



ASHFORD GREEN CORRIDOR HERITAGE PROJECT



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This heritage piece was produced by community groups, residents and Oak Tree Primary School in Ashford and compiled by the Ashford Green Corridor Officer. The Ashford Green Corridor is part of the Kentish Stour Countryside Project, which aims to conserve, protect and promote the Stour Valley. Funding for this heritage project was made available by the Heritage Lottery Funding

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Introduction

This heritage piece concerns an area of green space called the Ashford Green Corridor (AGC) that sits alongside the River Stour in Ashford. Although at risk of flooding from the River Stour, the flood plain role of the AGC has actually helped secure the land's very survival as green space. A periodic flow of water over the riverbanks during heavy rainfall has ensured nature prevails and with it an abundance of wildlife has remained or even taken up residency where habitats have been improved.

The Ashford Green Corridor is exactly as the name suggests - a 'corridor' and should not therefore be seen as an isolated piece of land. This corridor through Ashford creates a line for wildlife to either reside in or pass through on a migratory basis. Isolated pockets of habitat vegetation are of course important, but a link between them that extends out of an individual park, onwards out of village or town into the countryside and beyond into a neighbouring county, creates migration paths and interwoven links for wildlife that are far more beneficial.

As for the human element, green spaces such as the AGC offer people a chance to escape busy urban environments into the peaceful tranquillity and richness of nature. In fact any stranger visiting Ashford who should stumble upon this sudden green space in a supposed urban location, would be forgiven for thinking they had lost their way and wandered into countryside boundaries. Equally the AGC is an important spot for community groups such as ramblers, environmental groups, nature enthusiasts, health walkers and fisherman. Children can experience organised activities or schools visits or simply use the space for their own recreation.

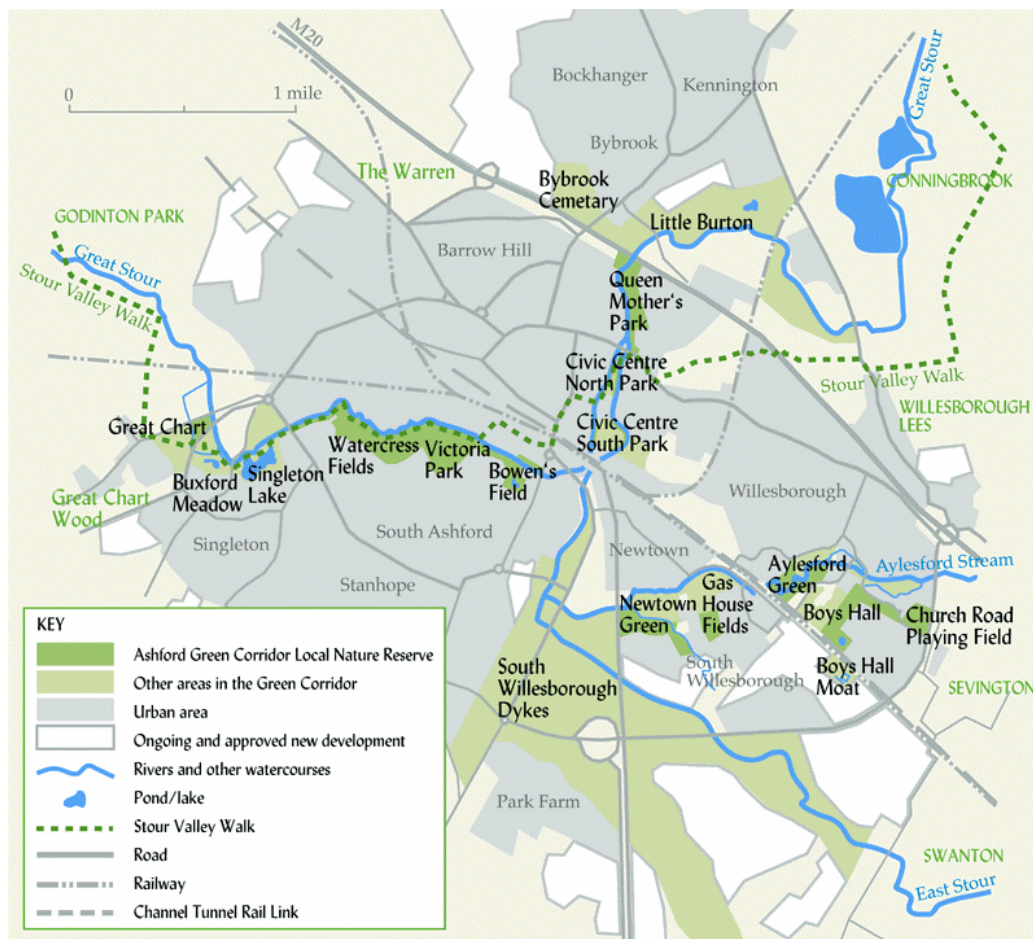
As much as the corridor acts a physical connection of green spaces, it is also a 'corridor' in terms of linking the area to its past. A sense of history which has of course principally been preserved by the river and its need for a flood plain. For whilst the appearance of bank side vegetation and adjacent land parcels may have changed, the course of the river has altered relatively little making it a direct link to the past. In similar historical terms, the Ashford Green Corridor is both a product of and influencing factor over the surrounding area, shaping past and future history. This project's aim therefore is to discover more of the Ashford Green Corridor's development by capturing the land use history and man-made heritage surrounding its individual sites. The corridor needs to be

placed within the context of the surrounding area and their changes in land use patterns, otherwise the meaning at the heart of this strip of land is lost.

The importance of the river to the ACC is hopefully by now clearly expressed and for this reason the findings of the heritage project will be presented as a journey following the river courses. As we follow its path, stops will be made to look at specific AGC sites and the historical influence of those land parcels that link to the site. Along the way a tale or two will be shared about both the characters that worked the land and the land itself.

Major themes that shaped the present need and usage of the green space, such as the market, railway and war are explored. In contrast more relatively unknown influences are also shared, which might otherwise have been lost altogether one day. There will be facts you may have heard repeatedly before and some that may prove new to you, but all of which needs to be preserved tight in one written piece somewhere, before they are lost forever. Let not the skill and pastime of storytelling in Ashford become a dying trait, but instead live on to ensure the importance of Ashford Green Corridor continues to be recognised once the project that takes its name ends this year.

The Ashford Green Corridor



In order to describe the AGC, it seems fitting to start with the River Stour and its two main tributaries, the Great Stour and the East Stour. The word 'Stour' means 'Strong and powerful' in Latin and was originally recorded as Stur in 686 AD. The Great Stour begins its journey close to the village of Lenham. Heading south-east, it passes through the beautiful estate of Godinton Park and enters the AGC parameters at Great Chart. At neighbouring Buxford Meadow you will notice on the previous page that the river makes an abrupt 45 degree change in navigation continuing initially north-easterly then meandering between this compass setting and a south-easterly one, through the AGC sites of Singleton Lake, Watercress Fields, Victoria Park and Bowen's Field. Once again the Great Stour has a change of mind and alters its navigation northwards through Civic Centre South Park. At the far end of adjacent Civic Centre North Park the Great Stour teams up with the second tributary river of the River Stour - the East Stour.

The East Stour starts from south easterly position in a village called Postling near Folkestone and travels in the opposite direction to the Great Stour on a north-easterly course. Having served several mills, passed almost unnoticed through villages and open spaces, South Willesborough becomes the first part of the AGC that it reaches. Once in the region of the South Willesborough Dykes, it makes the same northwardly change in direction as the Great Stour, flowing alongside one another through Civic Centre North Park. Ultimately the East Stour ends its own individual journey and joins the Great Stour through Queens Mother's park and little Burton on the outer reaches of the AGC. The two rivers then head off through the chalk of the North Downs towards Fordwich where they become the River Stour and make haste for the English Channel at Pegwell Bay.

There is one other watercourse that has shaped the present day AGC layout and that is Aylesford Stream, running through the heart of Willesborough and South Willesborough in Ashford. These rivers, streams and Dykes of Ashford have sought assistance from the surrounding low lying flat land, as much needed flood plain after heavy rainfall. The result is a corridor rich in habitat and attractive to the eye with a network of parks and open spaces. Water voles, breeding birds, white clawed crayfish, moths, butterflies, flowering plants, reptiles and amphibians are just a taster of the wildlife that takes delight in such a cared for riverside location. The management is varied, depending upon its human usage and wildlife. For example meadows have been created in some areas, with grassland being allowed to grow long for wildlife and then cut once in late summer. In contrast ornamental lawns in parkland are cut frequently to invite recreation.

In 2002 the space was named the Ashford Green Corridor and Ashford Borough Council officially declared parts of it Local Nature Reserves in December of that year. Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are places that are recognised for their wildlife interest and nature conservation value. The fact that the AGC has such wildlife rich habitats in such close proximity to where people live, makes the area extra special and helped gain its LNR status. For the AGC runs right through the heart of Ashford's centre; close to commerce, residential areas and busy transport links. However the AGC can also lead a person along the riverside from the town into the countryside. The parts of the green corridor on the outskirts of the town have therefore been likened to gateways to the countryside - ideal places to start exploring the rural areas surrounding Ashford.

Finally it is not just wildlife and the diversity of its users that gives the green corridor its richness, but also its past users. The manors of Singleton and Buxford in the west, to Boys Hall and Boys Hall Moat in the east, stand as links to the space's past. Similarly the names 'Watercress Fields and Bowen's Field' can be traced back to the land's more agricultural based beginnings. In looking at how the land used to be, we can gain a much better understanding of how the land came to be that which it is today - the Ashford Green Corridor.

Godinton

The journey of this heritage project begins at the outer fringes of the Ashford Green Corridor – at Godinton Park. At this point the AGC has completed its role of safe guarding and enhancing wildlife through an urban environment and providing a green space within which wildlife's fellow humans can enjoy active recreation or sit in quiet contemplation. At this gateway to the countryside the baton of principal custodian is handed over to one of the AGC's direct neighbours – Godinton Park.



Although Godinton house dates from the 14th century, it bares its weight upon some partly Roman brickwork foundations. It is imagined therefore, that the mediaeval builders of Godinton House were using building materials from a nearby bygone Roman settlement – materials that perhaps once formed a building of a very different style, with a deep history of its own. With the Romans having already

established a settlement in the vicinity, it is probable that the clearing of an otherwise thick forest area had already taken place. With that in mind a proportion of the hard work had already been undertaken, making it an obviously attractive site for a medieval person seeking a manner house plot. The combination of a ready made clearance with an adjacent woodland (now called Loudon Wood) still remaining for needs of fire wood, plus the passing of the River Stour to the site's southern boundaries and the closeness of Great Chart, all made for a perfect manor house location.

The earliest family known with certainty to have lived in Godinton House, were none other than the 'Godyntons'. Apparently, according to Simon Houfe - the Arthur of the Godinton House brochure, many Norman families in Kent in the 14th century took the name from that of the property they owned. Fortunately this is not a process adopted in the 21st century otherwise Deed Poll would be severely overloaded. The Godyntons were lords of the manner from 1347 until the turn of the century, when the brothers Richard, Simon and John Champneys purchased it. The next main family of ownership featured the Goldwells from 1405 until female descent, Joan Goldwell married Thomas Toke in 1474 and the long 'Toke' reign of Godinton Park began. Thomas Toke was in fact the longest Godinton resident of all time, with a 50-year record to his name. It is reported that

Thomas Toke married five times and died on his way to London to find a sixth! Principally, as with the Tokes generally, Thomas Toke's main strengths were his farming and land management capabilities.

Godinton House remained in the Toke family until Colonel John Leslie Toke was forced to sell it in 1896 to Ashley Dodd, having gambled away his families inheritance. The great grandfather of Great Chart resident Marjorie Brissenden (see Appendix 1 for full society details) was head game keeper to Ashley Dodd and recalls him having a wonderful time whilst employed in this position. There were several game keeper employed and as head gamekeeper Marjorie's great grandfather lived in 'Fir Lodge', now called 'Keepers Cottage' and no longer a gamekeepers house. Her great grandfather would accompany Ashley Dodd on his fishing and shooting excursions including trips to Scotland. One of Marjorie's aunts was also a maid up at the house for a short while and her father used to undertake carpentry and decoration work at Godinton House; thus it is clear to see how Marjorie's ancestry is rooted deep in the heart of the area.

Major Alan Wyndham Green was the most recent owner of the estate, remaining there for forty-four years until his death in 1996, making him the second longest dweller behind Nicholas Toke. He interrupted his studies of modern languages at Cambridge to fight for his country in World War II, returning after the war to read the alternative subject of agriculture. Clearly a farmer at heart, Wyndham Green's knowledge and understanding of his herds and woods back at Godinton earned him the respect of the other estate workers. He was also an avid gardener, softening the formal planting within the twelve acres of tranquil gardens and having to clear up the devastation left by the 1987 hurricane in the surrounding mature parkland. Previously in 1939 the Godinton estate lost one of its most treasured trees - the 'Domesday Oak'. Planted at the time of the Norman Conquest, it is reported to have collapsed on the day the World War II was declared.

One of Godinton's present day estate workers is tenant farmer John Smith - also a member of The Great Chart Society set up in 1989. At the age of eleven John Smith moved to Ashford when his father became a tenant farmer on the Godinton estate in 1948. One of John Smith's fondest memories of the Godinton estate was an avenue of trees planted in a triple row, along an access route in its southern boundary area. John Smith recalls how 'The Avenue', as it became known, would "shiver making a gorgeous and magnificent sound", reminiscent of the Tennyson poem:

Willows white, aspen quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Tho' the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot

Tennyson (The Lady of Shallot)

Sadly the 1987 hurricane brought 'The Avenue' down and it has since been replanted in a single row format - now a less dramatic shiver, yet a shiver to nudge the senses. John

Smith recalls how the wind used to cause a different kind of destruction on the Godinton estate, in the form of fire. For the once steam powered trains would create sparks in their wake as they accelerated out of Ashford station. The sparks would land amongst harvested crops and the wind would set to spreading fire. The sight of smoke caused neighbours to jump in their old cars and race out to the spot to help beat the fire out. Eleven such fires occurred on the Godinton estate in the space of seventeen years.

The weather played a key role in the second job that John Smith's father upheld as insurance assessor for the National Farmers Union. For one particular part of this job entailed assessing whether a cow had been struck by lightning - a single mark running from head to foot was the confirmation sign. Evidently cattle sheltering under trees and then proceeding to be struck by lightning was a far more common occurrence when John Smith was a child, with half a dozen to eight deaths in the Ashford area per year. He stressed that this was far more of a rarity these days - perhaps the word had spread amongst the cattle community or rubber sole cow boots are now supplied! On warmer days his father inserted a long thermometer into numerous haystacks around Ashford to check they were not too hot. If a 'hot-stack' was discovered, the owner would have to turn or move it to avoid the outbreak of fire.

