

Little plant, Big impact



Rest-harrow (Dan Tuson)

Large tractors and immense cultivating appliances can be heard working the modern landscape in a plight to grow food for our ever expanding human population. Time-honoured and ancient farming methods are left only in our memories and encapsulated in idyllic oil paintings. However, there are other clues to our farming past hidden in the names of our native flora. Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*), a robust creeping plant of arable fields and meadows, requiring free draining soils, was known to stop a horse and plough in its tracks. The plants rhizomes, underground runners, would literally 'arrest' the drawn plough, making it very hard to work the land. Rest-harrow has many beneficial properties too including treatment of coughs and sore throats, as well as treatments for the kidney, bladder, rheumatism and chronic skin conditions. The roots were often chewed by children giving it the locally common name of 'Wild Liquorice'. Rest-harrow flowers from June to September.

Bug days at Brook School

What a lot of legs! (Lynda Gauthier)

Local village school, Brook Primary, is effortlessly winding their way to achieving a green Eco-school status. Schools working towards this prestigious award have to demonstrate that a range of environmentally friendly systems are in place to safeguard the local environment and our planet as a whole. Dedicated class monitors encourage peers to undertake a range of energy saving actions including turning off lights, reducing water use and promoting recycling and composting. The school is actively teaching the pupils about the natural world in their village and investigating the plants and animals that grow there. Themed days, including the colourful and highly imaginative bug dressing day, raises money, that is ploughed straight back into the school grounds and the pupils understanding of countryside conservation and food production.



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

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: friendsofkingswood.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

Volunteering

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

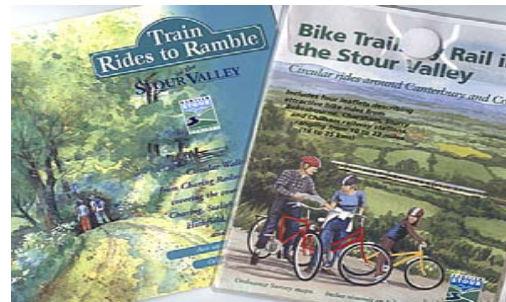
For our detailed programme phone us on 01233 813307 or go to our website and click on 'get involved'.

Volunteer days

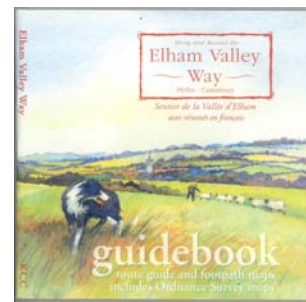
Wednesdays (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at the KSCP offices.

Thursdays (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.

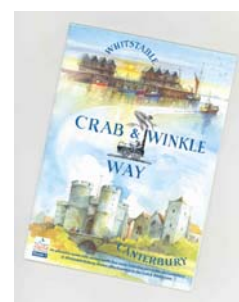
KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside



Train Rides to Ramble (£2.00) & **Bike Trails by Train** (£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 newsletter for people living in & around the Kent Downs AONB close to Ashford & Canterbury

Stour View

Kent Downs AONB

Issue 43
Autumn/Winter 2009

CONSERVING, ENHANCING AND PROMOTING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN GREEN SPACE OF THE STOUR VALLEY

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally protected landscape. It is special for its dramatic chalk escarpments like the Devil's Kneading Trough at Wye, secluded dry valleys, networks of tiny lanes and sunken byways, historic hedgerows, ancient woodlands, oast houses, unique and precious wildlife and sites of historic and cultural interest.

Good news bad news - King's Wood ponds

The KSCP and the Friends of King's Wood have worked together to create a new pond in King's Wood. The work was supported by a £4,000 grant from Viridor Credits who operate the Landfill Credits scheme from Shelford Landfill Site near Broadoak, Canterbury. It is the fourth pond that the Friends of King's Wood and KSCP have created over the last ten years. Unfortunately as one pond was created another one was destroyed by some mindless 4X4 drivers who decided to test the ability of their landrover in the pond and broke the clay lining.



