunset. Photo courtesy of Richard Welham.



The outside of the bungalow now benefits from a decking area from which you can observe the heronry.

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who made this possible including our funders who helped with the purchase of Rushmere and our partners, contractors and volunteers who have worked very hard to get Rushmere ready to open.

Thank you to everyone who helped!

Rushmere opened on 16th July 2011

180 people attended the official opening of Rushmere despite the very wet weather! Rushmere was opened by Councillor Peter Hollick (Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Council) and Peter Smith (Chairman of Joint Rushmere Board and Greensand Trust Trustees).



Visitors enjoyed talks from:

- Clive Warncken on Dogs in the Countryside
- Mike Fayers on Walking for Health
- Pauline Roby on CTC bike Club
- Stephen Coleman on Rushmere before the trees
- Judith Knight on garden bird watch
- Maggie Weber told childrens' stories
- The Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire Bat Groups had a display

Guided walks were led by Lyndsey Bignell (Central Bedfordshire Council), Jon Balaam and Alexe Rose (The Greensand Trust). Thank you to everyone who helped on the day it was very wet but everyone enjoyed it!



Visitors to the Park braved the weather and went on a guided walk to get to know the new site.



Anglia News and the Leighton Buzzard Observer were at the opening too.

Rushmere opens to the public



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Stanbridge Meadows opening



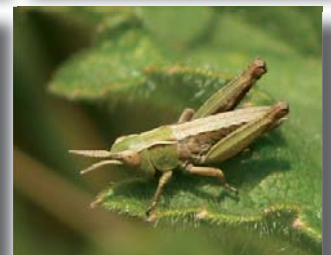
Stanbridge Meadows County Wildlife Site was officially opened on 7th May 2011. From left to right in picture Jon Balaam (Director of Development, Greensand Trust) Peter Smith (Chair of Trustees, Greensand Trust) Leighton Linslade Mayor Gordon Perham, Barry Metcalfe (Greensand Trust volunteer).

Over 40 people enjoyed a guided walk around the site in southern Leighton Buzzard discovering birds, caterpillars, spiders, cowslips, buttercups and many more wildflowers.

The event was to thank the people and the organizations who donated to and supported the Save our Stanbridge Meadows appeal.

The cattle we hope to graze the site with will be Red Poll which are a smaller, more docile breed. They are used for conservation grazing because they are able to convert low quality forage into high quality milk and they are not fussy eaters. They will happily browse on the hawthorn scrub which needs to be cleared to help encourage the growth of the wildflowers.

Wildlife pictures taken in Stanbridge Meadows.



Photos taken by Rory Morrisey



Stanbridge Meadows SOS heard!

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Amphill Gala Day

The Greensand Trust had an information stall at Amphill Gala Day and helped Amphill Town Council ask visitors what they thought of Amphill Park.

The Greensand Trust is working in partnership with the Friends of Amphill Park and Amphill Town Council to collect feedback on visitors' experiences of the park and suggestions for improvements.

Heath & Reach Go Green!

A new group has formed in Heath and Reach; it is called Go Green Heath & Reach. The group has merged with Heath & Reach P3 and will be looking at ways in which they can improve the village, particularly the local green spaces and rights of way network.

On the 30th April Go Green Heath & Reach held their first event which was a Big Tidy Up. The Greensand Trust helped volunteers to pick up litter from the Greenspaces around the village. The volunteers collected over 8 bags of rubbish and recycling in just a couple of hours. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day and to those who helped with the preparation before the event.

Southern Marsh Orchids

Southern marsh orchids have been spotted in a marshy area of Stockgrove. Also in that area 151 common spotted orchids were counted. The annual cutting and raking of vegetation in this area helps to encourage growth of orchids and other wildflowers.



3 southern marsh orchids and up to 5 hybrids with common spotted orchids have been identified.

Mammals spotted in cemetery

A small mammal trapping survey in Heath & Reach cemetery showed the benefit of the wildlife area that the Heath & Reach cemetery group, Parish Council and Greensand Trust have developed.

Good numbers of bank voles and woodmice were found along the hedges and in habitat piles and areas of longer grass.





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Raising cash for SOS Appeal



Jon Balaam (Director of Development) raised £100 for the Stanbridge Meadows Appeal by completing the Maldon Mud Race. Don't forget if you are doing a sponsored event you can also donate to the Greensand Trust.

Schools visit Wadelows

In May and June 6 schools and 359 pupils visited Wadelows Nature Reserve at Poplars Garden Centre, in Toddington. The Greensand Trust education team led the visits for different age groups on a variety of topics ranging from Gruffalo hunts to Flowers and Friends and habitat work.

Pulloxhill Lower School said *'The children had a super day which complemented the learning we have been doing over the previous few weeks.'*

For further information on Greensand Trust education programmes and field trips please visit www.greensandtrust.org

Easter exploits

The Greensand Trust held two popular events over the Easter Holidays encouraging young people and their families to experience the natural environment.

The first event was held at Wadelows Nature reserve, at Poplars Garden Centre. The event saw young people explore the site which was bursting with signs of spring on a beautiful sunny day. They hunted for clues as part of an exciting spring trail and earned a special chocolate reward!

