

Volunteer piling up
coppiced wood



Unstable cliff face

Discover

Bull Heath



Produced by Clarity Interpretation 01303 249501

Explore this haven
for wildlife and find
out why an old quarry
is home to so many
plants and animals...



Who is looking after Bull Heath?

Bull Heath is owned by the Heaths Countryside Corridor (HCC). We are a community-based group looking after this special place for everyone. We are carefully managing the habitats here...

Wooded areas

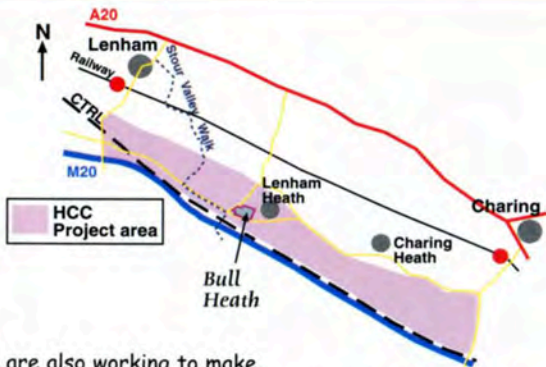
We are reducing the amount of trees at Bull Heath. Read about 'Trees in the wrong place' inside this leaflet to find out why.

Sand cliffs

From time to time we will carefully scrape parts of the cliff faces to expose fresh sand. This is to help sand martins, who are quite fussy - they don't like to nest in sand with too much vegetation growing on it.

Pond

We have restored the pond, and will continue to manage it to benefit water-loving wildlife.



We are also working to make Bull Heath accessible, safe and enjoyable for everyone.

We hope to do the same at other places in our project area (the purple area on the map above), and make the local countryside more accessible by buying land and working in partnership with others.

Involving local people is central to what we do, through conservation volunteering, events and links with schools. You can get involved too...

Contact us on 01233 713466.
Visit our web site at
www.heathscorridor.co.uk



Protect wildlife, protect yourself!

Please respect this special place and take care of yourself...

DO NOT CLIMB THE CLIFFS!

These cliffs are made of sand - they are unstable and unsafe to climb. Climbing will also disturb wildlife.

CAUTION - DEEP WATER

Please take care near the pond, particularly when supervising young children.

Access

No horses or motorbikes allowed.

Respect wildlife

Please do not damage or disturb wildlife and habitats. No shooting allowed. No fires or fly tipping.

Dogs

Dogs are welcome, but please keep them under close control (so they don't disturb wildlife) and clean up after them.

How to get there...

Map inside shows entrance points to site.

On foot

Access from Lenham Heath Road or Bull Hill in Lenham Heath. Public footpaths and quiet lanes link the site with Charing Heath, Charing, Lenham and Egerton. The Stour Valley Walk passes very close to the site (see map to left).

By car

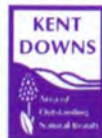
From the A20 between Lenham and Charing, take the turning for Lenham Heath and Egerton. Take the first right, onto Bull Hill. At the bottom of the hill you will reach Lenham Heath Road. Park along here.

By train

The site is within walking distance of both Lenham station (2 miles) and Charing station (2.5 miles).

Project sponsors

These organisations fund and support HCC and our work



Can you find...?

Signs of animals

Poo piles and poo pits

Piles of small droppings belong to rabbits (they look exactly like the droppings of pet rabbits). Keep your eyes peeled and you may see a rabbit running back to its burrow.

Small holes with larger poo in them have been made by badgers - they are called badger 'latrines'.

Feathers and fur

Feathers scattered over the ground are signs of foxes or birds of prey hunting birds. Foxes also hunt rabbits, and you may find fur or other more gruesome remains of a foxes dinner!

Tracks

Look for these tracks in patches of mud. Most of the tracks you will see will be from dogs, so we have included a dog track for comparison



Fox Rabbit Badger Dog

A restaurant for sand martins and snakes

If you know something about wildlife, you will know how important ponds are. The pond at Bull Heath adds a whole other dimension to this special place, by providing a home for a host of plants and animals that could not live here without the water it contains. Lots of creatures are attracted to ponds as good places to feed. Grass snakes will hunt frogs here, and sand martins will swoop over the water, snatching insects flying above the pond out of the air.

But how does the water get into the pond? There's no stream flowing into it.

Have you ever dug a deep hole in a sandy beach and found that the bottom filled with water? This old sand quarry is a bit like that - it was dug so deep that it has reached the 'water table' underground.

The water table is formed by rain water that filters down through the sandy rocks until it can't go any deeper. The more it rains, the higher the water table - so if you are here in winter you will find the ground can be very wet! If you come to Bull Heath regularly, check on the level of the pond, and you will notice that it goes up and down through the year. That's because it is filled by the water table, which changes through the seasons.

VALUABLE WILDLIFE - Sand martins in trouble

Sand martin numbers are in decline. They are on the 'amber list' of 'birds of conservation concern'. So it's even more important that Bull Heath continues to provide a nesting site for them.

