

Why are geographers interested in marston vale?



Marston Vale lies upon the Oxford clay, between Bedford and Milton Keynes in UK. The soils in this area are very fertile.

Because the majority of English houses are built in bricks, and the location of Marston Vale is also near London, many brickwork industries were set in this area over last hundred years. Most of the clay extracted here is sent to London to build houses. Today, the extraction of clay and the brick making is still busy, and the Stewartby brickwork industry is one of the biggest industries formed in Marston Vale.

Millions of tonnes of clay are extracted from the clay pit everyday, then the clays are transported by conveyor belt to the brickwork, where the clays are drained, moulded and then fired in kilns to make the red bricks that are used to build houses.

After all the clay that is valuable to mine has been extracted, huge holes are left on the ground. The topsoil has been removed from the ground during clay extraction, and so no plants will be able to grow in such areas. The area turn to worse if there is rain, the whole area will turn muddy and dirty.

A chain of pits stretches along the A421 from Bedford to the M1 near Milton Keynes. This was one of the worst areas of rural derelict land and damaged Ecosystem.

The noise, pollution, traffic and bad view that has been produced by the extraction pit and brick making factory affect local residents badly.

What can be done to improve the situation?

In 1989, 12 National Community Forest projects were launched. These Forests will cover 470,000 hectares, which take over 3.6% of all land area in England and Wales, nearly equal to half the total land area used by the National Parks. The Community Forests is a national programme of improving the environment, which affects half of the people in England. Improving the countryside around towns and cities by planting woodland is the main aim of the Community Forests, especially in the areas of the derelict land. This will improve the environment and benefits the local people.

In theory, the land must be made to contribute to the local communities, e. g.:
Creating jobs, Creating farmlands, Creating an attractive environment,
Creating a variety of different landscapes, Creating sports facilities, Creating settlements.

The Marston Vale Community Forests

Marston Community forests is one of 12 National community forests projects which introduced in 1989. The Marston vale community forests cover a total area which more than 150 km². About 25,000 people are living inside the forest area, about 145,000 people are living on the edge of the area, most of them are in Bedford and Kempston, about 500,000 people are living within 20 minutes' drive. (These figures are from GeoActive)

In order to succeed in this project, local people should put efforts in planning, planting and looking after the woods that are planted. The past experience

has shown us that most environmental management, which involved local people, are more likely to succeed.

Local people are encouraged by the Forest team to grow their own seeds in Marston Vale Community Forest project. The results of that are small woodland have begun to grow in their villages.

Forest team also need to encourage landowners to allow their land to be planted with trees and organise seed collection and planting days. (This information is from GeoActive.) From this act, we know that the Marston Vale Community Forest project does not just involve the restoration of the clay extraction pits, but also allows local people to get in. It encourages people to plant trees, to protect the woodland created, to take a part in the development of the forest. The most important thing is people will love what they have planted, in order to love the whole nature.

The restoration of the clay extraction pits in Maston Vale community Forest

There are three possible ways to restore the clay extraction pit:

- The main restoration for the clay extraction pits is by changing them to an artificial forest. The way of doing so is to spread 3-4 metres of topsoil over the top. Then trees may be able to be planted in. The local people are involved in the development of the Marston Vale community forest. The plan is for local people to plant 100 ha of woodland each year and 5 Km of hedgerow each year. Farmers can apply for grants from the Forestry Commission for planting woodland.

- The huge hole left on the ground can also be turned into an artificial lake by pouring water into the pit, or just leave them until the rain season comes. Separate clay extraction holes may be joined together by digging out the soil between them. The Stewarby Lake is an example of this restoration.
- There's also another restoration, which is making it into a landfill site. I personally think this is a fantastic restoration, because this is also a waste solution. Million tonnes of waste can be buried in the clay extraction every day. This solved the crisis of waste in London. After the waste is filled in, plants can also be planted on top. After a long time, a chemical reaction will be happen when the waste decays and the methane gas is produced in this process. We went to an L-field landfill site, which is run by Shanks company; more information on landfill site will be in the back.

Issues in the Maston Vale to Look at

A Geographer will particularly look at the environmental issues in this area, such as how clay extraction damages the area's Ecosystem, how this affects local people, and what can be done to solve the problems, and finally are these attempts successful or not, and what can be improved?

To answer all these doubts, I will first introduce the area to the readers, give them the exact location of the Marston Vale area and what transportation is available to get there.

To let readers understand more about my coursework, especially on the day we went to the Marston Vale. I'll explain clearly what we've done on the

fieldtrip; where we did them; why we did them; and what are the data can tell us.