

River restoration



In parts the Great Stour has chalk stream characteristics. Chalk rivers in the UK are classified as priority habitats and need to be maintained. Past management on the Great Stour, however well-intentioned, has changed the habitat resulting in the loss of some of the chalk stream characteristics. The river has been straightened, over-widened and over-deepened causing sluggish stretches. These are prone to silt deposition which smothers the natural gravel beds reducing the habitat available for fish to spawn. The river is also less able to cope with low flows during dry summers. During 2008/09 the Environment Agency has been restoring the river to a more natural condition at three sites in Ashford and Canterbury. Over 1km of river has been restored.



Before and during works

An example of this restoration work can be seen at Henwood just upstream of the M20 motorway. Here about 50 metres of the river bank has been re-profiled. Before the restoration the bank was very steep with very little marginal habitat. The re-profiled section has now been planted with native plant species and will be allowed to establish into a reed bed which will provide a habitat for wildlife such as the Water Vole.

Another successful summer of Ashford Green Corridor events!

The summer programme of Ashford Green Corridor events once again proved hugely popular, with most events being overbooked. Look out next summer for a further programme. Thanks to Interreg and Ashford Futures for funding the events. For more information go to www.ashfordgreencorridor.org.uk



Woody wonders, Buxford Meadow



In the river, Watercress Fields

Farmers' Markets in the Stour Valley

Chartham Farmers' Market - Chartham Village Hall, every Thurs. 2.30-6pm

Egerton Farmers' Market - Egerton Millennium Hall, access via Rockhill Road or Elm Close - every Fri. 2-4.30pm

Sandwich Farmers' Market - Guildhall Forecourt - the last Sat. of each month 9-1pm

Whitstable Farmers' Market - St Mary's Hall, Oxford St, 2nd & 4th Sat. of the month 9.30-2 pm

Wye Farmers' Market - Wye Green - first and third Sat. of the month

Volunteering

Come along and lend a hand with a variety of enjoyable and worthwhile practical conservation projects throughout the Stour Valley!

For our detailed programme phone us on 01233 813307 or go to our website and click on 'get involved'.

Countryside events in the Stour Valley

For information about events in the Stour Valley visit the following websites:

KSCP: kentishstour.org.uk

The Blean Initiative: theblean.co.uk

Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org

Denge Wood Butterfly Project: dengewoods.org

Wildwood (Herne): wildwood-centre.co.uk

Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk

Canterbury Environmental Education Centre:

naturegrid.org.uk

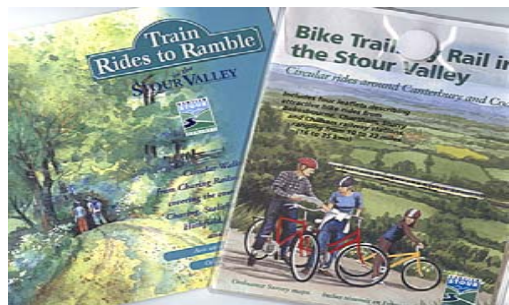
Volunteer days

Wednesdays (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at the KSCP offices.

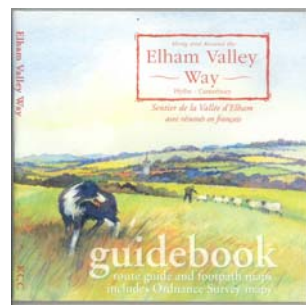
Thursdays (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices

or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.

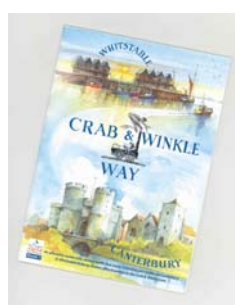
KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside



Train Rides to Ramble (£2.00) & *Bike Trails by Rail* (£1.50) Circular walks and cycle rides from railway stations in the Stour Valley. Full colour, maps & directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Elham Valley Way (£5.00) Recreational walk produced by Kent County Council with help from KSCP.



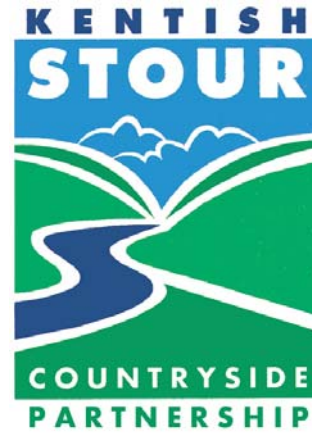
Crab & Winkle Way (Free) A guide to this walking/cycle path with map.