The second event, on Easter Saturday, was held in partnership with the Faith Woodland Communities Project at Maulden Woods. Over 50 people visited the woodland for a series of spring themed activities in the sunshine. The families had lots of fun meeting trees, finding clues, spotting butterflies, singing and picnicking before heading home for more Easter celebrations.

We would like to thank the local supporters of both events, Tesco Express in Leighton Buzzard, Tesco stores in Flitwick and Wilkinson Stores 'Helping Hands' in Leighton Buzzard. We appreciate all your contributions and are very grateful.

News from the Greensand Trust

Adders in Rammamere

It was a fabulous spring for adders on Rammamere Heath. There have been many sightings and up to 9 have been seen together basking in the sun. Their wonderful display dance was observed and filmed by one lucky observer. Our annual adder walk on Rammamere Heath was again well attended. Our expert Matt Andrews again came up trumps and everyone managed to see an adder.

Knolls Wood AGM

The Greensand Trust gave a presentation to the Knolls Wood Association updating on progress on the Rushmere framework and answering questions about the new green space facility.

Preserving our Orchards

Beds Rural Community Charity ran a chip budding session for volunteers involved in orchards. The training session was organised as part of the Greensand Trust and BRCC partnership project 'Preserving our Orchards', funded by Grantscape.

Ampthill Baptist Church

The Greensand Trust had an information stall at the Eco Festival organised by Ampthill Baptist Church. This year the theme was waste and recycling.

Pond survey training

A successful pond survey training course, at Flitton Moor brought to an end the two year 'Prosperous Ponds' project the Trust has been a partner in.



Funded by Grantscape and led by BRCC the project has supported work such as 16 important pond maintenance tasks at sites throughout our

area, a survey for great-crested newts, the creation of new wetland scrapes, water vole surveys and pond survey training both with adult volunteers and local schools.

Chalgrave Womens Institute

The Greensand Trust led a guided walk for 17 members of the Chalgrave WI along a section of the Chalgrave heritage trail. The trail was established as a result of the Chalgrave Green Infrastructure plan which was completed in 2007.



After the walk some members volunteered to help the P3 group.

www.facebook.com/pages/Chalgrave-WI



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Wildflowers in Vandyke Curve

The wildflower meadow at Vandyke Curve in Leighton Buzzard was in full bloom earlier this year. The Leighton Buzzard Railway received funding through the Chalk Arc Community Grant scheme in 2010 to plant the wildflower meadow and the volunteers worked hard to prepare scrub land for the wildflower seed.



For further information about the project and the Leighton Buzzard Railway please visit www.buzzrail.co.uk

Purple Emperor visits Stockgrove

The elusive Purple Emperor butterfly spends most of its time in the tree canopy so it is usually very difficult to spot. However one Purple Emperor was seen in Stockgrove car park this summer.



It's likely that the butterfly came down from his tree top hideaway to feed on animal droppings or moist ground to get salts and minerals which are not accessible in the tree canopy.

'Vampires' on Rammamere

Common Dodder was recorded on Rammamere Heath, this summer. It has not been seen in the area since some was found on heather in Stockgrove in the early 90's.



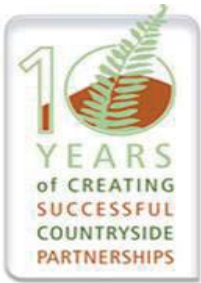
Despite its name, it is very rare locally. There are no records for Bedfordshire since that for Stockgrove and it is only rarely recorded on the heathlands in South Bucks.

Common Dodder is a 'vampire' plant; it has no obvious leaves and parasitizes heather and other plants by sucking their juices. It is currently just a mass of red stems but flowers later in the summer with nice fluffy pink flowers.

Ashy Mining Bee

An ashy mining bee was spotted on the newly exposed sand at Readshill Grassland County Wildlife Site in Clophill. These are solitary bees and are generally non-aggressive.

News from the Greensand Trust



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West of Linslade Planning Inquiry

The Greensand Trust attended and made an oral representation at the West of Linslade Planning enquiry in July. The Trust objected to the planning application for a mixed use residential development including 900 dwellings on the grounds of landscape and ecology.



Volunteer Coordinators'

The Greensand Trust attended the Volunteer Coordinators networking event arranged by the Volunteer Bureau. It was encouraging to see so many different organisations attend the event to exchange information and share experiences.



Luton Assembly Network Committee for Economy and Environment

The Greensand Trust attended the meeting for Economy and Environment. The objective of the committee is to support voluntary and community organisations working in the environment and economy areas. www.lutonassembly.org.uk/EnvironmentEconomy.htm



Bug Lab 2011

Drop-in to the Bug Lab Tour at a site near you this summer, and join the Greensand Trust in discovering the marvellous minibeasts that live there. Help us record our findings and create a crafty creature to take home.

Children must be accompanied by an adult, drop in anytime between 1pm and 3pm. £2 per child.

8th August	Amphill Park
9th August	Rushmere
11th August	Maulden Wood
12th August	Heath & Reach cemetery
15th August	Rushmere
16th August	Tiddenfoot Waterside Park
18th August	Flitwick Wood
19th August	Linslade Wood

Please support us, think of it as an investment with a guaranteed return: a richer, more diverse, more natural environment for everyone and everything living in the Greensand Ridge area, for now and for decades to come.