

The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in Ashford, Canterbury and the surrounding countryside

Stour View

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Summer 2011

The Great Stour Way open and busy!

The new Canterbury to Chartham riverside path, the Great Stour Way, was officially opened on Saturday 21st May by David Brazier - Kent County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste.



The three mile riverside path, which is already proving extremely popular, includes a new bridge over the river Great Stour behind Staples/Wincheap Park and Ride and is part of the National Cycle Network. It is a gateway for the people of Canterbury to the Stour Valley and to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

KSCP has been the lead organisation pushing the development of the route forward over the last 18 years. KCC Highway Services are responsible for the route and Canterbury City Council and Sustrans have also been instrumental in its development. KSCP has worked with many partner organisations, landowners and community groups. KSCP volunteers have also contributed hundreds of volunteer workdays to the project. The KSCP chairs the working group and was successful with over £250,000 of applications for external funding for the project.

Wetland creation in Kingsnorth

KSCP, working with Ashford Borough Council, has created six ponds and two seasonal wet areas on the edge of Park Farm in the South of Ashford. The ponds have been located on naturally low-lying areas of ground. KSCP volunteers have planted wildflowers at one of the ponds including ragged robin, marsh marigold, water plantain, ladies smock, purple loosestrife and flag iris.

The work has been part funded by the European Regional Development Fund Interreg IV programme.



Partnership Sponsors



Tackling misconnections – improving our rivers

Although much of the work we do at the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership involves working out in the open air, there are things we can all do to benefit our natural environment without leaving our homes. Take the quality of the water in our rivers. When most people think of river pollution they think of sources like factories, farms and industry. Yet in many cases, the pollution comes from a much less obvious place - **our homes**.



Those of us that live in modern, urban housing are probably served by what is known as a separate sewerage system. This means dirty water from household appliances is taken by a foul sewer to a wastewater treatment works where it is treated to make it safe to be returned to the environment. Whereas rainfall that falls on our property is generally piped away in a surface water drain to be discharged directly into our rivers. This is not normally a problem as surface water is usually quite clean.

However, sometimes mistakes happen and the foul water from domestic appliances such as sinks, baths, washing machines, dishwashers and even toilets, are connected to the surface water system rather than the foul system. This is known as a 'misconnection' and results in polluted water entering our rivers and streams untreated.

Did you know? Over a quarter of a million homes in England and Wales are pouring their dirty water straight into our rivers and streams.

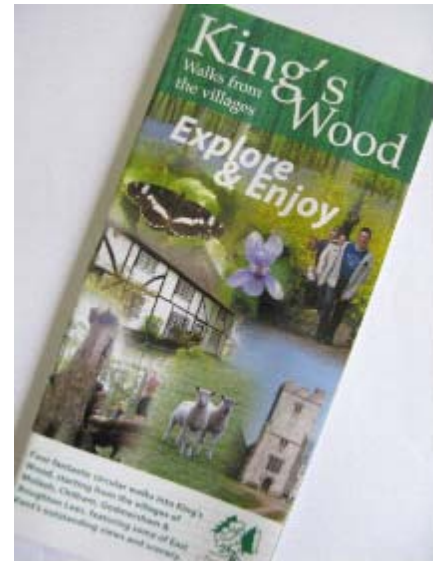
Southern Water Services, the Environment Agency and Ashford Borough Council have been working together in Ashford to encourage householders to check their plumbing to make sure it is not harming our environment. Checking for a misconnection is usually quite easy and to help you a dedicated website has been set up:

www.connectright.org.uk

If you find a misconnection it is often simple and cheap to sort out the problem. If you are unsure what to do you can contact your water company or a registered plumber for advice.

King's Wood - Explore & Enjoy

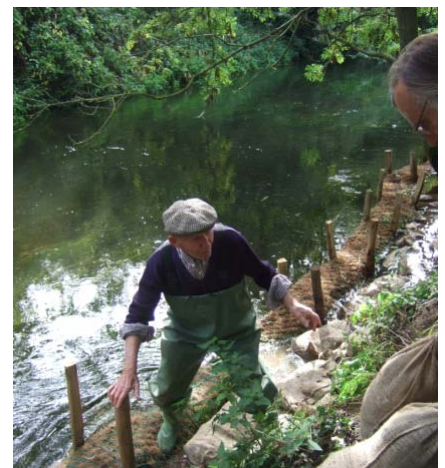
This is the title of a series of four walks from the villages around King's Wood promoted on a new free leaflet by the Friends of King's Wood and KSCP. Walks start from the attractive villages of Boughton Lees, Chilham, Godmersham and Molash and feature some of East Kent's outstanding views and scenery. The walks are intended to encourage people to eat and drink and buy local food in the villages as well as enjoy a walk in the countryside. There is also lots of information about the history and wildlife of King's Wood and points of interest along the routes.