Wildsites (£1.00) A guide to 31 wildlife sites in the Stour Valley.

All available from local Tourist Information Centres, quality bookshops, KSCP, and Kent County Council (08458 247600 or env.publications@kent.gov.uk).

Stour View for Ashford & The Low Weald, Downs, Canterbury & Wantsum is produced in January, May and September. Stour View is printed on Elemental Chlorine Free paper from wood pulp from sustainable forests and includes recycled fibre.



The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in & around Ashford & the Low Weald

Stour View

Issue 43
Autumn/Winter 2009

Ashford & The Low Weald

Once a traditional rural market town, Ashford is changing rapidly. The River Great Stour, being the only major river in East Kent, is a special asset, along with its green corridors running through the town into the countryside. Outside of the town are the pretty settlements at the foot of the downs, and of the Low Weald and Greensand Ridge. There is a good hedgerow network and many ponds on the clay soils. Views from the Greensand Ridge across the Weald are stunning.

Eco-corridor warriors on the bike path!

You might have thought the large group of French cyclists on the Ashford Green Corridor bike path were checking out a potential UK leg for the Tour de France, but they kept stopping to look at the wildlife! KSCP was in fact showing members of Nord Nature Chico Mendes (NNCM) and Parc naturel regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale (PNR) how we are helping the council manage and improve wildlife habitat in Ashford – providing an eco-corridor for wildlife through the town to the countryside.



What is an eco-corridor? It's where plant life and other landscape features (ponds, rivers and meadows) connect to create a corridor that allows wildlife to live, thrive and move through it. Gardens can also provide eco-corridors in towns! NNCM and PNR do similar work with schools, landowners and councils in different areas throughout Northern France – the tour was a European funded exchange.



Hothfield Heathlands, a world away

Stepping onto Hothfield Heathlands, one would be forgiven for mistaking the heather clad landscape with patches of Cotton Grass and Devil's Bit Scabious for that of the extensive New Forest. The site, a nature reserve managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT), is undergoing restoration that will harness the rich diversity of a heathland community. Heathland, defined as a patchwork of smaller habitats including wetland, scrub, heathers, grassland and scattered



Grazing cattle on Hothfield Heathlands (Ian Rickards)

trees is a declining habitat. Over the last 200 years, over 80% of heathland has been lost nationally. Small Copper butterflies, Viviparous Lizards and carnivorous sundew plants are a few of the outstanding and unusual treasures of a heathland habitat. Heathland and acid bog habitat can easily be lost through inappropriate management including under and over grazing as well as scrub encroachment. The site is currently grazed by Highland cattle and Konik ponies. Both species are very efficient browsers and grazers. The Konik pony, closely related to the Tarpan, a primitive breed from Europe, is unlike native British pony breeds including Ex-moor, Dartmoor and Shetland, they cope well with wet boggy conditions and are excellent conservation tools. The site is open all year round and can be found on the A20 between Ashford and Charing. The KSCP will be assisting the KWT with heathland restoration. To find out more, or to get involved with conservation volunteering please contact the KSCP office.

Partnership Sponsors



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Don't ignore it – report it!

During the autumn hopefully many of you will be out enjoying the rivers in and around the Stour Valley; whether bird-watching, fishing or just enjoying the tranquillity of a stroll along the riverbank.

But do you know what to do if you see an 'environmental incident' such as pollution, fish in distress, or a blockage? The message is 'Don't ignore it, report it!'

To report an environmental incident please call the Environment Agency's **Incident hotline** on **0800 80 70 60** (Freephone*, 24 hour service). You should not use e-mail to report an incident, as this could delay the response.

*Calls from mobile phones are not free and will be charged at normal network.

Apply now for your Free Trees

The Free Tree Scheme has been expanded in 2009 to cover the Borough of Ashford as well as Canterbury and Thanet. Individuals and/or organisations can apply for up to 25 native trees. The scheme is sponsored by Network Rail, Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council and Thanet District Council.

For an application contact 08458 247600 or visit kentishstour.org.uk and look for the Free Trees Link. Closing date is 30th October 2009.