John Smith's Wife - Chris, recalls the large wrought iron gates into Ashford market (Elwick road) where her father worked from an office. Brown's Fruits were always positioned just inside the gates on the right hand side and the large buildings for cattle and sheep sales towered in the background. Her father's office stood amongst a row of others - a sign of the many businesses associated with the agricultural market. John Smith points out that even though the market used to be a great deal larger, it is still the largest in the southeast.

Just as farmers from around Ashford would make their way into the centre for the market, so too would the younger generation to meet for the Young Farmers Club. John Smith explains that farm units used to be much smaller, meaning more people once lived directly off the Godinton estate and as a consequence there were far more farmer's sons or daughters to attend the Ashford Young Farmers Club. In today's climate the farm units need to be far larger in order to simply survive. One of John Smith's leading memories of the club was its president - Duston Schilbeck (also principal of Wye College) and his regular instruction to the members to "Keep breeding. Keep breeding, indoors and out!"

In John Smith's teenage years, leisure time was often spent practicing his rifle shooting for the home guards. The location for this target practice was one of the old quarries in Great Chart. Although only sixteen years old at the time, he claimed to be older in order to be permitted to fire a Bren gun. On one occasion the officer in charge of the home guards, Alley Watts, left hastily to open his pub and instructed John Smith to take the Bren gun home with him until they next met. Thus the gun remained in his bedroom for weeks - an exciting time for an enthusiastic home guard and a far cry from the strict necessary weapon control of modern times. Godinton farm tenant Jim Kerr (also a member of the Great Chart Society) explained that these quarries, where John Smith practiced his rifle shooting, have since been filled with soil taken from the Charter

House site (central Ashford) during excavation for its foundations. Thus leaving the only physical trace of their once existence, to bygone maps.

One final recollection John Smith shared when questioned about life on the Godinton estate, concerned a gentleman called Fred Coley - alias the 'bread and cheese' man. Fred Coley lived in New Lane in Great Chart and there built himself an old pram frame with a small engine inside. The contraption was attached to the back of his bike and used to transport his shearing equipment and of course the all important bread and cheese. However far Fred Coley cycled to the job in hand, however physically demanding the job may have transpired, however hot or cold the day proved, bread and cheese washed down with a flask of cold tea remained his set lunch time intake. On one occasion, in those days of non-mechanical ditch digging, Fred Coley and John Smith's father were strenuously digging ditches in the farmland of the Godinton estate. At lunch time Fred declined the offer of hot soup for lunch or at the very least to escape the freezing whether conditions and instead crouched down in one of the ditches, put his coat over his head and enjoyed his bread, cheese and cold tea. Fred was an incredibly fit and healthy man who seemed to escape colds and other such illness - clearly a man who would not have been impressed by modern day excessive central heating uses and common household needs for Beechams!

The ration, war time approach to food no doubt never left Fred Coley, yet for Godinton farm tenant Jim Kerr, it is the memories of wartime rationing itself that will never leave him. Before moving to Great Chart, Jim Kerr lived as a young boy in neighbouring Chilmington and here the same theme of war that seems to dominate Great Chart's history can be found. With American servicemen commandeering his father's land for an air strip and residing in the spare rooms of his father's farm house, issues of food were always on the agenda. On one occasion Jim Kerr's mother heard the catering officer for the American camp heading through the house towards the kitchen. Unbeknown to the officer, his sergeant cook was trading food for the wartime luxury of eggs and on this occasion it had been for the 200 weight of sugar now resting at Jim Kerr's mother's feet. Unable to move the heavy sugar, she sat on the pile and spread her skirt out over it. On entering the kitchen the officer said "Hey Mrs Kerr, how are you?". "Oh I'm not feeling too good. I'm just going to take a rest" she replied. "Can I help?" the officer asked. "No, no I'll be alright". So off he went through to his room and Mrs Kerr was up and instructing the sugar to be carried out, as fast as Mr Kerr could carry it!

The luxury of eggs also caused a light hearted race for the chickens whenever a 'cackle' was heard. Jim Kerr explained that many of the soldiers came from farms and therefore knew this cackle meant the possibility of an egg. On one occasion Jim Kerr's mother caught one of the soldiers just putting his hand into his shirt (to hide an egg of course). In order to imply he was merely admiring the chickens, he turned to Jim Kerr's mother and said - "That's a fine chicken you've got mam, a fine chicken" before walking away!

The servicemen brought further amusement to the family with their idea of shooting. Having requested Jim Kerr's father for an afternoon of partridge shooting, Mr Kerr was more than a little shocked to find them turning up with 'Standom Thompson Sub-

machine guns'. With bullets flying everywhere, a whole new light was introduced to the sport of pheasant shooting - although as to what the Shooting Times would make of it, who knows!

One of the soldiers moved out leaving all his rubbish in the room in his wake. Following his departure, a lady went up to clear it all out and picked up that which unbeknown to her was gelignite and detonators. The lady took them downstairs and placed them by the stove before turning to Jim Kerr's father to check they were fine to burn. "Can you look at this because there's some funny things in there", she said. Jim Kerr's father recognised them straight away and quickly carried them out of the house. The bomb disposal team arrived and confirmed there was enough explosives in there to blow the house sky high. Right to the other side of Great Chart no doubt!

In 1936 Jim Kerr and his family first moved to Great Chart, when his father became a tenant of the Godinton estate and in 1952 Jim Kerr entered into partnership with his uncle, again on land that lay within the park estate. His early memories echo those of John Smith with regards to field size - the land parcels were far smaller then and boundary lines have since moved. Prior to the installation of a dam, part of Kim Kerr's farm on the Godinton estate was prone to flooding from the Great Stour. Jim knew that within three hours of heavy rain, the riverbanks would over flow and the sheep would therefore need to be moved. On one occasion the sheep had already found themselves stranded on a bank surrounded by water. The shepherd waded across the water armed with a rope to tie around one of the sheep. Jim and his wife Anne pulled the other end of the rope from dry land and in the true spirit of sheep, where one ventured the rest followed. Unbeknown to Jim and Anne, in trying to pull the first sheep to safety, its head had been submerged in the water and they feared the worst as they positioned it onto the bank. As they turned to assist the other sheep, the one presumed dead, stood up and walked away as if nothing had happened – making for a one hundred percent successful rescue mission.

From each of their respective farms Jim Kerr's father would transport cattle to Ashford market by trailer, whilst his uncle would drove them by foot along Godinton Road. On one occasion one of the bullocks clearly more intent on doing a spot of shopping, strayed into a local shop selling pictures and re-appeared into the street with a picture on his horns. As Jim put it - "All hell was to pay!".

Arriving at Ashford market (with or without additional pictures on horns) has always been a time Jim Kerr looks forward to with eagerness. It's a chance to have a gossip and catch up on the price of wheat, cattle and the such like and every Tuesday Jim is there. Unfortunately with food and milk



prices for farmers low and showing no signs of improvement, many of the younger generation are opting not to enter into farming as a career - a situation that clearly presents itself at the weekly market with few young faces amongst those attending.

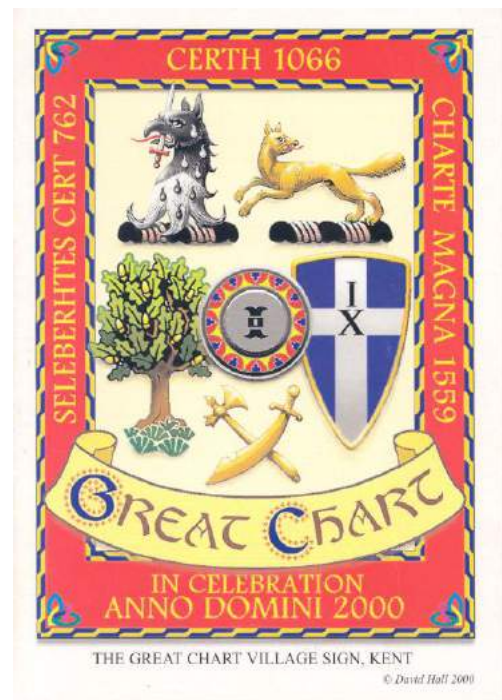
For Godinton estate manager Nick Sandford, managing the house and land requires a far different approach in these modern times. During a presentation for the Great Chart Society in March 2007 Nick Sandford revealed the estate now plays host to a number of community based activities such as outdoor theatre performances, exhibitions - ranging from sculptures to Roles Royce displays, workshops - on gardening, working with willow and longbow shooting. He added that the Christmas decoration workshop has since made for glitter still being found in the strangest of places. Even farming has adopted an alternative approach, with the experimentation of growing biofuels crops (willow) and irrigation sources partly depending upon the storage of rainwater in a huge container.

The Ashford Countryside Officer at the Kentish Stour Countryside Project (KSCP) frequently leads a team of volunteers to carry out work on the Godinton estate - such as planting trees and erecting tree protection guards. It is the combination of this work undertaken by the KSCP, the Godinton estate manager and the tenant farmers that together creates a gateway from the Ashford Green Corridor into a countryside that is continually enriched and protected both for wildlife and humans. Further more the wartime memories of food rationing and military activities shared in the preceding text highlights the important need for green spaces.

Great Chart

The northeasterly quarters of Great Chart fall directly within the Ashford Green Corridor, making the village our next destination in this heritage trail. Stories concerning the village claim that this part of the great Stour adjacent to Great Chart was actually navigable by boat.

Although many other roads and buildings now distract the eye, at the time of Great Chart's initial settlement a clearing with a Roman road on one side and the Great Stour river on the other, would have been a clear vision indeed. There is no exact date recording Great Chart's first settlement but the line can certainly be traced back to Roman times. The present day village sign, designed and created as The Great Chart Society Millennium Project, traces the history.



The oak tree on the sign symbolizes the oak's dominance of a dense forest that lay adjacent to the clearing where Great Chart would one day establish. The symbol of a millstone is perhaps one of the most significant feature with regards to time; for it represents the first written recording of Great Chart in AD762. An agreement allowed the use of half of King Ethelberht II's (king of Kent) mill in exchange for an area of pasture in the weald belonging to the monastery of St Peter and St Paul (possible owners of Great Chart). During this agreement reference is made in passing to Great Chart, under the name of 'CERT' - meaning rough common or clearing. Over one hundred and thirty years later Great Chart was a large prosperous settlement, making it therefore a prime target for the greedy eyes of Alfred the great and his Viking followers. The same surround of dense forest that provided settlers with an abundance of fire fuel also provided perfect camouflage for the Viking raiders. Thus they appeared on horseback in 893 without warning, to pilferage all they desired from the village and to set fire to the rest. Ancient legend claims that - 'Ashford began to rise and grow out of the ruins' (The Great Chart Village Sign pamphlet 2000) as villagers fled to safety and set up camp nearby.

Great Chart is rich in history, some of which borders on the unusual. Take for example Alfred Austin who lived in the village, a man who is portrayed as being short in height but large in ego. Austin's rather 'different' or some might say 'unsuccessful' approach to poetry meant the decision to award him the Poet Laureate title in 1896 was questioned by many, including numerous persons within the poet circuit and most probably his fellow villagers! Another unusual character of the village was recorded in the 1884 village church burial register entry as - 'A stranger known only by the name of a crazy man' (Igglesden, C).

The church itself is one of the most historically important buildings in the village of Great Chart. Its architecture is reminiscent of the Godinton Manor, suggesting a strong Toke influence in its design. Its building material is one of ragstone, depicting therefore the village's long association with quarrying. Although the intriguing small building at the church gate bares strong resemblance to the 'Pest houses' that isolated plague suffers, it is thought this was a house built in earlier times for the priest.

Although now residing in Brabourne Lees, Donald Woolley (member of the Brabourne and Smeeth Footpath Association - see Appendix 1 for details) was born in 1921 and lived in Godinton Road, Great Chart until moving at the age of twenty-two. Relatives of Donald have lived in a cottage in Singleton Road, Great Chart from approximately 1850 until 2004 and as a consequence he feels a great association with the village. In Donald's eyes the bypass saved Great Chart, permitting it to remain relatively unchanged from his childhood memories - "I've seen pictures taken from the top and you could take the same picture today" he says. The four stone cottages that once solely occupied Singleton Road still exist, yet in a manner uncommon to Great Chart, have since been joined by further housing development in the road.

Donald's earliest memories of Great Chart include sitting on the front of this father's bike and heading off to collect wildflowers from around the area to bring home and press. He

explains that it is therefore incredibly important and not to mention, nice to see these wildflowers growing again, such as those planted in various Ashford Green Corridor sites. Donald remembers that at the end of Godinton Road there were allotments followed by a cricket field and beyond lay purely pasture fields occupied by sheep. The man who looked after the sheep lived in the village. He was short in height, as too was his wife and as the pair walked down the road together, he was always a few steps ahead, with his wife trailing behind. Donald and friends referred to the pair as Mr Bean and his little lamb. Whilst the sheep grazing made for a beautiful countryside landscape on one side of the road, the other side housed a brick works and the familiar scars of excavation. To Donald and his friends these excavations were a source of great fun, creating a series of islands for them to jump between.

Donald's maternal grandmother was the Sinden family and her brother was in charge of a great deal of the farmland on the Godinton estate. In fact he planted a long row of chestnut trees along either side of the A28 all the way to Great Chart and around the cricket ground. Unfortunately few still remain on account of the 1987 hurricanes. Donald's grandfather on his mother's side was the Great Chart signalman at a signal box that once stood close to the present day recycling premises. His journey to work consisted only of a short walk down the road and over the bridge from his cottage. There were two such cottages that occupied this isolated area and his grandfather's neighbour worked on the Godinton estate. Donald remembers as a child his grandmother feeding the chickens she kept at the cottage and is sure that the painting produced by Jemmitt of a lady feeding her chickens, is actually his grandmother. Many of the roads in Ashford are named after Jemmitt, for he was a highly influential man and 'quite a character' as Donald put it!