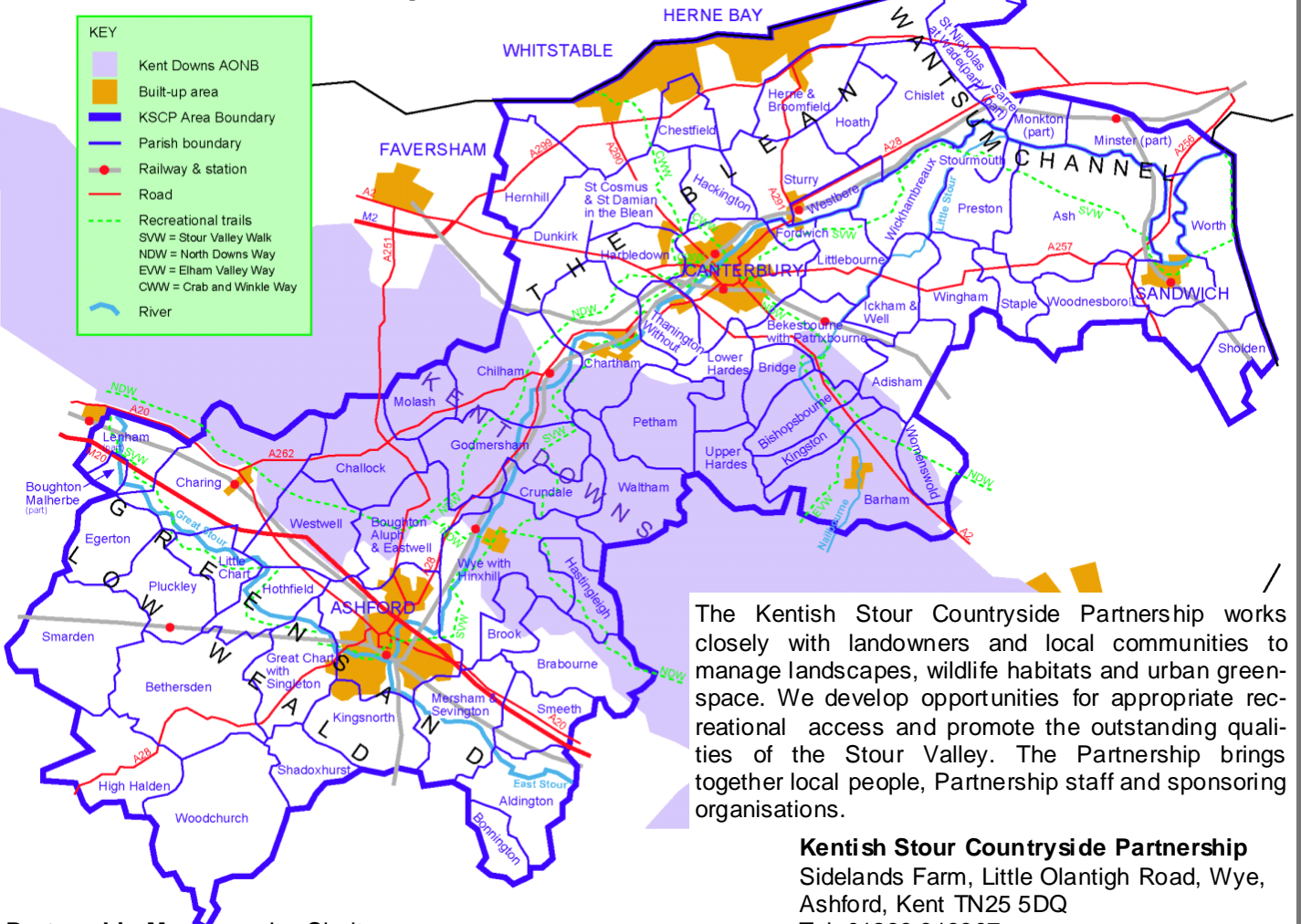
The leaflet is colourfully illustrated and Ordnance Survey mapping is used. Walks range from just over three miles to eight miles and are waymarked with standard Rights of Way arrows. Information about public transport is also included. The leaflet was funded by an Awards For All Big lottery grant to the Friends of King's Wood. The leaflet is available from local Tourist Information Centres and the villages featured on the walks. To download the leaflet or one of the walks visit www.kentishstour.org.uk