Can you hear...?

Willow warbler

The willow warbler's song can be heard in spring and early summer. It sings notes going down a scale.

VALUABLE WILDLIFE - Heath spotted orchid

This beautiful plant is rare in Kent, but grows at Bull Heath. It is so special, we have put it in the Heaths Countryside Corridor logo.



Greg Snow

Trees in the wrong place

What could be more natural than trees? It depends where they're growing. It may surprise you to know that most of the trees in Bull Heath are not naturally occurring.

Here's a clue to look for as you walk around: trees growing in straight lines. Nature doesn't use straight lines, so this is a sure sign that they were planted. Planting trees is often a good thing, but not in the case of Bull Heath. Why? Because the trees have been harming some very special wild plants growing here. These plants love sandy conditions and thrive on the sand floor of the quarry.

Can you find...?

Alder cones

Alder trees grow well in the damp soil here. Look for their cones on the ground or on the trees. These cones contain the tree's seeds.



But how can trees harm plants? The problem is their leaves. The leaves of the trees are shading out the small plants on the ground. Also, when leaves fall and rot, they change the sandy soil conditions. This is why some trees have been removed, but don't worry, they won't all be cut down! As you walk around you will notice that some trees have been 'coppiced'. This means the tree is cut back to a stump and allowed to re-grow as many shoots.

Can you find...?

A plant that looks like a bird

Between January and September, look carefully on the ground for the tiny, pinky purple flowers of a plant called 'stork's bill'. If you find it in flower you may wonder how on earth it got its name. Come back later in the year and you will see the long, pointed seed cases that look like a stork's bill.



A piece of pre-history

At the foot of the sandy cliffs and banks, look for flat, brown pieces of stone. They look almost like they are made of metal. That's because they are full of iron! This rock is called ironstone. It was formed millions of years ago.



PLEASE DO NOT MOVE LARGE PIECES OF ROCK - this will disturb any lichens growing on their surfaces.

Can you see...?

Dragonflies

Like sand martins, dragonflies hunt small insects over the pond in summer.



Map key	
	Site boundary
	Circular trail
	Public footpath
	Trees and scrub
	Cliff face
	Information panel

This old sand quarry is like a painting created jointly by people and nature. People provided the blank canvas, by digging the pit, and ever since, nature has been painting on this canvas.



Why is Bull Heath special?

If you were describing Kent's countryside to someone who had never been here, what would you talk about? You might mention the many woodlands, the acres of orchards and the majestic chalk hills. You probably wouldn't tell them about old sand quarries like Bull Heath.

But that's exactly what makes Bull Heath special - it's unusual!

When quarrying stopped, the pit became a home for plants and animals that like sandy conditions. They don't have many places to live in Kent, so Bull Heath is very important for them.

For this reason, the Kent Wildlife Trust have made Bull Heath a 'County Wildlife Site'.

Read on to find out more about the wildlife that likes the sandy conditions here...

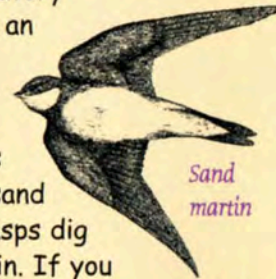


Cliff face value

The sand cliffs left by quarrying are perfect homes for some special wildlife...

If you are interested in wildlife, you have probably heard of a bird called a house martin, and you may know that it likes to nest on the walls of houses. Can you guess where the sand martin likes to nest?

It digs a burrow in sand, and the sandy cliffs that form the sides of this quarry are perfect for it. Sand martins are migratory birds - every year they make an incredible journey from Africa to Britain to breed.



Sand martin

Some much smaller creatures also make their home in the sand cliffs. Burrowing bees and wasps dig tiny holes in the sand to live in. If you were only half a centimetre tall, and you crawled inside one of these holes, you might get a nasty surprise...Burrowing wasps use their holes as 'larders' for storing dead creatures like caterpillars which they eat!

Look out for...

Sand martin burrows

Look up to the high parts of the cliff faces. The small holes in the sand are sand martin burrows.



Lichens, mosses and the Starship Enterprise

Look down as you walk around and you will see that what's going on at ground level is rather unusual...

What are you used to seeing growing on the ground? Grass and daisies perhaps. But not here! Much of the quarry floor is covered in weird and wonderful lichens and mosses. Have you ever seen anything like this before? If not, that's because this habitat, known as a 'lichen and moss heath', is very unusual in Kent.

Mosses and lichens really are weird.

Mosses are plants but they don't have flowers! Lichens are even stranger: Imagine, if you can, two living things that grow so closely together that they look like a single organism. It may sound like something out of Star Trek, but that's what a lichen is! The two things living together are a fungus and an alga.

Can you find...



Lichen



Moss

In fact, lichens and mosses are like the crew of the Starship Enterprise. Why? Because they boldly grow where nothing has grown before! They are often the first species able to take a foothold on bare ground, which is why they like Bull Heath so much. Their job is to pave the way for other species to follow - they are nature's tiny pioneers.