After marrying at the age of twenty-two, Donald and his wife moved to Victoria Crescent and then Hythe Road. For many Christmas days to follow, they would return to Great Chart to visit their family. Their travels were always by foot along a similar route that is now an official foot / cycle path through the Ashford Green Corridor. At this stage in Donald's life he worked for Ashford Urban District Council in a building in Kings Parade. He recalls the impressive nature of the building with its high balcony, where speeches would be delivered from on special occasions. The fire brigade was also located in Kings Parade, run by a gentleman named Harry Shorter - owner of a shop that sold tobacco and pipes and which still exists as a tobacconist today. Many of the young men working in the offices and shops worked part time for the fire brigade, changing into their protective clothing and dashing off as soon as the siren was heard. The Ashford fire brigade is of course the oldest in Britain and Donald revealed that a further business resident of Kings Parade - the citizen advice bureau, was similarly the first of its kind in Kent.

With the proposed building of the M20, Donald and his wife moved from Hythe Road to Brabourne Lee and Donald is now a member of the Brabourne and Smeeth Footpath Association. The group was established in 1973 and seeks to promote the marking, protection and use of local footpaths in the two parishes, more details of which are available in appendix 1. He explained that the Brabourne Lees and Smeeth area was a military basis in the Napoleonic war with a hospital field close to the present day village

green. Evidently the boundary line between Brabourne Lees and Smeeth lies across this village green, meaning a house in Brabourne dwells directly next door to the Smeeth village garage. Donald further explained that the stream used to be the official boundary divide, which would have run through the present day village green before man altered its route and installed an extensive number of drains. Donald remarked that Brabourne is a highly viable village with a good village shop (unfortunately the general store selling everything from a tic-tac to a lawn mower has closed), a hairdresser, four churches and likewise four pubs!

Enter into a discussion on the history of Great Chart and there is no escaping the subject of World War II. Great Chart was both thrown full force into the war and likewise saw its residents throw themselves voluntarily into the war effort. The memoirs of Great chart residents Marjorie Brissenden (also member of The Great Chart Society) and John Baker are no exception to this rule. They spoke of landing strips dotted in and around Great Chart and of a search light in nearby Singleton. They explained that Stanhope estate was once a prisoner of war camp and that the prisoners themselves were often forced to work on farms. They recalled heavy anti aircraft guns being fired in nearby Goldwell which shook the whole of Great Chart village. They also relayed the happy memory of trains stopping at a single box that once occupied Great Chart (where the grandfather of Braebourne Lees resident Donald Woolley worked), allowing service men to pick the oxeye daises. It was at the end of the war and with large numbers of trains needed to transport the servicemen home from Dunkirk, the trains had to be held up somewhere and what better place than beside a field of wildflowers in Great Chart.



The war also introduced Marjorie Brissenden to someone who still remains her friend today. One day during World War II many of the Great Chart village children were sat on the grass bank opposite the village hall, waiting for a coach to arrive with evacuee children on board from London. Evacuee - Francis was chosen to lodge at the Brissenden's home on account of the fact she was taking piano

lessons and the family owned a piano. Francis (13 years old) shared a bedroom with Marjorie (9 years old) until the threat of invasion and enemy shelling across the channel meant Francis was relocated to Wales.

Marjorie Brissenden explained that with no television in the days of World War II, children were not really aware of the dangers involved in war and thus it was seen more as fun, than anything else. John Baker added that to children war was realistically their main source of fun, it was more like an ongoing adventure. In fact he wonders how many children managed to escape injury in view of their inquisitive nature towards enemy plane crashes and bombs!

Marjorie can remember cycling home from the hop gardens with her friends after an afternoon spent picking, only to find that all the American soldiers along the route were laying or crouched down in ditches. With planes fighting up above, the Americans cried out to the girls - "Get Down. Get Down!". Unperturbed the girls replied "No, we're going home to tea!".

One evening John Baker and a friend were walking up Hill Crest in order to reach Chilmington from Great Chart. Along the route they came into company with an old colonel who used to enjoy talking with the local people. He asked John Baker - "What are you looking at boy?". To which John replied "Those black dots in the sky over there". "Get down, get down" cried the colonel on realising it was a Doogie Bug bomb (officially called a 'V One Rocket'). John Baker wondered whether he was ever going to see his family again as it flew straight over him, landing just over the railway bridge. He explained they were flying bombs, which although intended for London often ran out of fuel and when the noise of their engine stopped, that was the sign that it was about to drop from the sky. Once the bomb had landed without causing fatality, the thrill of adventure began all over again.

Marjorie's father paid witness to one of the first Doogie Bugs as he sat outside the air raid shelter one evening. He was unable to identify the object that appeared to be travelling through the air with a flame at its rear and making a distinctively loud noise. By then Marjorie was going to school in Ashford and would travel by bike with her friends. On arriving at school one morning, the air was black with Doogie Bugs and the school was almost deserted. Marjorie and friends were thus told to return home and off they pedalled with little concern or worry

The garden belonging to Marjorie's family home used to back onto the village allotments. In the event of any aircraft flying over head, Marjorie's father would assist her mother and herself into the air raid shelter in the garden, plus any neighbours seeking refuge, and he would then sit on bench outside. On one occasion a horrible crash was heard and everyone thought a parachutist had landed in the allotments. Quite scared by this prospect, a search to find out was held off until the following morning, at which point it was discovered that the noise had been somebody's runner beans blowing over!



Prior to 1920, the house Marjorie Brissenden grew up in owned the village saw mill, before it was removed. At the saw mill wood was once cut for carpenters in a time when carpentry was a far larger business than it unfortunately is today. Her father (the village builder, carpenter and undertaker) owned a car, which unfortunately at the

outbreak of the war had to be stored away and have its wheels removed in case the enemy discovered it. Meanwhile down at the northeasterly quarters of the village at the cricket pitch, the war meant few men were left in Great Chart to play the sport. Previously the cricket pitch that falls within the Ashford Green Corridor's walk number 4 and the Stour Valley Walk, was forbidden territory to children and had fencing all around it. The war relaxed this rule and children took up the sport in place of their fathers, continuing to play after the war's end. On one such occasion at the end of the war Marjorie was looking forward to her first ride in her father's car since the war had broken out and was expressing this delight to her fellow cricket companions. "Cor, you're lucky. I wish I could go out in the car" responded playmate Colin Mercer. Having returned home for dinner, there was a knock at Marjorie's front door. Colin Mercer had fallen over, breaking his arm and now needed a lift to hospital in the car. So he got his ride after all!

At the Great Chart Playing Fields the Ashford Green Corridor Project has helped plant a hedge and improve access. Similarly, nearby Great Chart Riffle Club grounds, the Ashford Green Corridor project has created a small wildlife pond. As a consequence the Green Corridor has left its own historical mark on the village; a mark that in years to come might be addressed in order to find out exactly how it came to be. The pond now attracts a range of amphibians to its water and a whole host of wildlife to its diverse backside vegetation.

Buxford Meadow

Venture through the A28 underpass from Great Chart and arrive at the next point in this heritage project - Buxford Wood and Meadows. Buxford Meadow is directly part of the Ashford Green Corridor and consists of a small area of wet grassland and woodland. It is certainly a wildlife hotspot, home to 12 different dragonflies and damselflies, 59 moths, 100 different plants and a great variety of birds. Field vole and pygmy shrew enjoy the grassland, whilst woodmouse and bank vole prefer the woodland. Wellington boots are a must in the woodland during wet periods in order to wander deep into the heart of it and enjoy the ash, alder, English oak and grey willow which thrive inside. However it is likely this is a secondary woodland for no woodlands exists in this area on the 1876 Ordinance Survey map. Similarly the pond in the middle of the meadow, supporting frogs, toads and smooth newts, does not exist on this map and is likely to have been dug later for livestock or as an ornamental feature. Wet meadow surrounds the pond, within which a variety of willows can be seen - white willow, crack willow and goat willow.

The Great Stour divides the meadow from a nearby mill stream that has been the site of a mill since at least the 13th century. It is likely that the mill and the present day meadow area were all at one point part of a medieval estate. The name Buxford is also very old and refers to the presence of bucks (male deer) at a ford (a crossing point on the river), indicating that the estate had a deer park. Buxford Manor was built in the 17th century as a dower house of the Toke family of Godinton. Whilst in the ownership of Mrs Toke, the house was in need of a gardener and father of Great Chart resident, John Baker, in fact filled the position. John Baker's father remained in the post until he was later

offered a higher paid job with the railway and having a family to feed, decided to take the offer.

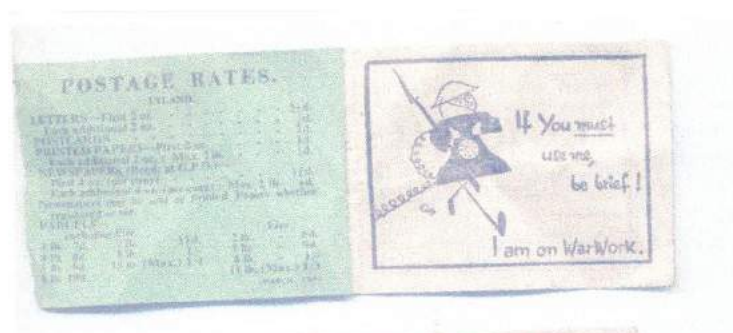
Singleton

Directly opposite Buxford meadow is the large lake of Singleton. Although the lake sits with ease amongst its surroundings, its history is surprisingly relatively recent. For the lake is actually a man-made fishing lake, constructed as a pleasant environment for residents of the nearby housing estate. Despite this, Singleton Lake has quickly developed into a wildlife haven in the Ashford Green Corridor. The depth of the lake makes it ideal for diving birds such as the great crested grebe, whilst the willows and alders around its perimeter provide habitats for the more land-loving birds. The range of mainly wetland habitats includes rough and wet grassland where flag iris and reed mace thrive. At night Daubentons bats fly over the water, whilst a more permanent feature is visible by day - a sculpture of a heron by Anthony Gormley, creator of the 'Angel of the North'.

Councillor Alan Allcock (ABC Member for Beaver Ward) commented that for those living close to the Singleton Lake for some years may find it hard now to ever think of the Lake not being there. There was a time when locals would see grassland, thoroughbred horses grazing and enjoy a pleasant rural walk along Buxford Lane on past the mill. As a London commuter this provided Alan Allcock with personal quiet and peace after the train journey. It was a big surprise to one day find a digger excavating a large basin, prior to allowing the river to fill it to form the present island and lake. It has taken some years to settle down but now it continues to provide a much needed green solace for the community and looks like it has always been there. Alan concluded that - 'surely it sends out a message, an environmental message, for current developers to do likewise?'

The name singleton is a corruption of the Old English shyngle tone, meaning a farmstead with a shingled roof. The origins of the name of the lake therefore can be traced to nearby Singleton Manor - a former 14th century farmstead. The picturesque moat of Singleton Manor dates back far earlier to a time when the original manor house was located towards the back of the present day gardens and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Sylvia Roberts, member of The Great Chart Society, takes an active role in trying to piece together the history of Great Chart and its surrounding area. Sylvia takes great delight in both learning new historical facts from those around her about the place that has become her home and in sharing her own



knowledge with others. Sylvia explained that Elizabeth Quinton Strouts moved into Singleton Manor in 1906, following her marriage to Richard Stanley Strouts. In January 1915, during World War I, Elizabeth Strouts decided to help the men in the Armed Forces. Having set up a small committee, Elizabeth and other ladies began sending regular parcels and letters to those servicemen from the Great Chart area. The project was funded by local means such as through Farmers' Gift sales and the Cottage Gardens' Annual show. These funds helped ensure that an amazing total of 5921 parcels and 989 letters were sent! Sylvia Roberts pointed out that the Strouts of Singleton were renowned for another great achievement and that was as pioneers of the Romney Marsh sheep breed!



As with many large houses during the war Singleton Manor was taken over by the army. On one occasion during this occupation of Singleton Manor, Marjorie's undertook a spot of fishing in Singleton Moat. Whilst sat on the edge rejoicing her catch of a Perch Marjorie turned her head only to discover a bull staring straight at her. No doubt wishing this was an occasion when the army was outside rather than in, she sat motionless until

the bull finally lost interest and walked away.

Great Chart resident John Baker recalls that an avenue of lime trees marking the entry into Singleton Manor were surrounded by stacked bomb cases during World War II. One of the gentlemen who used to diffuse the bombs before they were stacked in this way, was an officer who married a local girl after the war and moved into Great Chart permanently.

Sylvia Roberts explained that in 1950, after 250 years ownership by the haberdasheries, Singleton Manor was sold to Mrs Muddle. In 1978, the present time occupant - race horse owner David Wingham, was issued a compulsory purchase order on the house by Ashford Borough Council, who wished to turn it into a museum. However in 1982 this was decided to be a non-viable venture and the property was sold back to private residency.

In 1984 one of Singleton Manors outbuildings - Tythe barn was sold and is now a public house called Singleton Barn. This pub is said to have a ghost, which is fetchingly called George by the staff. There are a number of stories explaining the presence of the ghost and the first of which identifies him as ex-employee who used to sleep rough in the barn and care for the animals. As a teetotaler he objects to the barn big used as a public house. A second local story says the ghost is Frank Hollier who was fatally injured when a piece of farm equipment fell on him. The third story concerns a soldier that was on duty at Singleton Manner during WWII with a bomb disposal until a bomb when off killing him - Mr Fred Hayward of Great Chart told Sylvia of this tragedy.

Oak Tree Primary School took part in compiling the Ashford Green Corridor heritage project and four of the pupils were kindly invited by present day owners of Singleton Manor - Mr and Mrs Olympitis, to look around the building. Mrs Olympitis revealed to the four pupils that original beams in the main banqueting hall of Singleton Manor date the room back to 1380. During this period no ceiling would have existed, merely a large fire in the centre



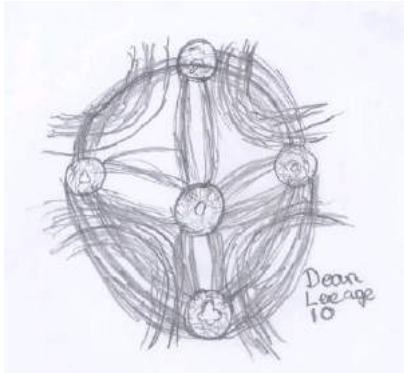
of the room for all the family and staff to huddle around to keep warm. Seeking advice on reinstating the traditional flooring of the hall, a historical architect informed Mr and Mrs Olympitis that mud mixed with blood to form a hard surface, would be the exact materials. Needless to say they decided to compromise the authenticity on this particularly feature! Even with a top layer of rushes and herbs to disguise the smell of the blood and mud floor, the air would have still been filled with less desirable potencies on account of everyone living in one room - including dogs and chickens! The lord of the manor and his wife and children would therefore retreat to a neighbouring room to sleep at night, called the 'Solar' because it faced the sun. Climbing up a series of steps outside, planks of wood as opposed to any form of ceiling would once again be all that greeted them and here they would sleep for the night.