The pond destroyed by a 4x4

Ponds in the countryside have disappeared as wet fields have been drained to increase productivity levels, and their use for watering stock has become less important. Loss of ponds means less of the wildlife that thrives on ponds such as amphibians, dragonflies, and wetland plants. Although ponds on the downs are not as abundant as those on the impermeable clays of the Weald, they can be very important because the downs are a drier environment and water is harder to come by. Newts are certainly breeding in one of the recently created ponds and it's hoped that more amphibians will breed in the new pond. The ponds are just part of a wider programme of wildlife conservation work that, over the last ten years, has turned the wood into an even more attractive environment for people and wildlife.



The new pond

The hurried life of mammals



Wood Mouse inspects his onlookers

The summer holidays are fraught with holiday plans and shopping trips, but in one corner of the Kent countryside a community group arranged an invaluable timetable of free wildlife events. The Charing Alderbed events included insect surveys, bat detecting, moth trapping and bird spotting too. One event in particular attracted participants from the bustle of modern living into the hurried world of small mammals. Harmless live traps caught a range of furry creatures including Wood Mice, Bank Voles and the rare Water Shrew. Fascinating facts included a Water Shrew's heart beating at 800 times per minute! They must eat over half their body weight in food each day to stay alive. Sounds exhausting! Small mammals are very important in our natural landscape. They eat a range of insects, seeds and berries and in turn provide an important food source to larger mammals and birds of prey. To discover more about the fast world in miniature look on the Kent Mammal Group website www.kentmammalgroup.org.uk.

Partnership Sponsors



Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate. The publishers can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership.

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.

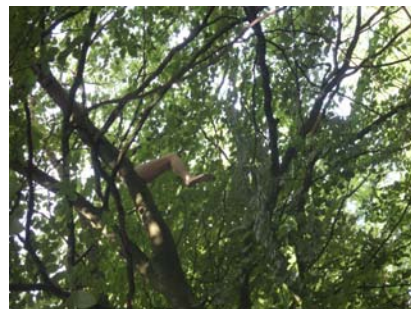
All newt species require water in which to lay their eggs. The females lay up to 250 eggs, wrapped in the leaves of submerged aquatic plants and grasses in the spring of each year, before returning to their terrestrial lifestyle in late summer. Many of the eggs are predated by fish, water beetles and 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.

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 2010.

