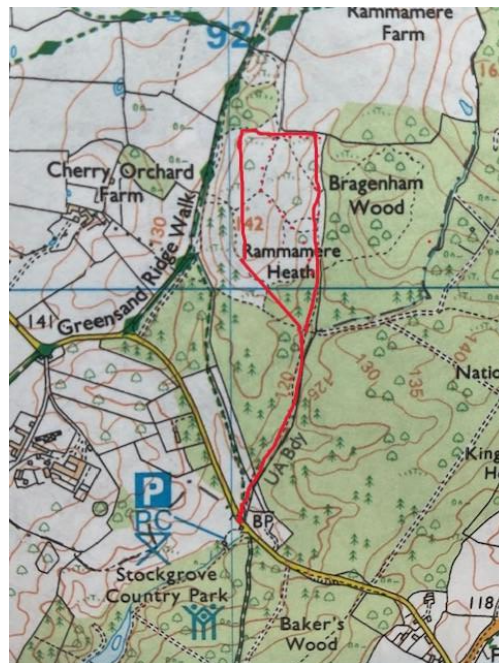


**MKNHS Plant Group**  
**Rammamere Heath 11 May 2025**  
**Report of visit**

**Co-leaders: Charles Kessler and Di Parsons**

**Introduction**

The objective of this visit was to observe heathland plants, heath being an unusual and limited habitat for Milton Keynes. On a bright, sunny spring day we headed north from the car park on the Heath and Reach to Great Brickhill road. This took us alongside the medieval woodbank and ditch separating King's Wood from Rammamere Heath and, indeed, the counties of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. We then moved onto the heath itself, walked along the crest of the heath and turned east to the border of Bragenham Wood whence we returned south to our start.



*Map of the area showing our route in red.*

**Approach to the heath**

On our way to the heath we were able to observe many of the classic heathland plants, notably Heather (Ling), with its tiny leaves pressed close to its stems, and Gorse and Broom, two yellow-flowering shrubby legumes, the former being heavily armoured with spines and the latter more woody.

**The heath itself**

Once on the heath we were able to appreciate the typical heathland vegetation dominated by heather and wavy hair grass, with isolated gorse and birch trees as in the photo below:



*General view of the heath with heather, gorse and birch.*

Heaths are man-made and are formed after woodland has been cleared on poor soil, in this case on acid, sandy soil. If undisturbed, heathland naturally develops back into woodland as trees move back in and gradually enrich the soil. However, in practice, heathlands became part of the farming system, providing grazing for livestock, heather for thatch, bracken for bedding, gorse for bread ovens and broom for fuel. Constant disturbance, including fire, results in a landscape that is now valued scenically and for its unique wildlife. Archaeological evidence shows some heaths to date from the Bronze Age, some 3,000 years ago. Historical sources give the name Heath and Reach as far back as 1276, suggesting the great age of local heaths.

We observed on the heath many birch seedlings and bracken and if these are not kept in check the heath will disappear. A small herd of Manx sheep and human volunteer action help maintain the heathland vegetation.

The heath is part of the King's and Baker's Woods and Heaths SSSI, and adjoins King's Wood and Rushmere NNR and Rushmere Country Park; it is owned by Tarmac and managed in cooperation with Greensand Trust and BCNWT.

### **A mosaic of soils**

Leaving the heath at its north-east corner, we passed down into a valley area adjoining Bragenham and King's Woods with more clayey and damp soil and correspondingly different flora. Below the Oak, Hazel and occasional Holly, we were lucky to find Moschatel, Yellow Archangel, Bluebell and Lily-of-the-Valley. Leaving the site was a fine view of Hawthorn in flower and Bluebell in an area which will become dominated by bracken as the season progresses.



*Hawthorn in flower and bluebell*

### **Thanks**

To Anne Champion and Janice Robertson for the list of plants, and to Julian Lambley and Jagoda Zagac for the photographs

**Charles Kessler**  
**May 2025**

### **Annexes**

- Consolidated List of Plants observed: <https://mknhs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Rammamere-plant-list-11.05.25.pdf>
- Photographs: <https://mknhs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Rammamere-Heath-photos-11.05.25.pdf>