On the opposite side of the banqueting hall from the Solar room stood the main entrance into the hall, enabling carriages to pull right up along side and drop off those guests graciously invited by the lord of the manor for dinner. It was of course an important undertaking that the lord of the manor convey his status by inviting those in the area or passing through on their travels between London and Canterbury, to be lavishly entertained in the banqueting hall.

Mrs Olympitis further explained that the Tudors were the biggest show offs of all and decided life should be a great deal more comfortable. As a result building work was undertaken extensively during the Tudor period and the manor house gradually grew into much of the building it is today. The main entrance became a hallway with staircase to an upper level. The upper floor beams were huge as too were the joists to support them measuring 2ft by 2ft. Mrs Olympitis explained that the gaps between the beams were filled with Rye grass for insulation as the grass is local to the area - in other places in Kent Wheat was used. Adjacent to the staircase a kitchen was introduced and carvings of wine and wheat in the present day door frame show where this kitchen was once located.



The most significant renovation was the ceiling installed in the banqueting hall. It was created by an Italian artist who also put in the ceiling at Hampton Court and it is this specialised ceiling that Sylvia Roberts explained earned this Grade II listed building, its additional 'star' award. Mrs Olympitis confirmed that although some people believe the ceiling was put in after



the earthquake in Great Chart in 1580, it in fact actually survived the earthquake and was input in the 1560s. The introduction of a ceiling in the room meant the fire had to be moved from the centre and the fireplace was also made into a feature. Two seats were positioned at either end of the hearth for small boys to sit on and turn the meat during banqueting occasions. Oak Tree Primary pupil Dean pointed out that this was surely dangerous and Mrs Olympitis assured him it would not be allowed to happen today!

Having received a wonderful insight into the manor house from Mrs Olympitis, the four pupils then asked some further questions and the findings feature as follows:

Year 3 Connie

Connie - What is your favourite room in your house?

Mrs Olympitis - I think my favourite room is my drawing room because its so lovely and sunny as it faces south - it used to be called the 'Solar'.

Connie - What do you use it for?

Mrs Olympitis - We use it for sitting in, for getting away from noise and children and dogs and for reading newspapers on Sunday.

Connie - Why do you like it so much?

Mrs Olympitis - Because its lovely and sunny and warm and very quiet.

Connie - Did this used to be a farm?

Mrs Olympitis - Yes it did, it used to be a big farm.

Connie - What sort of animals did it used to have?

Mrs Olympitis - I think they would certainly have had pigs, sheep and maybe some cattle

Connie - Do you have any animals now?

Mrs Olympitis - We have two chickens.

Connie - Thank you

Year 4 Adele

Adele - When was your house built?

Mrs Olympitis - This part of it was built in 1380, the bit we are standing in, but probably the majority was built in the 1560s.

Adele - Was the moat built at the same time?

Mrs Olympitis - No, we think the moat was built around the time of 1066 and there would have been a dwelling here then, but that vanished a long time ago and there are no remains left of it now.

Adele - Do you have any wildlife in your garden?

Mrs Olympitis - Absolutely, we have lots of wildlife. Because of all the hedges and all the greenery we have an amazing amount of birds of all different types - its lovely

Adele - Do you have anything to make more wildlife come in to your garden?

Mrs Olympitis - We have bird boxes - we get lots of nesting blue tits. We have bird tables. We feed the ducks. We have our own friendly ducks that come every spring and then show us their family when they are all hatched. We have moorhens that come up and eat the food that we keep for chickens, because we have chickens.

Adele - What is your favourite wildlife creature in your garden?

Mrs Olympitis - The ducks, they are lovely.

Adele - Thank you.

Mrs Olympitis - That's alright, thank you

Year 5 Dean

Dean - Have you heard any stories about the de Singleton family who first lived here?

Mrs Olympitis - I think you can see Henry de Singleton in a stain glass window in Great Chart. I believe he is buried there too but I didn't check when I was last there so that would probably be quite an interesting thing for me to do - to go and check through the de singleton family.

Dean - Was the whole house built at the same time?

Mrs Olympitis - No it wasn't. From 1380 the main banqueting hall area which we are standing in now was built and it was added onto by the Tudors in about 1560, probably a bit earlier, but the ceiling of the banqueting hall was certainly done in about 1560.

Dean - What materials did they use to build the house?

Mrs Olympitis -A lot of wood, an awful lot of wood. Some people say the beams were from old ships. In this part of Kent there was a lot of Oak.

Dean - Why did they build a moat?

Mrs Olympitis - As a protective gesture in 1066 we believe, to protect the house.

Dean - Why isn't the house in the middle of the moat?

Mrs Olympitis - The house originally, if we are thinking back to 1066, would have been built right at the other end of the garden because there would be more distance between them. But when they built the banqueting hall in 1380 they probably used this as the first point of arrival, they didn't need to defend themselves as much.

Dean - Thank you.

Year 6 Bethany

Bethany - When the house was part of the farm how big was the estate?

Mrs Olympitis - Now I'm not certain how big it was when the house was first built but I do know that by the beginning of the twentieth century it was about two hundred acres. That would take it pretty much to Great Chart, up to Kingsnorth and then to Ashford. If you imagine that area, its quite a large area. We don't know, we don't have any records for 1380 or 1560. It was probably about two hundred acres, maybe a bit bigger.

Bethany - Where did its boundaries finish?

Mrs Olympitis - Kingsnorth, Great Chart because there was another big farm at Great Chart, probably up to Godinton because Godinton House was the other big house in the area and then again to Ashford. Boundaries were normally formed by natural things like hills or rivers so it's probably a question of tracing your steps along the river.

Bethany - What sort of farm was it?

Mrs Olympitis - It was a manor farm, we know that because of the Tythe barn and they would have probably had animals and crops. Which crops I don't know but probably a lot of Rye because of all the grass we found. They would certainly would have had pigs, sheep, horses and chickens.

Bethany - What have some of the out buildings been converted into?

Mrs Olympitis - The outbuildings which you can see over the other side of the bridge were probably stables or piggeries and they are now little houses. Tithe barn has become a pub and the pub owner lives in one and a friend lives in another.

Bethany - Have you heard of the Ashford Green Corridor?

Mrs Olympitis - I have now, brilliant! But yes I had heard of it before.

Bethany - How do use it?

Mrs Olympitis - We walk the dog in it especially around Singleton Lake and its quite easy for us to get to. I also like to walk under the bridge to Great Chart cricket ground.

Bethany - Thank you.

Mrs Olympitis - Thank you very much.

Singleton Hill

Before heading back to Singleton Lake, a glance up Singleton Hill is worth mentioning. SWANEG member Nicky West has heard through local stories on the area that Singleton Hill once had three clearly visible trees on its brow that earned it the local name of Crucifixion Hill. Evidently the three trees looked like Christ and the two thieves either side of him and the field became known as Jesus Field.

Watercress Fields

The next main stopping point from Singleton Lake in the Ashford Green Corridor is Watercress Fields. Watercress Fields has kept much of its wild character despite its particularly urban setting. The meandering path it takes through the Ashford Green

Corridor and surrounding landscape is very natural and relatively unchanged. Similarly many wild plants remain at its bank side ready to support the abundance of wildlife that have either taken up residency or passes through. Maps of the late 19th century show a neighbouring plot called Watercress Farm, now lost to urban development. It is likely this particular farm, which now gives the field its present day name, was once growing watercress commercially in the chalk waters of the Stour and transporting it to London markets.

Tenant farmer of the Godinton estate, Jim Kerr, is almost certain that a Scottish man rented the Watercress Farm for a while, at the turn of the century. Jim explains that times had become particularly hard in Scotland and men came down to the Southeast of England to look for farms (his father included). Jim recalls that passing through the ford, at the boarder of Watercress Farm, was the only real route into Ashford - besides a small pedestrian bridge. There were certainly cows grazing at the time but unfortunately Jim cannot recall any sign of watercress being grown.

Brabourne Lees resident Donald Woolley can remember a time when there used to be a man who would travel around selling watercress, shouting - “Fresh green watercress”. This was a sound that Donald used to take for granted like the clan of the milkman’s metal container or the calls of the ‘rag and bone’ or ‘muffin’ man. He can recall plenty of watercress being grown professionally in areas along the River Stour and thus it seems highly plausible that watercress Fields takes its name from a bygone trade of the old farm.

As previously mentioned Oak Tree Primary School took a highly active role in helping research and record the Ashford Green Corridor heritage project. The following is an overview of their participation that was posted onto the school project page of the South East Grid for learning website.

Oak Tree River Watch and the Ashford Green Corridor.

Oak Tree Primary school in Ashford has for many years been working with the Ashford Green Corridor to investigate the uses of Victoria Park and the fauna and flora within it.



We are lucky to have the Great Stour flowing through the park.

This term the children at Oak Tree will be taking part in many activities including, pond dipping, mapping, surveying the uses of the park and its facilities, interviewing the owners of Singleton Manor and many more activities.



We will also be measuring the river and talking to some people via Flashmeet about what happens to all the water.

Check to some of our previous work, including

our food chains, at the Ashford Green Corridor site below. Especially the exhibitions where you'll see some of our work from the last few years.

PS The reception class at Oak Tree are called Acorns, well

Each class took on a different role, starting with the acorns (reception year) colouring in some pictures of major themes

within the project, such as a farm tractor and a rain scene. Year 1 looked at an overview of changes in Ashford's land patterns and their findings are recorded below.

Year 1

Class 1 looked at old Ordnance Survey maps of Ashford and compared them with aerial views and maps from Google Earth.

They looked at maps dated 1912, 1921, 1946 and 1978. They discovered that South Ashford was mostly farmland, with just a few houses in 1912 and 1921. By 1946 there was an industrial school. Over the next 30 years almost all of the farmland was built on for houses and 3 more schools were built.

By 2007 the area of developed land had spread to include the villages of Kingsnorth and Great Chart. It is currently out as far as Stubbs Cross.

Class 2 visited Watercress fields for a spot of river dipping and the following is a record of their visit.

Oak Tree Primary School Class 2.

River Dipping Trip To Watercress Fields. Emma came to visit Class 2 and talked about food chains in Watercress Fields. We went river dipping to see how many animals we could find and how many plants that the water vole might eat.

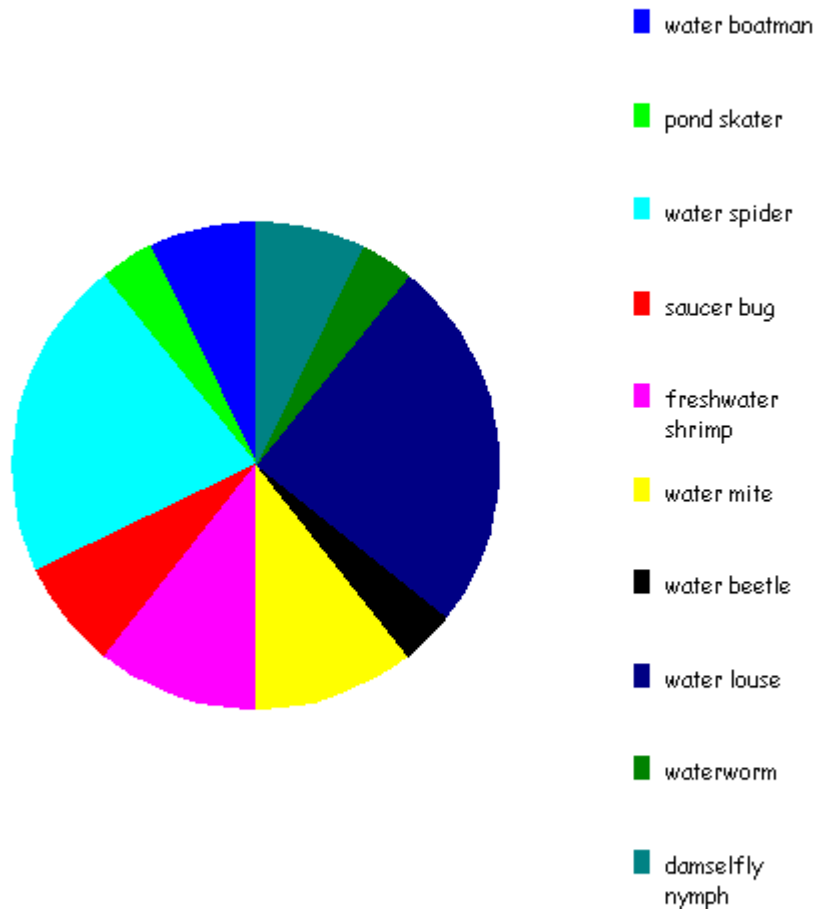


We worked in pairs and tried to identify the pond /river animals we saw. Some of the animals had legs and some didn't. Every time we identified something we

ticked them off on our sheets. When we got back to school we put all our results together and made bar graphs and pie diagrams.

