

VICTORIA PARK

A walk through history

Have you ever walked through Victoria Park and wondered about its history? As its name suggests it was created during the Victorian period when, as today, Ashford was growing rapidly. Between 1851 and 1901 the population more than doubled from 5000 to 12800!



Photo: © Ashford Museum

Entrance, Victoria Park, Ashford. Victoria Park, early 20th century

To provide more leisure facilities Victoria Park was created from 17 acres of farmland bought for the sum of £2780 from local landowner George Jemmet.

Trees were planted to commemorate important townspeople and members of the Royal Family. A band stand was built where the bowling club now stands, and in 1912 the park acquired its grandest feature – the Hubert Fountain.



Photo: © Ashford Museum

The Hubert Fountain in 1914

The fountain was made in 1862 in France and first displayed at the Second International Exhibition in London. It was later purchased by Major Sawbridge Erle-Drax of Olantigh House, Wye. Following a fire there, it was bought by local art dealer George Harper, who donated it to Ashford Urban District Council in 1912. It was installed in the park along with two cast iron stags on the balustrades, which are no longer on display.

It is thought that originally the fountain had a set of 64 whistles, and as a condition of the donation, Harper requested that each year, on his birthday, the fountain was 'let play'. In May 2016, the entire fountain structure was given a Grade II* listing by Historic England, who describe it as 'The finest of only three examples of listed iron ornamental fountains in England'.

