

# Reigate Heath

**Reigate Heath is a 51 ha Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve owned by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.**

Heathland was probably created during the prehistoric period, when the poor soils were exhausted by early farming activities. For many centuries afterwards this area was regarded as waste land - too poor to use for arable farming, and was used for grazing instead.

This situation continued until the middle part of the 20th Century when agriculture changed and grazing stopped. As a result tree and scrub growth invaded the heathland making major changes to the landscape & wildlife

## A changing landscape

During the last century forestry cover in this country dramatically increased and vast tracts of heathland were planted with trees or used for housing. As a result Britain has lost nearly 80% of its heathland over the last 200 years. This cultural landscape with its unique variety of life is now rarer than woodland in Surrey and it is important that this scarce habitat is protected.



### Key to map



Bronze Age Tumuli



Greensand Way



Horse riding allowed



Car Park



Bus Stop



Pub

Reigate Heath is open access land and considerate visitors are welcome.

Walkers are welcome but please take care when walking on or near the golf course.

Dog walkers must pick up after their dogs.

Cyclists must stay on the public bridleway, but are welcome to leave their cycles in the car parks and visit the Heath on foot.

Please observe the byelaws of Reigate Heath (Displayed on the rear of this board).

There is a permissive horse ride available for horse riders (please do not ride anywhere else on the Heath).

Stonechat perched on gorse

Small copper butterfly

Gorse bush

Alder Buckthorn

Heather

### Can you spot a Burial Mound on site?

In this fragile sandy soil are seven Bronze Age burial mounds called Tumuli or Barrows, which were built on high ground above wild open spaces several thousand years ago. These are now Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

A number of these mounds were excavated during the 19th Century, and cremation pots were found. The pine trees seen here today were originally planted on the barrows at this time to beautify the landscape, since then these trees have spread to many other parts of the heath.

### What makes the small holes in the paths?

There are many different types of insect which rely on this heathland habitat. See if you can spot one of the Spider Hunting Wasps burrows in the footpath. This species captures its prey and buries it alive to become food for its larvae.

This is one of the many reasons that the Heath is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

There are two types of snake which can be found on this heath, the adder (pictured) and grass snake. There are also 2 types of lizard, the common lizard, and slow worm.

This board has been funded jointly by an Environmental Stewardship Grant from Natural England, The Friends of Reigate Heath, and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

We are often out and about on the Heath, and would be happy to answer any questions you have. Alternatively please contact the Countryside Manager on 01737 276000 or visit [www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk](http://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk).

Designed and illustrated by John Barber 2011

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