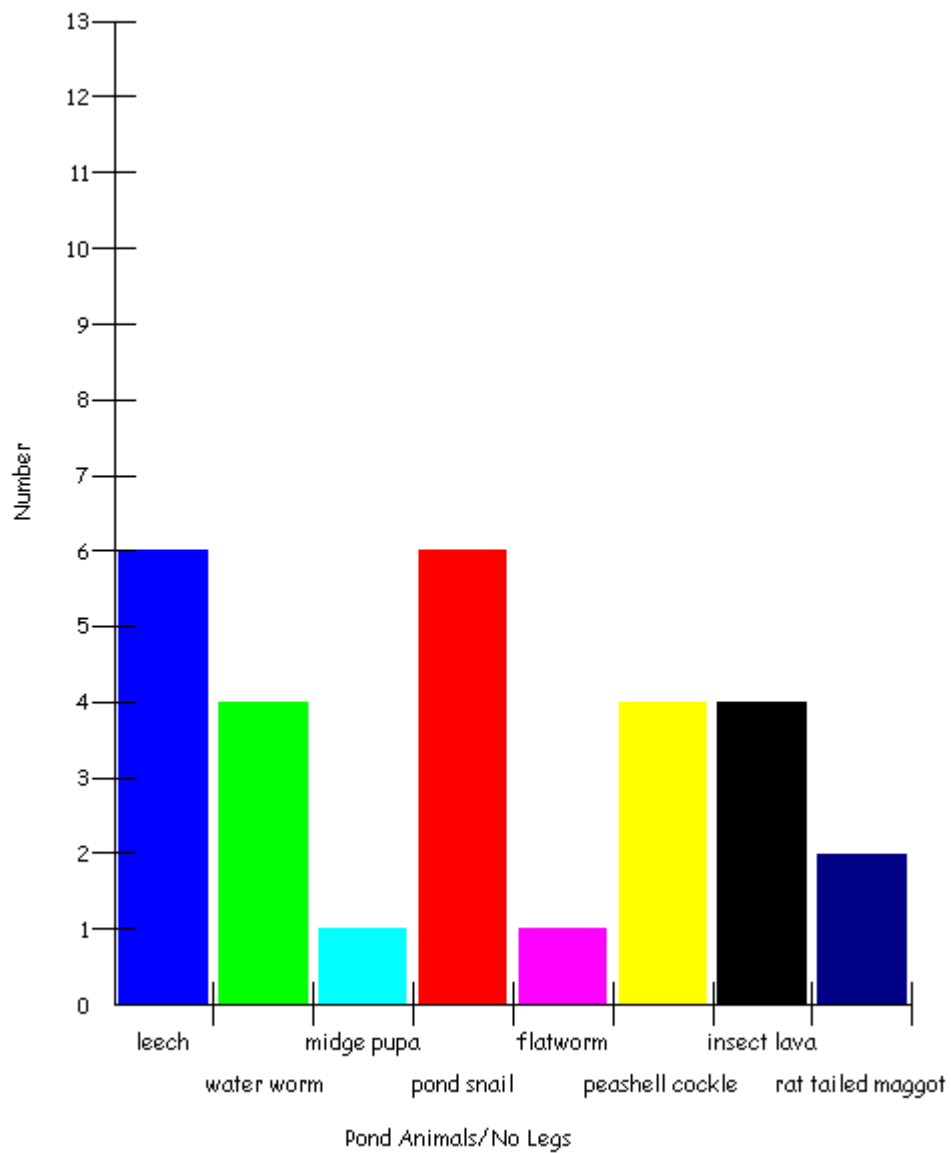
Pond Animal/Legs	Number
water boatman	2
pond skater	1
water spider	6
saucer bug	2
freshwater shrimp	3
water mite	3
water beetle	1
water louse	7
waterworm	1
damselfly nymph	2

Class 2 Pond Life 2.



Pond Animals/No Legs	Number
leech	6
water worm	4
midge pupa	1
pond snail	6
flatworm	1
peashell cockle	4
insect lava	4
rat tailed maggot	2

Class 2 Pond Life 1.



Year 6 took a more scientific approach to the Ashford Green Corridor heritage project and recorded more present day facts about the river - facts that now already belong to the past.



Year 6 River Maths

Have you ever wondered how much water goes down the Great Stour River?

Well it's 4,410 000 litres /hr. Yes that's the truth and that is huge number of pop bottles.

You might be wondering how we worked it out. Well we had to visit the river and do some measuring! First we measured out a 10 meter line along a straight part of the river. Then Mr Bentley gave us some oranges. Yes, oranges!



We took some orange peel and threw it in upstream of where we were going to measure the river. When the peel passed our starting line, we started our stop watches. We then followed the orange peel along until it reached the 10 meter line and we stopped our stop watches. We did this three times so that we could find an average for the speed of the river.

Do you know how to work out an average of three times?

Our average was 40 seconds.

So how fast was the water flowing.

Well if it was covering 10 meters ever 40 seconds in 60 seconds it would cover $10/40 \times 60 = 15$ meters for every 60 seconds (or a minute) or you could look at it this way, every 20 seconds the peel travelled 5 meters so in 60 seconds that would be three of them or 15 meters!

So in one hour or 60 minutes how far would the peel travel?

Well $15 \times 60 = 900$ meters

So the peel was travelling at 900 meters per hour.

We like to think of speeds in kilometres per hour so 900 meters is the same as 0.9 km/hr! (for your mums and dads that's just over half a mile an hour).

Of course what we wanted to know was how much water moved down the river every hour. So we measured how wide it was by throwing a heavy weight attached to a long string across the river and pulling it back till we could just see the weight on the opposite bank. We then marked the string pulled it all across and measured the distance between



the weight and our mark. Our average distance was 7 meters. We measured (or our teacher did) how deep the river was at different places. Our average came out to 0.7 meters. So for the ten meter stretch of river we were measuring we had a box 10 meters long by 0.7 meters deep by 7 meters wide. How much water was in that box?

Well it must have been $7 \times 10 \times 0.7 = 49$ meters cubed or 49 m³ So how much water is in that box. How much water is in 1 m³ ? A clue is that 1 litre of water fits into a box 10 cm by 10 cm by 10 cm. If you work it out like we did, you'll find that 1 m³ holds 1000 litres of water, that's a lot of pop bottles.

Now we had 49 m³ so that's 49000 litres of water in our bit of the river we were measuring. Now if our water is flowing at 900 meters per hour that must mean ninety of these boxes flow past us every hour. So that must mean 90×49000 litres per hour flows past us.

Have you worked it out yet, yes that means 4,410,000 litres per hour were flowing past us! So how many houses could use all that water?

Well we worked out that on average every morning in our homes we had:

Loo x4 Shower x2 Bath x2 Drinks x4

We looked up the numbers on the internet :

<http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/aptrix/ofwat/publish.nsf/Content/waterandyoumarch2000>

and we think it came to: $4+40+20+100+20=184$ litres

Now if 4,410,000 litres of water goes down the Great Stour in an hour then in the same hour it could supply $4,410,000/184 = 23967$ or roughly 24000 houses.

So that's 24000 houses using 4,410000 litres and hour before the River Stour goes bone dry and there will be no water to be seen. Yes, so in the future so be careful and don't use that much water and we will be ok. Now we think there are more houses than that in Ashford, so were does all the other water come from?

PS We measured the temperature too, it averaged out at 18 degrees Celsius.

Written by Keely, Courtney and Louisa.

Victoria Park

In 1898, the council bought 17 acres of land for £2,870 from local landowner George Jemmett to create Victoria Park as a leisure facility for local people. The park has since been extended by a further 15 hectares. Old maps show that before becoming a park,



the area was agricultural fields with similar boundary lines. Many of the trees visible today were planted in the early 20th century to commemorate important townspeople and various members of the royal family. These trees, the riverside area and a small pond provide important habitats for wildlife.

Regardless of where an Ashfordian lives geographically or where as a consequence they generally most frequently visit within the Ashford Green Corridor, there is a common space that seems to gain the attendance of almost everyone for one reason or another and that is Victoria park. South Willesborough resident Jack Edwards recalls the iron gate fencing that used to surround Victoria Park, restricting entry to two gates at opposite sides of the park that were locked shut at night. Besides the residential sandpit, paddling pool and bandstand, it was the fire works display held just after World War II was over that provides the fondest memories for Jack. With pigs on the roast and fun for all the children, Victoria Park took on a carnival like feel that evening. Resident of South Willesborough, Peter was born in Battersea and moved to Ashford at the age of two when his father was transferred to the locomotive shed. Peter describes the Park Keeper responsible for the park and its locking at night as a Mr Spicer who was an ex sergeant Major with a waxed spiked moustache. On one occasion Mr Spicer caught Peter and his friend scattering piles of mown grass. Grabbing them by one ear, he then kicked them on the backside out of the park.

Kennington resident Norman Ibbotson was born in Blackheath and moved to Ashford in 1936 at the age of six. As a child Norman would often use Victoria Park for recreation and recalls that the park keeper at closing time would deliver a sharp - "Oi, Out" to any youngsters found still inside. Norman added that on hearing this command his friends and himself would pedal for their life! Norman and his wife Sheila still enjoy a walk in the park and commented that it used to be far smaller than it is now, as it sat snuggled between the two working farms.

Tenant farmer of the Godinton estate, Jim Kerr, went to Ashford Grammar School. In order to reach the school from Great Chart he would cycle through Victoria Park. A present day cycle path along the riverside boundary of the park and throughout most of the Green Corridor as a whole, encourages such modes of transport.

Jim Kerr woke one morning to discover twenty cows had escaped from his father's farm in Chilmington. Approaching a policeman about his missing friends, he was informed of the havoc they had caused through the streets of Ashford the night previous - including knocking over tombstones in the churchyard. With the police having had great fun chasing them around, they finally ended up in Victoria Park!

Local resident of Great Chart, John Baker, remembers how Victoria Park became a huge gun site during World War II. It is strange to think that heavy anti aircraft guns were dug into the ground all around the park, yet no sign remains of them now. John Baker recalls the loud screech the rocket guns used to make as they were released. Understandably members of the public were not allowed into the park and the gates at either end were kept locked.

Resident of South Willesborough, Peter reveals that at the edge of Victoria Park the Great Stour was scooped deeper by the army as an anti-tank ditch in approximately 1940. As sand and gravel was removed from the river bed and dumped on the bank, hundreds of freshwater mussels shells were exposed, showing the purity of the river water.

It is no wonder therefore that this same water from the great Stour was in fact pumped into sediment basins, then into the main swimming baths. South Willesborough resident Peter recalls that in the early days of the baths swimming companions often included frogs and grass snakes. The water was apparently then released from the baths near the Beaver Road Bridge, back into the Great Stour. Peter concludes that a chlorine plant was instilled later to purify the water. This open air swimming bath or 'lido' was in fact opened in 1867 and was the largest in Britain at the time. South Willesborough resident Jack Edwards was a regular visitor to these swimming baths as a young adult.

Year 5 class from Oak Tree Primary School split into groups allowing some pupils to conduct interviews with more elderly members of the community, whilst others mapped Victoria Park. The following are examples of their findings.

River Stour by Folusho 11 Jul 2007

A couple of weeks ago year 5 at Oak Tree walked to Watercress Field to map the park and River Stour.

Our groups were Mrs Davies, Miss Hipson, Mrs Caneppele, Mrs Bowden and Mrs Deplege. This is the work that we were doing; sport and safety equipment; Mrs Bowden group did vegetation and tree and bushes; Mrs Deplege did dog bins and litter bins. We had a great time at Victoria Park. We wish we went again.

How we mapped Watercress Fields. By George. 11 July 2007

On Tuesday 27th 2007 year 5 went to Watercress Fields to map the park. There were five groups those groups were Ms Hipson's group they were looking at litter bins and dog bins; then there was Mrs Davies's group, they were mapping the safety equipment ; then came Mrs Caneppeles group, they were doing the benches, and finally Mrs Bowden's group doing vegetation. That was the group I was in along with Dean, Jade and Myles. It was hard work mapping Victoria Park but I enjoyed it, we had to make keys to match up with our drawings of the trees. I would recommend people who like nature to do the same things as we did.

River Stour and Watercress Field by Jordan 13 Jul 2007

On 27th June 2007 year 5 children at Oak Tree went to Victoria Park to map it. There were 5 groups that were going.



Mrs Davies' group, Mrs Caneppele's group, Mrs Depledge's group, Ms Hipson's group and Mrs Bowden's group. Mrs Davies' group looked at safety equipment and sports equipment. Mrs Caneppele mapped picnic benches. Mrs Depledge marked down benches. Ms Hipson looked at litter bins and dog bins. Mrs Bowden

looked at vegetation trees. I found out that there are more litter bins than dog bins because there are more people than dogs.

Year 5 preparing their map of the Stour

The amazing Stour by Harry 13 Jul 2007

A few weeks ago Yr5 from oak tree school went to Victoria Park to see if we could map the park. It took us about three hours. The people in my group were Darcy, Bradley and me. Every group had a different subject to map. My group had to map down benches. At 11am we got to play on the park for 5 minutes. Once we had finished we had mapped from the bridge near Materlan to the bridge near the fountain it was a lot more interesting than I thought it would be.

Victoria Park and River Stour by Bradley 13 Jul 2007



On 27th June 2007 year 5 from Oak Tree went to Victoria Park to map the River Stour and the park. There were five groups who went. Mrs Davies's group, Mrs Caneppele's group, Miss Hipson's group, Mrs Bowden's group and Mrs Depledge's group. Mrs Davies's group looked at safety equipment and sports equipment. Mrs Caneppele's group looked at picnic benches. Miss Hipson's group looked at dog bins and litter bins. Mrs Bowden's group looked at vegetation and Mrs

Depledge's group looked at benches. There were loads of trees and plants so we did not put them on our map because there was not a lot of space. I found out that there were more benches than picnic benches because not a lot of people eat in Victoria Park. If they are running they might stop, sit down and then start running again.

The River Stour and Victoria Park by Luke 13 Jul 2007



On 27th June 2007 year 5 children at Oak Tree School went to Victoria Park. We went there because Victoria Park isn't mapped on Google Earth. There were lots of trees, litter bins and picnic benches. There were five groups. Mrs Davies group looked for safety equipment and sports equipment. There were about three safety rings. Mrs Bowden group mapped the tree and vegetation. Mrs Depledge's group mapped picnic benches. There were approximately 10 - 13 picnic

benches. Mrs Caneppele's group mapped litter bins. There were approximately 8-10 litter bins. We also mapped the gas meter, the fountain and the football goal post.

Year 5 school trip to Victoria park by Elise 13 Jul 2007

A couple of weeks ago year five from Oak Tree walked to Watercress Field to map the park and the River Stour. We had five groups and Mrs Davies was our supervisor. My group was Stuart, Chloe, Matthew, Folusho and Aaron. My group done sports and safety equipment. The other groups mapped picnic benches, benches, dog bins and rubbish bins. One side of the river was very fast the other was slow. I would recommend a great day out by the River Stour and the park.

Year 5 Interviews

Hello our names are Stuart and Shannon. We'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park and Watercress Fields have changed over the years.

Are the flats old or new in watercress fields?

Lady: they are very new.

What did you use the river for?

Lady: we used it for boats and fishing. They got the name for Ashford because there were lots of ash trees.

Was the river dirty or clean?

Lady: it used to be very clean but I do not know what it is like now.

Were there any shops or things like ice-cream vans?

Lady: there were ice-cream vans coming around on bicycles.

Was the fountain there when you were a child?

Lady: the fountain has been there for a long time.

Were there any fields in Victoria Park?

Lady: oh yes, there were a lot.

Who did you go to the park with when you were young?

Lady: with my friends, you could go anywhere because you all were safe.

Were there any benches around then?

Lady: yes, lots.

Was there a nursery then?

Lady: no

Were there any fences around the park?

Lady: yes there were lots around the park.

What kind of clothes did you wear to the park?

Lady: girls wore dresses and boys wore shorts.

Is there anything else you can tell us about how the park and fields have changed?

Lady: It used to be mostly fields and markets, there were cows and sheep walking around. The horses used to go in carts. The big sheep used to follow everyone.