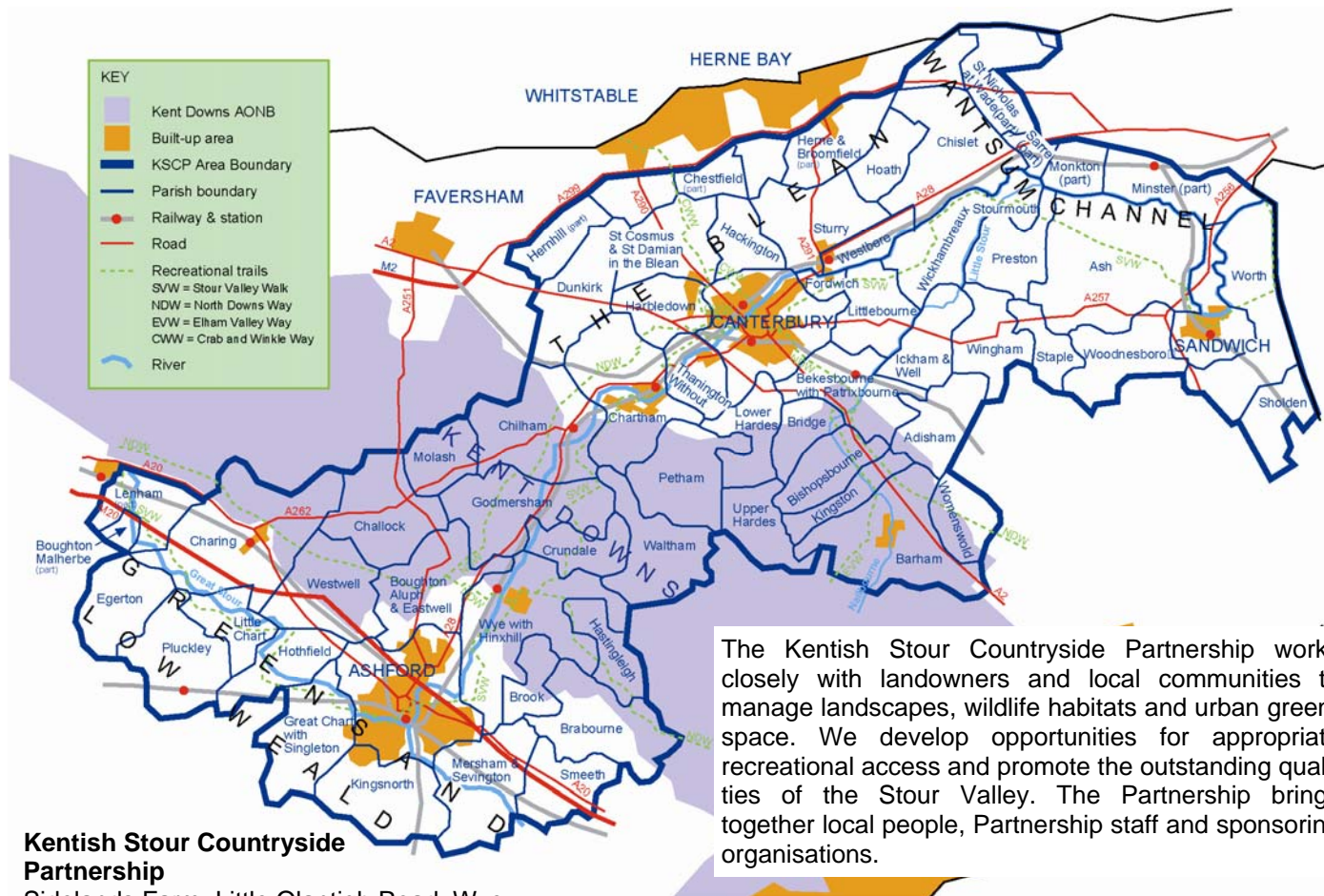


Great Crested Newt



Newt habitat

About the Partnership



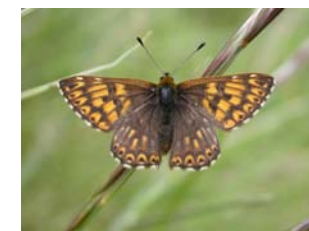
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The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership works closely with landowners and local communities to manage landscapes, wildlife habitats and urban green-space. We develop opportunities for appropriate recreational access and promote the outstanding qualities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

Hats off to the Duke

Work is due to start in two Forestry Commission Woods - Denge Wood, Waltham and Covert Wood, Barham following successful applications to Interreg and Viridor Landfill Credits by KSCP. Work at Denge will focus on extending the Duke of Burgundy butterfly habitat whilst at Covert, heathy areas will be extended and rides widened. The £40,000 projects will be completed by March 2010. The Denge Woods Project also had success with a BiFFA funding application for woodland management in Denge and Eggringe, so there should be a lot of work taking place there this year.



Duke of Burgundy butterfly (Sam Ellis)

Festival sunshine from our National Nature Reserve

Welcome to the Wildside, a project run by Natural England to actively promote community participation in the local countryside, hosted a naturally wild free family festival at the Devil's Kneading Trough, on the Wye Downs NNR. As the sun shone visitors to the site had an opportunity to visit stalls from a range of countryside and conservation bodies including the KSCP. Face painting and a whole range of activities including insect identification, butterfly walks, storytelling, charcoal burning and art piece creation took place throughout the day. A range of events are organised throughout the year by organisations such as the KSCP. To find out what may be happening in your area visit our website at www.kentishstour.org.uk



Encouraging young interest at the Wye Festival

Happy horses & walkers around Kingston

Walkers, equestrians and cyclists who have ever tried to use the bridleway across the A2 at Kingston will be pleased to hear that the Highway Agency is to build a bridge! For those of us who have taken our life in our hands and for those leading walks, the lives of others, this comes as very welcome news. The proposal has been on the cards for some years but the project might now be completed before the spring. The bridge also improves things for bus users and it links the Elham Valley Way with the North Downs Way. To see the proposed bridge visit www.kent.gov.uk/environment/public-rights-of-way/news/a2-bridge.htm