

SUMMER VISIT 2009

LAND AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AFTER GRAVEL AND SAND EXTRACTION

Panshanger Park and Waterford Quarry, Hertfordshire

Date: Thursday 9th July 2009

PROGRAMME

10.30am	<p>Meet at Waterford Quarry, closed landfill site. (Postcode SG14 2QE)</p> <p>Introductory talk by Viridor Waste Management followed by tour on foot looking at restoration to agriculture and forestry, including Forest Research site where 'ridge and furrow' technique was employed.</p>
11.45am	<p>Drive to the White Horse Hotel, Hertingfordbury for buffet lunch.</p>
13.15pm	<p>Drive to Lafarge Aggregates, Area Office at Panshanger Park. Introductory talk from Lafarge followed by:</p>
14.00pm	<p>Site Visit: Tour in 4x4's looking at restoration of mineral workings in historic 'Repton' parkland with mix of agriculture, conservation, wetland creation, woodland and veteran tree management schemes.</p>
15.45pm	<p>Return to Lafarge office for departure.</p>

You need to bring stout footwear. We will not be entering working quarry areas, so no need for PPE (high-vis jackets etc) but would recommend waterproofs / umbrellas!

The nearest railway station to Waterford Quarry is Hertford North Station. We can arrange pick ups if people need them.

Outline of visit

Having had two recent visits to large regeneration schemes (Longbridge and Waverley); the summer BLRS visit will focus on land and ecological restoration after mineral working in Hertfordshire, hosted by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Viridor Waste Management and Lafarge Aggregates. HCC's Restoration Manager, Andy McIntosh, will guide us with the respective site owners around two quite different sites. It is very much an outdoor, walk and talk visit.

Waterford Quarry

We meet on site at the old Waterford Quarry, which is a closed landfill. A working quarry and landfill for many years, the site was restored progressively through the 1980's and 1990's and finally closed around 10 years ago. The site has a complex patchwork of different planning permissions and associated restoration standards. The present owners, Viridor, will outline their plans for the future management of the site, which comprises a mixture of agriculture and forestry restoration over non-inert landfill, including an area of re-restored land that was completed in 1998 to address an earlier problem of 'differential settlement'. A representative from the Forestry Commission will also explain their involvement through trials of the pioneering 'ridge and furrow' restoration technique for forestry on landfill. There is also an ongoing heathland restoration project on a nearby quarry site at Waterford Heath.

Lunch

After a short drive in our own cars, we have lunch at the White Horse Hotel in Hertingfordbury. Those with cars please offer lifts to those without, there is plenty of parking available at the Hotel.

Panshanger Park

After lunch we drive the short distance to Panshanger Park, the South-East area office of Lafarge Aggregates, which also contains a working quarry within the park. After an introductory talk from Lafarge at their offices in old stable block, we will be given a guided tour of the park in 4 x 4's.

Panshanger Park is a 400ha Grade II* listed parkland designed by Humphrey Repton but also containing remnants of an earlier 'Capability' Brown parkland. The mansion was dismantled in 1950's although some historic structures remain, including The Orangery. The site is now owned by Lafarge Aggregates and is another with a complex history of various planning permissions. The site has more recently been subject to a successful re-negotiation of 'old' 1980's planning permission through the 'RoMPP' (Review of Mineral Planning Permissions) mechanism. Still an operating quarry, the site has the benefit of a detailed package of phased extraction and restoration within carefully constrained working areas and all subject to a legal agreement and environmental management plan, all of which has been designed to be sympathetic to Repton's original vision for the park.

On our tour we will learn about the process and negotiations involved in harmonising physical restoration with amenity, agriculture, conservation and historic heritage, including the sites substantial number of 'veteran' trees. We will visit restored agricultural land (I am trying to negotiate a soil pit to look at!), a recreated chalk stream, lakes and wetland scrapes, woodland and veteran tree management as well as the cleared 'footprint' of the demolished house and finally, the famous veteran tree known as the 'Panshanger Oak'.

We hope for fine weather but probably won't get it! Nevertheless please come and join us on this very interesting visit, all members and non-members welcome.