Thank you.

Hello our names are Stuart and Shannon. We'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park and Watercress Fields have changed over the years.

Are the flats old or new in watercress fields?

Angela: probably new.

What did you use the river for?

Angela: playing. In the 1900s my granddad was born and he would take me and my sister down to the river to play with nets, we would play in the river and catch little fish.

Was the river dirty or clean?

Angela: it was very, very clean.

What games did you play?

Angela: mainly we just used to play the games we play now. But around then it was safe. We never stayed indoors.

Were there any shops or things like ice-cream vans?

Angela: yes around by Victoria Park there was a little shop called Musgrove. Because it was on Musgrove lane. And when we used to go to the park my grandad used to give us something called a per. Musgrove shop we used to buy sweets there for a penny or a hapenny.

Was the fountain there when you were a child?

Angela: yes the fountain was there when I was a child.

Were there any fields in Victoria Park?

Angela: there were fields all around the park.

Who did you go to the park with when you were young?

Angela: as I said I went with my granddad. He used to go and watch football in the park.

Were there any benches around then?

Angela: there were lots of benches.

Was there a nursery then?

Angela: no.

Were there any fences around the park?

Angela: _no, but there were big huge gates.

What kind of clothes did you wear to the park?

Angela: _we wore swimming costumes with shorts on top.

Is there anything else you can tell us about how the park and fields have changed?

Angela: it has changed a lot since I was a kid.

Hello our names are Darcy and Kenzie. We'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park and watercress fields have changed over the years.

K; was the river clean?

Man: I don't know because we moved in 1986.

Woman: yes it was clean.

D: did you go fishing in the river?

Man: I didn't go fishing in the river but I had a tropical fish in a tank for our grand children.

Woman: I sewed 230 jumpers, 10 each for my 17 grand children.

K; how did you get to the park?

Man and woman: we walked.

D: was Victoria Park still there?

Man; yes when we moved here but now they have done more adjustments to it.

K; was there a fountain there?

Women; I don't remember seeing a fountain there.

D; could you get any snacks there?

Woman; yes there was a kiosk that sold ice creams and cups of tea.

K; what games did you play?

Woman; we played hop scotch, skipping, marbles and tag.

D; Was Victoria Park popular?

Woman; yes very popular.

K; was the bridge still there that leads to the town?

Man; Yes a very old metal one.

D; was there a playschool there?

Woman; No not in the park but there was one outside the park.

K; were there toilets there?

Man; can't remember but I think there were

D; were they clean?

Woman; yes.

K; did there used to be a car park there?

Man; No because there didn't used to be that many cars around.

BY DARCY AND KENZIE

Thank you very much

Hello our names our Darcy and Kenzie, we'd like to interview you about how Watercress Fields and Victoria Park have changed since you were a child.

It has changed very much, there was a sand pit and a swimming pool.

Did you go fishing in the river?

I didn't go fishing in the river, no.

Was Victoria Park still there?

Yes it was.

How did you get there?

We used to walk.

Could you get any snacks there?

There was one kiosk.

Was there a fountain there?

Oh yes, the fountain has always been there.

Was it clean?

Oh yes, very clean.

What games did you play?

Loads of games.

Was Victoria Park popular?

Very, very popular.

Was the bridge still there that leads to the town?

Yes it used to be steps.

Was there a play school there?

When I was young we didn't have play schools.

Were there toilets there?

Yes in Victoria Park.

Did there use to be a car park there?

No because there wasn't many cars around.

Is there any thing else you can tell us about watercress fields and Victoria Park have changed since you were a child?

They have changed an awful lot.

Thank you for your time.

***Hello our names are Chloe Balson and Myles Jay,
we'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park
and Watercress Fields have changed over the years.***

Q Were there any dog parks?

NO

Q Did you camp in the park?

NO

Q Were you allowed to walk your dog?

Yes

Q were there as many play parks as now?

NO

Q what did you use the river for?

Nothing really

Q Were there any buildings?

NO

Q were there any litter bins?

Only black sacks pinned to trees

Thanks!

-

Interview

Hello, our names are Myles and Chloe.

We'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park and watercress fields have changed over the years.

2. Were there any dog parks?

A. no

2. Did people used to camp in the park?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Were you allowed to walk your dog all over the park?

A. yes

Q. were there as many play parks as there are now?

A. no

Q. were there any bins?

A. no. I don't remember any.

Q. were there any buildings?

A. no.

Q. were there as many trees as there are now?

A. no about the same.

Q. were there any bike lanes?

A. err no that is very new.

Q. Was the river dirty?

A. No, not particularly dirty and not particularly clean.

Q. what did you use the river for?

A. I really don't know.

Q. how many fields were there and what did you use them for?

A. walking on really.

Q. were there any cafes in the park

A. no.

Q. what sort of games did you play in the park?

A. tennis.

Q. Is there anything else you can tell us about how watercress fields and Victoria park have changed since you were a child?

A. the water fountain

Thank you very much for your time.

Interview

Hello, our names are Myles and Chloe.

We'd like to interview you about how Victoria Park and watercress fields have changed over the years.

Q. were there any dog parks ?

A. no.

Q. did people used to camp in the park?

A. no

Q. Were you allowed to walk your dog all over the park?

A. yes.

Q. were there as many play parks as there are now?

A. no. no I don't think so.

Q. were there any bins?

A. yes.

Q. were there any buildings?

A. I don't think so.

Q. were there as many trees as there are now?

A. yes

Q. were there any bike lanes?

A. no.

Q. Was the river dirty?

A. I don't know.

Q.what did you use the river for?

A. children to fish in.

Q.how many fields were there and what did you use them for?

A. 1 field and we walked to school through the park.

Q.were there any cafes in the park?

A. no

Q.is there anything else you can tell us about how Victoria park and watercress fields have changed over the years?

A. no

Thank you for your time with us.

INTERVIEW

1. Were there any dog bins?

No there wasn't any at all.

2. Were there many cars around?

There weren't many cars around when I went to school there was only one car and that was a taxi.

3. Was there a bike lane?

No you would ride on the road because there was little traffic.

4. What kind of trees were there?

There were mostly trees near the playground.

5. What did you do with the fountain?

I didn't live in Ashford you see I lived in pluckley I was 25 years old when I came to Victoria Park for the first time.

6. Could you get to the town from the park?

You had to go up the stairs to get to town then down the other side.

7. What games did you play?

Hopscotch with a stone or a rock, chasing games, you used to play it in the river and catch with a ball.

8. Did you go on your own?

Yes you had to walk everywhere else you have a car or a bicycle.

9. Were there any picnic tables?

No never heard of them.

10. Were there as many dogs around?

There were lots of dogs around you could let the dogs off anywhere.

11. Was there a nursery, cafe or a bowling centre near the park?

There was a nursery, cafe and a bowling centre near town.

12. How old is the fountain?

152 years

13. Were there any fish in the water?

Some fish in the river the water was very clean.

14. What kind of plants were there?

Some daffodils but they got damaged

15. Was there a car park?

No you had to mostly walk or park your car on the road. By Matthew and Carla

Year 3 pupils at Oak Tree Primary School had a fun time discussing the games that used to be played in Victoria Park. Not only did they get to look at photographs of children playing in Victoria Park, supplied by local resident Jean, they all got to try out the modern day playing facilities during a trip to the park. The following are recordings of this visit that the pupils compiled.



If you go to Victoria Park this what you can do. I like playing football because it gives me exercise and its fun. I like playing Basket Ball, I can do slam Dunk and my friends love to play it. You can play cricket and it is lots of fun. There are monkey Bars and there is a saucer attached to a chain and you can go high. There are lots of swings. And there is a see-saw that goes in a circle. The zip lines go sliding down. The roundabout spins round with lots of people on it and the bowl is fun. And you can walk your dogs. You can also have a picnic.

By Conor

If you go to Victoria Park in July this is what you can do:
you can climb on climbing frames and can play football, golf and fetch on the football pitch, you can play basketball on the basketball court. In the enclosed area there is a big

swing that four people can go on at a time a fireman pole and a thing that goes up, down and round in a circle. There is a picnic area and café.

The Victorians played: conkers, 5 stones, races hoops down hills and maybe had races they also played marbles and walked round with their nannies. The adults played Tennis.

By Amber

If you went to Victoria in the past you could of:

Played crazy golf, you could have Swam in a swimming pool. You could have climbed a big frame. You could have played in the park.

When you go to the park now in 2007 you could play on an assault course. Slide on a zip line, you could ride a scooter, you could put on Heeley's, have a picnic, you could go on the monkey bars, you could ride a bike. You could go on the big blue bowl swing. You could have tea in a café. You could go on a round about. You could play on the basket ball course. Go a skate board and walk a dog.

By Marcus

At Victoria Park in July 2007 there is a big swing and it is dark blue, it is fun, and people like to play on it a lot. We went on the monkey Bars we went and played on the wooden Slide. Then went on the metal slide,

we went down the metal and went on the seesaw. Next we went on the round about, after we went on the spinning top.

There are lots of areas there are, football, Basketball, skate Park, lake, Play ground, grass area.

At Victoria Park there is a metal climbing frame it is brilliant.

At Victoria Park there is a café and the Ice lollies are nice there.

By Bobbie.

If you went to Victoria Park in the past you could of played crazily golf, you could swam in a swimming pool, you could have climbed a big climbing frame, you could of played in the park in 2007 you could play on an assault course, slide on a zip line, you could ride a scooter, you could put on Heeley's, have a picnic, you could go on the monkey bars, you could ride a bike. You could go on the big bowl swing; you could have tea in a café, you could go on a round-a-bout. You could play on the basket ball course or go on a skate board and you could walk you're dog.



By Alex

Monday 9th July 2007.

When we visited Victoria Park on the 28th June it was really good fun because we got to play in the parks. Zak and George found lots of interesting places like a skate board area with a skate board slide which is about 4 meters high and 4 metres to the bottom on the 28th June 2007. How big is the skate board slide? You can play on the round about at Victoria Park. We went to some of the parks, and we discovered a football pitch, a nature area, a basket ball court, a golf Course and a play area. We found different equipment like swings, monkey bars, slides, sea saws, two zip lines a bane to sit on.



By Zak

At Victoria park

If you go to Victoria Park in 2007 you can play on the: slides, swings, blue climbing frame and more. If you have a bike, a football, or skates you can go in the skate park or on the football pitch.

In the past times they had big swings and slides.

Near the basket ball court there is a path so you can go on your heeleys.

By Connie

VICTORIA PARK.

When we went to Victoria Park, there was a climbing frame and we saw a slide, a roundabout, people riding their bikes and walking their dogs and playing basketball and a zip line.

By Parris

If you go to Victoria park in 2007 you can play on the: slides, swings, blue climbing frame and more. And if you have a bike, a football or skates you can go in the skate park or on the football pitch. In the past times they had big swings and slides. Near the basketball court there is a path so can go on in you Heeley's.

At Victoria Park in July 2007 there is a big swing and it is dark blue, it is fun, people like to play on it a lot. We went on the monkey bars we went and played on the wooden slide. Then we went on the metal slide, we went on the metal pole, spinning top.

There are lots of areas they are:

Football, Basketball, Skate Park, lake, playground and the grass area.

At Victoria is a metal climbing frame, it is brilliant. At Victoria Park there is a café and the ice lilies are nice there.

By Abigail

What we do now

If you go to Victoria park you could have a picnic on the field and you could play on the swings they are bouncy you can play on the Zip lines they are down the bottom of the park You can walk your dog on the field. There Is a café up top of the park with the baby Park and with the bowling centre. You Can play on your Heeley And wheels as well that's what you can do at Victoria Park. You can everywhere you want to play in the baby park its fun.



By Chloe

A Victoria

Monday 9th July 2007

If you go to Victoria park in 2007 play on the slides, swims, blue climbing frame and more. And if you have a bike a foot ball or skates you can go in the skate park or at the foot ball pitch. In the past times they had swings and slides. Near the bask ball court there is a path so you can go on your Heeley's

By Lauren

Victoria park.

If you visit Victoria Park in 2007, you will see a climbing frame and people walking their dogs. Some have a picnic and play on the roundabout and in the summer there is a music festival. Girls and boys playing basket ball and playing golf and people riding their bikes

By Shannon

Victoria Park. You can skate round Victoria Park. People can ride their bike's. You can climb on the climbing frame or swing on the monkey bars. You can swing on the swing at the park. You can practice playing golf and football. We can swing round the round about. There are two zip line's at the park. We can walk are dog's and slide down the slide.

By Joshua

Victoria Park

If you go to Victoria park in 2007

This is what you can do.

I like playing football because it gives me exercise and its fun. I like playing

Basketball I can do slam dunk and my

Friends love to play it. You can play cricket

On the field and it is lots of fun there are

Monkey bars and there is a saucer

Attached to chains and you can go really high. There are

Lots of swings and there

Is a sea saw that goes in circles the 2 zip lines goes really

Far and it springs right up. There is a skate board park

And you can have a picnic and sunbath on the grass you

Can walk your dogs around the park and you can get a ice cream or a coffee.

By Jack

If you go to Victoria Park in July 2007, this is what you can do:

You can climb on climbing frames, you can play football on the football pitch and golf and fetch on the field.

You can play basket ball on the court. In the enclosed area there is a big swing that four people can go on at a time a fireman's' pole and a thing that goes up and down and round in a circle. There is a picnic spot and a café.

The Victorians played: conkers, 5 stones, they raced hoops down hill, and may-be had races.

They also played marbles and walked round with nannies. The adults played tennis.



By Georgia Jones

Victoria Park

We can play golf in the football pitch and we can play in the park on our bikes
You can play on the round about in the park and we can ride our skate boards in the park.
We can play in Victoria Park using our roller skates and we can play on the swings.
You can go to the fair, walk your dogs, have a picnic, play on the monkey bars, and then
you can go to the café.

By Charlie

What we do now

If you go to Victoria Park you could have a picnic on
the field and you could play on the swings they are
bouncy you can play on the zip lines they are down the
bottom of the Park you can walk your dog on the field.
There is a café up the top of the Park with the baby Park
and with the bowling centre. You can play in the Park
and its
Good fun. There is a fun fair up on the Park on the field you
can chill out on that as well. You used
To play crazy golf and there was a huge slide
That you could play on. You can play on your
Heeley's and wee leys. That's what you can
Do at Victoria Park. You can play everywhere
You want to play the baby park is fun.

By Megan

At Victoria park

You can skate round Victoria Park
In 2007 people can ride there bikes
You can climb on the climbing frame or
You can swing on the monkey bars
You can swing on the swing at the park
You can practise playing golf and
football
We can swing round on the round about
We can play on 2 zip line a the park
We can walk you dog and slide down the
slide.