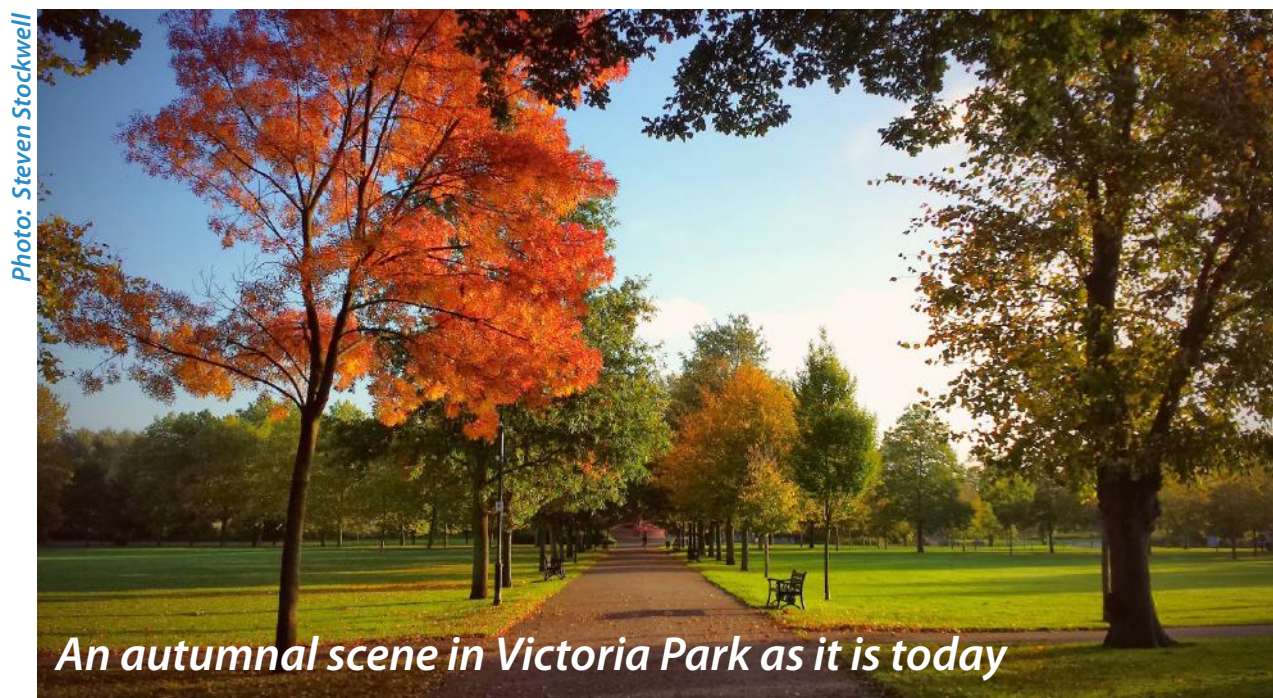


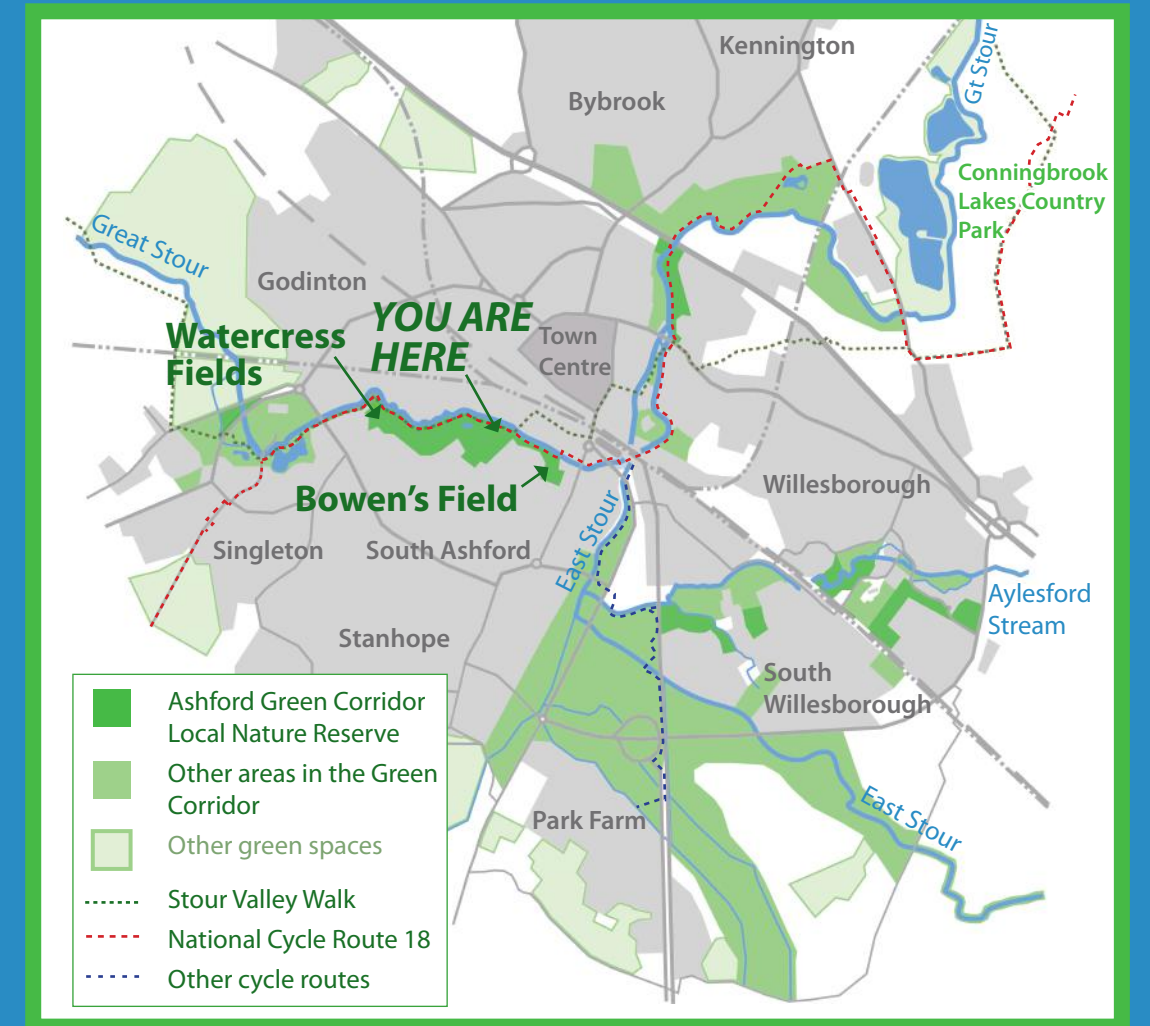
Photo: Steven Stockwell

An autumnal scene in Victoria Park as it is today

The park is still a great space for people but it is also a good place for wildlife. The trees, river and pond provide habitats for many species of birds, butterflies and other insects. Newts inhabit the pond and small mammals live in the woodland area nearby.



Peacock butterfly



The Ashford Green Corridor

Discover one of Ashford's greatest assets!

Since the middle of the 19th century Ashford has expanded but land close to the rivers has not been built on, due to the risk of flooding and because the Borough Council has protected it as green space. Some areas are designated as Local Nature Reserves.

The resulting undeveloped 'fingers' of land, around the rivers Great Stour, East Stour and Aylesford Stream, reach right into the heart of Ashford. Collectively they connect to form the Ashford Green Corridor, which provides both people and wildlife with routes through the town and to the countryside beyond.

Watercress Fields

Bowen's Field

An Ashford Green Corridor leaflet, which includes walking maps and information on other areas of the Corridor, can be downloaded as a PDF from www.kentishstour.org.uk or by scanning the QR code.

