

## The History of Linslade Canal Festival



Linslade Canal Festival is a free community event with a heritage and conservation theme and is situated in a unique setting. The Waterside Park was once a working quarry with its sand being transported all over England for the building industry. In 1960 the quarry closed and the park reverted to its natural state, becoming home to many species of wild plants, animals and insects. The park is now managed by the Greensand Trust on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council, which is responsible for an ongoing management plan to develop and maintain

the site. A surfaced path running around the lake has recently been completed providing easy access for all and a new pedestrian footbridge will be opened in 2009.

The first Linslade Canal Festival took place in July 2002 in a small area of the park. The tranquil setting and access to the lake and canal side provided an ideal setting for the event, which has grown steadily in popularity, and now attracts 6000 visitors annually.

Today the festival site is divided into three areas, the **Paddocks**, in which numerous arts and crafts stalls are located selling quality goods such as jewellery, paintings and collectables as well as displays by local interest groups. The **Lakeside** where, traditionally, charitable groups and wildlife organisations, children's activities and hands-on workshops are sited. Further along you will find **the Poplars** featuring demonstrations of traditional rural crafts such as bodging and besom brooms, pyrography and spar making. A gentle stroll among the trees will lead you to a pedestrian footbridge, which crosses the Grand Union Canal to allow visitors access to the towpath and the colourful display of narrow and working boats.

The festival also features a programme of musical entertainment including traditional folk singing and Morris dancing. The music arena is located in the **Paddocks** giving visitors an opportunity to sit awhile, enjoy the music and some refreshments from the many food stalls or to just take in the atmosphere of this popular Waterside event.