Forging newt territory

It's not a lizard, it's not a small gecko and it is not a Chinese Water Dragon, it is in fact our own native crested king of the British countryside. Measuring up to 17cm, this largest of Britain's newts is a glorious sight. As a species, newts have faced drastic population declines across the country as their natural habitat of ponds, rough grassland and hedgerows have been lost or fragmented through the actions of development, over management, fish stocking and agricultural intensification.

All newt species require water in which to lay their eggs. The females lay up to 250 eggs, wrapped in the leaves of submerged aquatic plants and grasses in the spring of each year, before returning to their terrestrial lifestyle in late summer. Many of the eggs are predated by fish, water beetles and snails. The presence or absence of Great Crested Newts provides a barometer of the health and diversity of the surrounding environment. Linking ponds through towns or the countryside with tracts of green land will actively promote the survival of this nationally protected handsome species.



Great Crested Newt



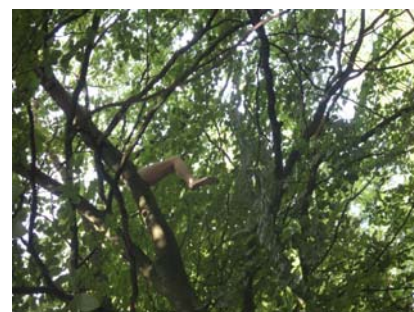
Newt habitat

Miracle of the Legs & Carboretum - Stour Valley Arts latest commissions

During 2008 Australian Gregory Pryor worked closely with people who use King's Wood and he recently returned to install his proposal, carvings of a leg each of three forest users - a local woman who walks in the forest early each day, one of the foresters who works in the woods and a child who came to a Stour Valley Arts workshop and told her mother 'it was the best day of my life'. These vigorous and active legs, constructed by Whitstable artist Will Glanfield, have now been attached to three different beech trees in King's Wood, symbolically re-invigorating the trees and suspended like sacrificial offerings. *Miracle of the Legs* will be an addition to the collection of works in King's Wood, which is free and open at all times.