By Nathan Mason

In terms of heritage the Hubert
fountain installed in the park in
1912 has a particularly



interesting past. It was originally exhibited in the Second Grand International Exhibition in London, some 60 years before it came to the park. After the exhibition it was purchased by Major Sawbridge Erle-Drax of Olantigh House, Wye. Major Sawbridge Erle-Drax was also known as the Mad major of Wye as a result of his rather eccentric nature. For example in the 1860's he conducted rehearsal for his own funeral. After a fire at Olantigh. George Harper, a local art dealer, purchased the fountain and donated it to Ashford Urban District Council. Originally it had a set of 64 whistles and Harper donated the fountain on the condition that each year, on his birthday, the fountain was 'let play'.

Year 4 at Oak tree primary were set the task of finding out about the fountain and the following is the information they recorded:

Year 4 - Exploring the Hubert Fountain

At Victoria park there is a fountain if your follow a path. We drew some bits of the fountain. Then we threw some pennies in the water. We went there because we were learning about the fountain. Miss Fry had the idea. The fountain must be at least 3 ½ meters high.

Class 4 Visited Victoria Park to look at the Hubert fountain. We looked closely at the different parts of the fountain and then talked about the colours of the fountain and how these may have changed over time.

Friday 13th July 2007

At Victoria Park

At Victoria Park we walked down to Victoria fountain to write and draw about the history of the fountain. At the fountain my best attraction has to be the adult statues and the child statues sitting on the first row of the fountain. We were all sent to the fountain because of the fantastic Green Corridor to see if we could put some nice pictures and writing into it. At the back of the fountain there is some writing of who used to own the fountain it was owned by George Harper. George Harper said he would give the fountain to Ashford Borough Council if they would let it play every year for his birthday

Victoria Park Fountain

At Victoria Park there is a fountain, its called the Victoria Park fountain.

Sometime in June years 3 and 4 went to Victoria Park year 4 went to go and see the fountain. Year 3 went to the park instead.

When we got to the fountains we chose a bit of the fountain, then we drew the bit that we chose. We went there because we were learning about it in class. It was really funny because when we were standing

around the fountain it was squirting water out but when it was coming out it was spilling all over us! By Natasha



We looked at photograph from the past of the fountain and discussed how old photographs and new photographs may change our view of the fountains, paying particular attention to colour.

We did some observational drawings of parts of the fountain and looked at the details of the gargoyles and statues.

It used to have music playing on George Harper's birthday, the water goes through the whistles

The fountain has water in it all the time

The fountain has a hole in it and water comes out

The fountain was built in the 1800s

It was put in Victoria park in the 1900s

There was a statue of god on the fountain.

The fountain has loads of water in it and the water flows out of holes.

Victoria Park fountain was not built in Victoria Park, it was made from stone.

Miss Fry gave year 4 one pence to throw in the Fountain and made a wish some people made the same wish!

Oak Tree Primary School pupil Rebecca asked her mum and Nan to share their memories of Victoria Park and Rebecca recorded them in the following piece.

Year 6

By Rebecca's Nan

The park has changed so much since my childhood. You had tennis courts and changing rooms. There was also a bandstand where the small children's play park is. You had shelters all the way round the park. There was a big sand pit and paddling pool. There was a swing boat. You also had seesaws. The swings and baby swings. The fountain was always turned on even in winter. You also had iron railings what was right around the park. And the park was locked up at 8pm everyday day by the park keeper. The park keeper kept everyone under control and kept the park clean.

By Rebecca's Mum

When I was young Victoria Park was a lot different than it is now, I remember when I was at Primary school we went on a visit to the park and we had to draw a picture of the fountain.

There was a sand pit and a small paddling pool, there was kiosk where you could get a snack and ice-cream. There was no safety flooring then, there was a huge metal swing boat which could hold twenty children that was a lot fun. There were tennis courts and a large wooden seesaw. There were a lot more sheltered seating areas.

The Ashford Green Corridor heritage project journey now leaves Victoria Park and enters neighbouring Bowen's Field.

Bowen's Field

As is the case with most of land throughout the Ashford Green Corridor, Bowen's field is used as a flood alleviation area and it is a site that remains particularly prone to frequent flooding. This excess water has been put to positive use for the benefit of wildlife by introducing shallow 'scrapes' and ponds to the site. These provide excellent conditions for aquatic plants, insects, amphibians and birds. Humans are able to enjoy this rich display of nature by a series of boardwalks installed to improve access and enjoyment of the space. A pond at the far end of the field often requires maintenance care from the Ashford volunteers at the Kentish Stour Countryside Project, in the form of cutting back and removing the vegetation that grows vigorously within it.

The 1876 Ordnance Survey map of this part of the Ashford Green Corridor shows that it was still essentially rural, with open fields and sheepfolds. Subsequent maps show housing and industrial development was gradually taking place all around the site of Bowen's Field, yet it managed to remain one of the last farmed areas in central Ashford. The man who kept this agricultural legacy alive was owner Sid H Bowen (1895-1971) who lived on the farm for over sixty years. At the entry point into Bowen's Field from Victoria Park, a memorial plaque has been installed to remember the man. Through researching this heritage project, it became clear there were a number of people who also wished to remember Sid Bowen and some of their memories are shared in the text to follow.

Sid Bowen

Kennington resident Norman Ibbotson came out of the Royal Navy in 1951 aged 21. He met his future wife - Sheila at the Corn Exchange where Sheila was performing with the Nita Biggars Dance School. Sheila's father used to work as a plate layer for the railway just off Kingsnorth Road and her uncle worked in the railway works. Sheila fondly recalls the pieces of railway sleepers her father would bring home with which to light the fire. In preparation for his son's departure from the Royal Navy, Norman's father set up a Coach Works business where Norman began working and continued running the business after his fathers' death, until closing it in 1975. At the bottom corner of Victoria Crescent dwelled Amberley House Farm, belonging to Sid Bowen. Next to Amberley House was a barn that Norman and his father used to rent for the purpose of building their lorries.

Norman remembers Sid Bowen not primarily as a farmer, which may come as a surprise considering he owned a livestock farm, but more as a horse dealer. A land girl Kathy

Scamp, was more in charge of the farming side whilst Sid Bowen focussed on alternative angles to the business. The dealing of horses was Sid Bowen's main objective in life - he loved the animal and would buy them in the markets to sell straight on. Sid Bowen's other enterprises included the general trade of cattle and their transportation. Bowen's field therefore often became an overnight grazing ground for cattle unloaded at Ashford market after a journey from Ireland, Scotland or Wales - a pit stop for which Sid Bowen would charge a fee. The railway used to run alongside the market, enabling cattle to be unloaded straight into the pens. Sheila can remember the huge gates at the entrance to the market and the hubbub of activity inside. The favoured day to visit for Sheila and her children was Tuesday (livestock day), when with so much to see, getting all the way around was a difficult task!

After an overnight stay (or sometimes longer) in Sid Bowen's field the cattle would return to Ashford market to be loaded back onto a train and taken across to the meat market on the continent. Although Norman's services were required in terms of building the lorries for the five drivers Sid Bowen employed to transport the cattle, Norman was also frequently called upon for assistance in general favours. Such favours included driving the cattle along the road from the market and playing midwife by helping the delivery of difficult calves.

On one occasion in the 1950's approximately one hundred donkeys were shipped from Ireland to Ashford market for Sid Bowen's attention. In a tactical style familiar of Sid Bowen, Norman somehow suddenly found himself having been conned into assisting five other men in driving the donkeys along the road to Sid Bowen's farm. Driving cattle along the road was a regular undertaking in those days, holding up the traffic whatever the time of day. Farmers would transport sheep from the Romney Marsh into Ashford market by foot, driving them along the roads. Norman adds that motorists on the road were far more patient back in those times. Anyway despite the fact driving donkeys proved an absolute nightmare, all one hundred were successfully transported into the fields. However over night the donkeys escaped, deciding to explore all the far corners of Ashford and eating any vegetation in their path - including garden plants. Norman and the other men spent two days chasing around Ashford trying to find the donkeys and eventually all were found safely. The furthest escapee donkey was found as far as the other end of North Street, near Queens Road!

In view that many of the surrounding farmers kept pigs in the 1960's, Sid Bowen decided to start carting pigs. Thus the services of Norman and his father were called upon to build lorries specifically suitable for carrying two decks of pigs from all the way around Ashford to places such as Walls factory. One day a driver inappropriately loaded the pigs by putting them all onto the top deck of a lorry. This meant that as he turned the corner from Magazine Road into New Street, the weight imbalance between top and bottom deck, caused the lorry to turn onto its side. The police called Sid Bowen requesting him to bring another lorry and provide. Of course it was Norman that Sid Bowen turned to in order to provide this assistance and Norman headed up to New Street with another lorry. Reversing up to the lorry and using the loading gates to prevent the pigs escaping, ninety-nine of the pigs were successfully transferred to the other lorry. One however decided to

seek freedom and shot straight through Norman's legs. Norman instinctively sat down onto the pig in attempt to stop it and ended up momentarily riding it back to front down New Street, until finally he managed to bring it to a halt and return it to the lorry.

Norman remembers Sid Bowen as a businessman who definitely saw the funny side of life. Norman can still picture how Bowen's Field used to look with its six inches of water and constant flooding. Sid Bowen's own cattle would be taken out of the stock yard each morning and put into the field until they were brought back up for milking in the afternoon. After Sid Bowen passed away in the early 1970s, his two sons sold the farm and the area of land became an open space for the community called 'Bowen's Field'.

Tenant farmer of the Godinton estate, Jim Kerr, reveals a time when farmers and agricultural businessmen would 'smack' hands to agree a deal. No paperwork was exchanged, instead the price that was verbally expressed and agreed upon made for the 'gentleman's' agreement. On one occasion Jim Kerr as a little boy can remember Sid Bowen chasing his uncle (Alan Kerr) around trying to get Alan's hands out of his pockets to 'smack' them on a price and seal the deal. Alan Kerr was of course holding out for a better price so kept them firmly in his pockets. Once the price had finally been agreed, Jim asked his uncle "Did it hurt when he hit you?".

For many years cattle trains arrived at Ashford Market (Elwick Road) loaded with cattle - the Irish Bullocks being of particular interest to Sid Bowen. South Willesborough resident Peter (born 1925) was approximately 13 years old when Sid Bowen approaching him and his friends with an arm full sticks, instructing them - "Here you go boys, you've got to come and drive some cattle". Up at the market the boys would help unload the cattle from the trains and holding pens and then stand at the point at which Elwick Road joins Bank Street to stop the cattle escaping. Lead by a handful of Irish drovers, some of the boys drove from behind, whilst others blocked off all the road junction points. Once successfully escorted along Bank Street, down the High Street, down East Hill, along Hythe Road and into Frogman's Avenue, the cattle would be left in the fields that lay beyond. After the drive, the Irish drovers would head for the Fox pub and the boys would hang around outside until one of the drovers came out with a glass of Guinness - "Here you go boys, that will do you good", he would say.

For Peter and his friends, hanging around Sid Bowen's stables became a regular place to spend their recreation time. Sid Bowen would appear from the stables with a cart horse in just a halter and a potential buyer in tow, calling out - "'ere are boy, run this down the road". One of the boys would then take the cart horse and run it down the road in order for the potential buyer to see what it looked like.

Civic Centre North Park

Head out of Bowen's Field across trumpet Bridge towards the Civic Centre and a rather complex looking join exists between the Great Stour and the East Stour rivers. Author of *Ashford, a Pictorial History*, Arthur Ruderman, explains that originally the two rivers joined at a point higher upstream but an artificial cut was made to create the stretch on

the western side. This cut is shown on the 1898 ordinance survey map as the 'Lords Cut' yet was actually made many years previous in approximately the 15th century. The reason behind the cut was based on a need to improve the flow of water to the mill at the bottom of East Hill. However before discussion enters upon the site now known as Pledges Mill, the Civic Centre North Park needs addressing first.

North Park is entered via Tannery Lane, named as such on account of the Tannery business that once took place close by, since the 16th century. The Kent Tithe award schedule (1843) identifies the land forming Civic Centre North Park as being pasture fields in the 19th century, owned principally by Richard Greenhill and a small proportion by George Maude who rented it to William Jemmett. In this time of a pastoral landscape a much needed wood supply was gained through the growing of willows along the river edge, also helping stabilise the river bank. These willows still exist today and show clear signs of having been cut in the traditional way of pollarding - where the whole crown is cut to a height of about 2 meters from ground level. It grows back with a bush 'shaving brush' effect that provides an ideal habitat for birds, lichen and insects. In these modern times mechanical means as opposed to grazing cattle are relied upon to keep the grass neatly mown.

Pledges Mill

At the far end of North Park stands the previously mentioned Pledges Mill, which stands as a successor to the mill on this site recorded in the Domesday book in 1086. The existing building dates from 1864 and was one of two large mills owned by Lawrence Pledge. The mill had an electricity supply nearly 30 years earlier than the rest of the town; the same source of energy supply that in fact helped bring its own downfall. For as alternative power sources progressed during the 20th century, water mill declined generally. By the early 1970s Pledge's Mill lay derelict and following a fire in 1974, it was renovated and turned into a night club now called Liquid Lounge.

Local south Willesborough resident Peter recalls that during the time that the mill waterwheel was still in operation, whenever the water level was high in the Great Stour between the mill and the railway line, a concrete waterway took the excess water down to the East Stour. This overflow channel runs alongside the base of the rail line

The Ancient Ford?

Upon exiting the Civic Centre North Park in the direction of Mace Lane, the river used to be crossed via a ford before any bridge was built. Many people claim this is the ancient ford from which Ashford gained its name, whilst others say that it was at the point where Beaver Road crosses the river.

South Willesborough resident Peter suggests the ford at the end of Bailey's Field (Watercress Fields) seems to be situated in the middle of nowhere, where as the ford in Beaver Road would have been on a route from areas such as Kingsnorth, Bromley Green, Homestreet and Romney Marsh. The Great Stour by Beaver Road bridge also used to

locally be known as the 'Horse River', believed to be on account of the horses involved in droving using it for refreshment after their journey from Romney Marsh.

Queen Mother's Park

On the opposite side of the road from Civic Centre North Park is Queen Mother's Park, known previously as Henwood Nature Park. On early 19th century ordnance survey maps, a small cluster of buildings just south east of the site is named Henwood and thus presumably where the name originated. These maps also suggest that in the late 19th century this area was sheep pasture.