River Serpent appears in Chartham

Is it a serpent? Is it a work of art? Is it a stately home for water voles? These are just some of the questions asked of Canterbury countryside officer Carol Donaldson as she works with volunteers in the River Stour near Chartham. The structure is in actual fact an erosion barrier built by the KSCP volunteer team to protect the riverbank and new Great Stour Way path from the eroding effects of turbulent high water that occurs after heavy rain. The barrier is built from chestnut stakes and hazel faggots (bundles of twigs left over from coppicing woodlands) rolls of coir fibre top the structure that will be planted with vibrant native wetland plants. Keep an eye out this summer as the serpent is set to grow!



About the Partnership



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.

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www.kentishstour.org.uk

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

Entente Cordial

This spring our intrepid volunteers headed across The Channel to join forces with Les Blongios Conservation group to clear scrub from orchid rich chalk downland. The two groups of Conservation volunteers have been working together for ten years as part of the Landscape and Nature for all projects supported by the European Regional Development fund Interreg IV programme. A team from Les Blongios (the bitterns) arrived in Kent to work at Wraik Hill and Duncan Down near Whitstable. The team worked to protect the flower rich grassland and plant native trees. The exchange visits not only provide willing hands to undertake habitat management work but allow French and English volunteers the chance to share ideas and a love of the countryside on both sides of The Channel.



Internal Drainage Board Watercourse Survey

The River Stour Internal Drainage Board is responsible for the management of many streams and ditches in the Stour Valley. Now as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan they are working with KSCP to conduct a six-year survey of all the watercourses they manage. The work is all about conserving and improving the banks and channels for wildlife such as water voles and rare wetland plants such as tubular water dropwort. In 2010 29,500m of watercourse was surveyed stretching from Ashford to Reculver and Sandwich. The River Stour IDB are doing a good job for wildlife but this additional work moves them to the top of the class!

What are you doing next Wednesday?

Whether you are retired, between jobs, looking for work experience or just plain free to be able to give us a hand we would love to hear from you. Every Wednesday KSCP runs a practical task somewhere in or close to Ashford. Tasks range from planting trees, sowing wildflowers and laying hedges to picking up litter and installing bird boxes. All our tasks help in our work to create, enhance or manage wildlife habitats and improve access for the community to enjoy these sites. Volunteers enjoy being outdoors, learning practical skills, working with a range of people, getting a bit of exercise and knowing that they have made a difference. We provide the three Ts where ever possible - the tools, some training, and transport. As we are based in Wye volunteers either meet us here or at the task site. If you think you would be interested look below for details.



WILLESBOROUGH AND NEWTOWN RESIDENTS might be interested in joining their own local environmental group known as SWANEG (South Willesborough and Newtown Environmental Group). A fantastic bunch of people, SWANEG members meet up the first Monday evening of every month and do about one task a month in the green and wild corners of this part of Ashford. If interested call Sean on 070795 8544710

Calling all landowners

KSCP's Landscape Enhancement Partnership Scheme, enables landowners to undertake improvements to benefit landscape quality and wildlife habitats. Payments averaging £1000 are available to help fund such work as hedge-row planting, wildflower meadow creation and pond restoration. Awards average about 50% of the cost of undertaking the work. The scheme is likely to close at the end of October. Contact KSCP for further information.

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: friendsofkingwood.org

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

Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.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.

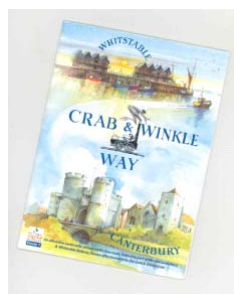
Thursdays (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.

KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside

All available from quality bookshops and KSCP. For information on other publications and free downloads visit kentishstour.org.uk



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.



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.