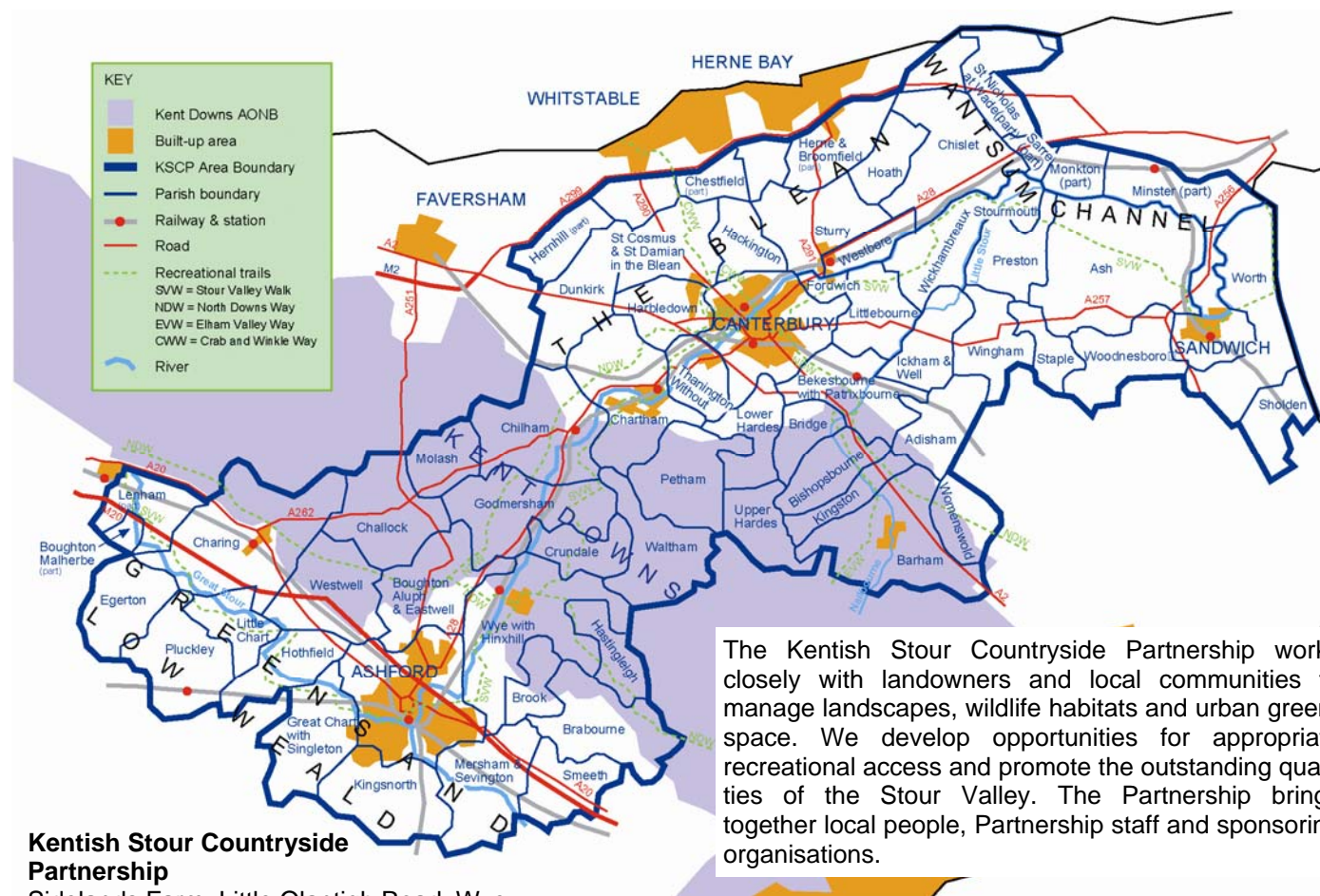
Carboretum



Miracle of the legs (Darius Wilson)

The main King's Wood car park is the unlikely setting for Edward Chell's new work, which continues his interest in overlooked pockets of the English landscape, those green spaces generally seen through the windscreen of a car. *Carboretum*: From Acer to Quercus makes a playful link between the ways in which labelling is used for botanical specimens and within corporate car parks. KSCP volunteers helped to install this piece and it can be seen until early next year.

About the Partnership



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The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership works closely with landowners and local communities to manage landscapes, wildlife habitats and urban green-space. We develop opportunities for appropriate recreational access and promote the outstanding qualities of the Stour Valley. The Partnership brings together local people, Partnership staff and sponsoring organisations.

Partnership Manager: Jon Shelton
Ashford Countryside Officer: Debbie Adams
Canterbury & Wantsum Countryside Officer: Carol Donaldson
Project Officer (P/T): Diane Comley

Evegate wetland trail tells a story

Evegate Farm and Business Centre, located on the A20 between Ashford and Sellindge, has opened its fields, marshlands and woodlands for the public to enjoy via a new trail leaflet. The leaflet, which depicts a route through the farm, explores the colourful and energetic range of plants and animals, including Ragged Robin and Common Snipe. A launch event for the trail, organised by the KSCP and attended by Aldington school young gardeners club, project supporter Rail Link Countryside Initiative (RLCI), Ashford Borough Council, Natural England, Public Rights of Way and Kent County Council, was held in the summer. It was a great success and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the two mile nature and history walk. To walk the trail, or visit one of the many shops and businesses including The Olde Oast Restaurant and Montgomery Veterinary Clinic, pick up a leaflet from the KSCP or the Evegate shopping centre.



Saving water saves lives

Hot, dry summer days may be welcome to us but to the wildlife in our rivers they can be challenging, even life-threatening. Wildlife in the River Stour depends on good water flow, yet over the course of a year we take out about 10 billion litres of water from the natural environment around Ashford. You can help make a difference for the local environment by just making a few simple changes to your lifestyle. For instance, if everyone in Ashford spent one minute less in the shower it would save enough water to fill an Olympic size swimming pool everyday; that's water that could be helping support the wildlife in our river. It could even make the difference between life and death.

Working with industry to protect the River Stour

The Environment Agency has been undertaking pollution prevention visits to the Cobbs Wood industrial estate in Ashford. And in April this proved extremely worthwhile. An incident on the site resulted in a leak of 20,000 litres of a highly polluting chemical. If this had found its way to the nearby River Stour it would have had devastating consequences for the wildlife in the river. Fortunately the pollution prevention measures employed by the company, and quick work by Kent Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency and Southern Water Services, meant that the pollutant was contained and the impact on the river was minimal.