

Welcome to Greenham & Crookham Commons

This leaflet provides a brief introduction to Greenham & Crookham Commons. Recently opened up to the public, the commons form a valuable wildlife and amenity site.

Try one of the suggested circular walks or just wander at will amongst some of Berkshire's most spectacular heathland and beautiful landscape.

How to find Greenham & Crookham Commons



An Introduction to the Commons

Greenham and Crookham heaths have long been 'Common Land' ~ areas of land open to the general public on which people who have 'commoners rights' may graze their animals, take gravel, cut turf and collect firewood.

In 1941 the land was taken by the Air Ministry to become an important military base, home to British squadrons and then the American Air Force.

In 1981 nuclear armed Cruise Missiles arrived at Greenham and the site became notorious for anti-nuclear demonstrations. Now, the site is once more open to the public and is managed for wildlife by West Berkshire Council.



The Nightjar is one of Britain's rarest birds. Listen for the distinctive call on a summers evening. Nightjars can also be seen silently hunting for insects over the heath at dusk.

Why are the Commons Important?

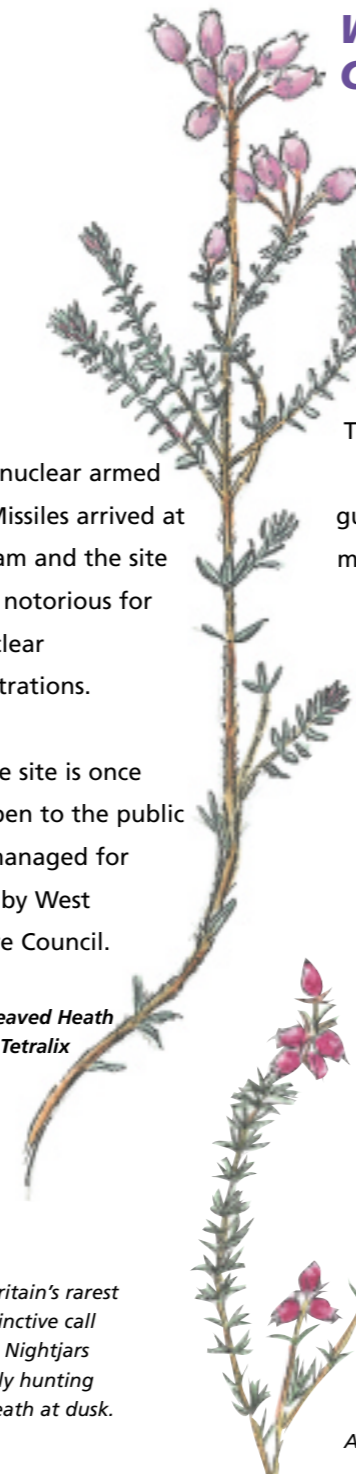
Greenham and Crookham Commons make up the largest area of lowland heathland in Berkshire.

They also contain ancient woodlands, alder-lined gullies, remnants of valley mire and sphagnum bogs, newly created ponds, wetlands and grassland rich in wildflowers.

Already the site has been designated a site of 'Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) and is home to many rare and endangered plants and animals.

Heathland is a rare habitat dominated by dwarf heather and gorse and is typically found on acidic free draining soils. In recent times heathland habitat has suffered a dramatic decline in area (80% loss). As heathland is re-established on what was concrete runways this process will be reversed.

Crossed Leaved Heath
Erica Tetralix



Bell Heather
Erica Cinerea

Heathers are becoming increasingly rare as heathland habitat is lost. They provide a spectacular wash of colour in August and September.

Restoring and Maintaining Greenham & Crookham Commons

Returning the airbase to nature will take time and money. Parts of the site were contaminated by aviation fuel which is being cleared by a natural process bioreduction.

Areas of open gravel are being re-colonised by heathland and grassland plants. This process is given a helping hand by scattering of mown seed heads in autumn.

Many of the special plants and animals living on the heath would not survive if it were not for such management.



Heather
Calluna Vulgaris

On the heath and grassland, mowing and grazing are used to keep down the growth of scrub which would eventually turn the heath into woodland.

Remember the Country Code!

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
Guard against all risk of fire
Fasten all gates
Keep dogs under close control
Keep to public paths
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
Leave livestock and machinery alone
Take your litter home with you
Help keep all water clean
Protect wildlife, plants and trees

When at Greenham & Crookham Commons please be especially aware that:

The site is important for ground nesting birds which can easily be disturbed. Please keep all dogs on a lead during the breeding season 1st March to 30th June.

Heathland and its associated mosses and lichens are very susceptible to trampling. Please keep to paths. Bylaws that apply to the commons are published separately and should be adhered to.



Autumn Ladies Tresses



GREENHAM & CROOKHAM COMMONS

RESTORED TO LOWLAND HEATH FOR THE COMMUNITY OF WEST BERKSHIRE



AN INTRODUCTION AND GUIDE TO THE COMMONS

THEN, Greenham Common was once a strategic military site

NOW, the Commons are full of life and here for everyone to enjoy