This rural past is celebrated by one of a series of three sculptures installed in 2007 by Martin Brockman and Mark Sidders as part of the Ashford Green Corridor project. Old maps also show the name Martyr's Field in the southern park of the park. This refers to a dark chapter in its history when a number of local people were burnt at the stake for their religious beliefs during the 16th century. According to South Willsborough resident Peter, the executions were reportedly near the ford at the bottom of East Hill. The names of the victims are recorded on a memorial stone in the park.

In the early 1980s the Ashford branch of the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation set to improving the habitats in Henwood and member Heather Silk was involved in this undertaking. Now part of the Ashford Green Corridor under the new name of Queen Mother's Park, Heather Silk continues to visit the park and recalls having seen Fieldfares and Redwings (visitors from Scandinavia). Heather is an enthusiastic member of the Ashford Birdwatching Club and admits that on first arriving to Ashford in the mid 1970s from a rural area, she incorrectly assumed that most urban birds would be House Sparrows, Starlings and various Pigeons. On spotting a Kingfisher at Newtown Bridge, Heather was thrilled to be proven wrong and had been birdwatching ever since.

Heather Silk and the Ashford Birdwatching Club have kept records of birds seen in the Ashford Green Corridor. These have included the rare Jack Snipe underneath the Beaver Road Bridge during a frozen spell, canary like Siskins in the winter feeding on alder cones near the Stour Centre and many more species, including a regular Kingfisher seen currently near the International station. At the beginning of each meeting, the group discusses the birds seen recently in the Ashford Green Corridor and the local area. In 2004, the club was asked by the Kentish Stour Countryside Project to do a survey of the birds in the Ashford Green Corridor. This was split into sections and Heather's section was between the Stour Centre and Bowen's Field -which to her amazement yielded 36 different species! Heather says to any further Birdwatching groups visiting the Ashford Green Corridor - "look and listen, there is a grater variety of species here than you would

imagine because there are so many different habitats”. For more information concerning the Ashford Birdwatching Club, refer to the Appendix at the back of this project.

Bybrook

Bybrook cemetery stands as the most northwesterly point to the Ashford Green Corridor, before heading in a northeasterly direction to Little Burton. This cemetery has an area reserved as a woodland garden cemetery, providing a resting place for those who wish to return to nature. On the tithe maps of 1843 Bybrook remains a tiny settlement with only a few buildings.

Little Burton

On these same tithe maps of 1843, neighbouring Little Burton was a single farm dwelling. The land on which the housing estate is now built remained farmland with pastures and extensive orchards until as recently as the 1990's. The adjacent green space that exists today as part of the Ashford Green Corridor is shown as mainly arable fields on the 1843 tithe maps. It was owned by the Earl of Thanet and leased to tenant farmer Walter Murton. The reason that the green space managed to escape housing development is that the developers decided to provide a public open space for the new estate. A pond central to it creates habitats for wetland birds such as coot and moorhen and as the planted trees mature, woodland habitats will also develop. Between the pond and the railway line there is a small marshy area. Here a range of wild plants that thrive in damp conditions, such as reed mace, are plentiful. The Great Stour flows along the southern boundary of Little Burton, providing the aquatic and bankside vegetation common to the habitat. However there is one slightly more unusual feature of the riverside here and that is the number of cricket bat willows, traditionally used for making cricket bats!

At this point in the journey along the Great Stour, the neighbouring Ashford Green Corridor reaches its most northerly quarters. For the next stage a return to the Civic Centre area is necessary, for here is where the East Stour joins the Great Stour. Civic Centre South Park will feature as the first stop off point in this second section of the journey.

Civic Centre South Park

Civic Centre South Park consists of closely mown grass with more ornamental based planting. Leaving the park in the direction of South Willesborough and Newtown requires passing through a subway under the railway. Once a drab access route, the Ashford Green Corridor commissioned a local artist to work with school children to create the wildlife based mural that exists there today. Passing through this cheerful access route, South Willesborough and the new town of Newtown await on the other side.

Newtown

Ashford became a railway town in the 19th century and as a consequence a whole new housing development took place to house the railway workers. It had its own schools, shops, baths and other such facilities and was named Alfred Town. However this name never really caught on and poor old Alfred lost out to the accepted alternative of 'Newtown' – the name that lives on today. This next section of the heritage journey will therefore be steeped in theme of the railway works, which even had an influence on Ashford's watercourses.

South Willesborough resident John Flisher contributed to this heritage project by kindly spending a few hours leading Ashford Green Corridor Officer Emma Griffiths on a walk around Newtown and South Willsborough pointing out points of interest on route. John Flisher, his grandfather and great grandfather all worked in the railway works and it was his great grandfather who worked the Cuplin. Comparable to a blacksmith, only on a much larger scale, the heavy metal hammer made a thumping noise and vibration to be felt and heard all over South Willesborough. A high fence made from dark railway sleepers, with a somewhat menacing effect, surrounded the railway works. A set of railway lines across Crowbridge Road provided a link between the railway works and the Gashouse works on the opposite side of the road, on which to transport coke wagon trains. South Willesborough resident Keith Williamson remembers these tracks remained in place until as recently as the late 1960's.

The workers at this southeast end of the railway works entered the site at another entrance further down from the coke trains, marked by a set of large gates. John Flisher remembers that just before entering, many of the men pulled up on their bikes in a lay-by opposite where Arthur Wakefield parked his little green van, ready to sell them their daily newspaper.

On the far eastern side of the railway works site was Marshlin Yard - known to John Flisher and colleagues as the 'Upsiders' or 'Humps'. Here the freight trains were marshaled ready to go on their journey; only one occasion shunting was undertaken a little too forcefully and the freight train ended up out onto the street! Local resident Jack Edwards was also involved in shunting the engines, having worked his way up from an initial engine cleaning position. As appears to be the theme of most development, this area used to be a farm before it became a railway works. However one consistency still remains since the days of the railway works and that is the presence of the fish and chip shop just outside the 'humps' which John Flisher claims made the perfect end to an evening shift!

Although a huge gate stood at the entry point into the gas works, that did little to stop John Flisher and friends as young boys gaining access to play on a large old black war tank and other similar remains inside. At the bridge by the gashouse works gate, competitions took place on Guy Fawkes night between Newtown, South Willesborough and North Willesborough to see who could build the biggest fire - reminiscent of the light hearted rivalry existing between the three since the railway works came to Ashford.

Gas House Fields

The railway works created a small reservoir adjacent to the present day subway, for the purposes of its construction works. South Willesborough resident Keith Williamson explained that in order to have constant supplies of water to the reservoir, a diversion in the Aylesford Stream was deemed necessary. Thus as opposed to running its original route across the bottom of Cudworth Road, it now makes a man-made sharp bend towards the old railway works. Keith further mentioned that a glance down whilst standing at the crossing point will reveal the brickwork from where the water used to be piped.

John Flisher explained that the profile of the Aylesford Stream by Gashouse Fields also changed, this time in an attempt by man to reduce flooding. Previously it was more 'V' (valley) shaped with steeper banks and thus the profile used to lack the present day platform effect that increases its water holding capacity. Instead the river in times of heavy rainfall used to squeeze under the narrow bridge and burst out the other side onto the Gashouse Fields, owned by the Currah farming family.

South Willesborough resident Sheila Russell explained that the Currah family used to own most of the land in the South Willesborough area and still does own a considerable amount. Although the railways own the eastern area of Gas House Fields, the adjacent central area, known as the Spinney, was left by the Currahs to the people of South Willesborough and it still remains as such today. Its present voluntary guardians are the South Willesborough and Newtown Environmental Group - known as SWANEG. Formed in the late 1990's the group consists of local residents who give up their time to improve the site for both the benefit of nature and the local community. With pond wardens, tree wardens, litter pickers and a qualified wheelbarrow technician on board (to name but a few) the group's work extends beyond purely the Spinney into areas such as Herbert Road sports fields and Bushy Royds fields. The Spinney itself is young woodland with predominately hawthorn scrub, bramble, open-glade areas and some tree specimens.

Cudworth Road resident Peter remembers the Spinney in the 1950s was an area of rough grassland and brambles. Walking through it was no easy task and a careful eye was needed to spot small areas of masonry and man made holes hidden by grass. The spinney and part of the area adjacent backing onto the stream, John Flisher recalls as once being allotments for the local people. The SWANEG group has turned the site into a pleasant young woodland for local residents to enjoy a stroll through. In April 2007 SWANEG teamed up with the Ashford Volunteers at the Kentish Stour Countryside Project for a series of tasks at the Spinney, including improving the small access paths and opening up the canopy in some areas to allow more sunlight to ground vegetation.

SWANEG member Dave Gower remembers a crossing keeper cottage that used to stand on the South Willesborough side of the level crossing between the railway track and Crowbridge Road. During the 1960's Dave's school friend lived in the cottage with his family and the two friends would often sit together in one of its rooms to complete their homework. Each time a train passed by, the cottage would shake, since it was just a few inches from the track. The crossing keeper's garden was on the other side of Crowbridge road and sloped down towards the Aylesford Stream at the bottom. Dave recalls that in

the late 1950's and early 1960's the familiar sight of the steam train was being phased out and replaced with electric and diesel trains.

SWANEG member Sue Williamson adds that the Aylesford level crossing was the last remaining crossing between Paris and London when the Eurostar service first began. The crossing keeper was a very interesting individual who she notes owned a selection of knitted Fair Isle hats! Eventually (in approximately the 1990's) the level crossing footbridge and keeper hut were all demolished and replaced by a subway from South Willesborough to Willesborough.

John Flisher also remembers this crossing and compares it to the existing one in Wye village - only with the two gates opening outwards. During John Flisher's guided walk he pointed out where a basic footbridge allowed access over the railway track. The chaps from the railway works would either carry their bikes over the footbridge when returning home for lunch or sit and wait for the crossing gates to open. In order for the local farmer to reach his barn located on a plot adjacent to the spinney, he often used the bridge that crosses the river close to the Albion pub. SWANEG member Claire Howe has been informed that a farm house and outbuildings, including an old shed, were located close by to where the Albion Pub dwells, which John Flisher believes belonged to Mr and Mrs Knowles.

Dave Gower and his family lived in one of twenty-four houses in Albion Terrace facing the Aylesford Stream. Each house had a walled front garden that was lower than the cinder footpath. This meant that once the water level reached the top of the bank during winter months, the family knew it was about to flood the house. As a child, Dave and friends watched the water level to establish whether it was rising or falling. In the event of it rising, the children in the street would warn their parents and help move rugs, toys and any other removable belongings, upstairs – the toys no doubt being the children's priority in the move! Meanwhile anything remaining downstairs such as the furniture was raised onto apple boxes or other similar objects to hand. Dave can recall the house flooding approximately twice and on those occasions the family moved upstairs or waded around in their Wellington boots in up to twelve inches of dirty, muddy water. Once the water had finally drained away, a sandy muddy mess was left behind, which the whole family set to clearing up. The houses would dry out after a few days and then everything would return to normal once more. All the terraced houses have since been demolished and ten houses now form a residency known as Albion Place.

Newtown Green

Opposite Newtown Green baths stands the main entrance into the railway works, as ceremoniously marked by a large clock for the workers - shifts began at 7.30 am until midday and then 1pm until 4.30pm. Newtown Green baths (now converted into flats) were open to women between the hours of 8.00am to 1.00pm and from 9.00am to 1.00pm for gentlemen. Perfectly located next door to the baths was a pub allowing the workers to truly 'freshen' up before returning home for their evening meal. South Willesborough resident Iris Edwards, remembers this area was one to avoid at the hours of midday and

5pm on a weekday. This was a fact she learnt through experience when out pushing a pram one day and finding herself nearly knocked over by a mass of men on bikes racing down Newtown Road!

Behind the baths is Newtown Green itself, now host to a Railway Wheel monument that marks the importance of the railway to the area. With regard to open air entertainment, Newtown Green was certainly a favourite and still is today. For South Willesborough residents Anne (whose father worked on the railway works for 45 years) and Iris and Jack Edwards it was the regular vegetable and flower shows that now feature strongest in their memories of the space. This was on account of the multitude of colours and hubbub of activity such shows were guaranteed to entail. Much of the fruit and vegetable produce on display was grown in nearby allotments on Mead Road, yet now lost to housing. However the sight of allotments in the area has not been lost forever and instead they now occupy land adjacent to the Ashford Green Corridor, in an area locally known as 'Frog's Island'.

South Willesborough

SWANEG member Sue Williamson has lived in South Willesborough since 1966 and remembers a sweet shop owned by Mr Garlinge in a row of terraced houses in Gladstone Road. During the couple of hours Mr Garlinge was open on a Sunday afternoon, it was a Sunday treat for Sue and her husband, Keith, to take their two daughters to purchase sweets. The door would open with a welcoming ding and they would step over the polished brass threshold into the sweet shop, complete with wooden counter and original Frys Chocolate wooden and glass display cabinet. Mr Garlinge would appear from the back room to weigh up the sweets, accompanied by wafts of his Sunday roast dinner.

When Sue and Keith Williamson first moved to South Willesborough Mrs Lilliott's general store was opposite the present day Post Office in Gladstone Road. The store had an annexe on the side used as a butchers shop run by Mrs Lilliott's friend, Mr Dossett. The annexe has since been demolished and converted into flats. A further adjacent shop was used by many of the local people because the owner, Mrs Sharp, stocked almost everything and would order items in for a person's individual needs. Sue remarked that it was a definitely the place for a good chat and to catch up on all the local news!

Nicky West's own home in Cudworth Road used to be a shop. This was a fact that caused fellow SWANEG member, Maureen Pallant, to express wonder over the small areas shop owners used to live in - given the front of their house was a shop and the back was often storage. It was however a common feature of the pre 1970's, which SWANEG member Theresa



Partington explained as being accountable to transport. For commerce would once have come to the people of Ashford, either in the form of travelling traders or stationary shops dotted in amongst residential housing. In contrast residents are now expected to travel to large out of town shopping complexes. The Ashford Green Corridor recognises this change and aims to offer a safer and more pleasant trip to the supermarkets by providing cycle and pedestrian paths throughout. For the traders transporting their goods in bygone times, this sometimes proved a difficult task. Theresa Partington recalls having` to shut the front gate on her garden when first moving to the area in the 1980's, in order to prevent the sheep on their way to market from straying and paying a visit to her house!

The Churchill pub Canterbury Road, formally The Vicary Arms but originally The Bricklayers Arms, was a Fremlins House once run by landlord Ted Caldwell. Sue Williamson recalls the lovely dog he owned that was sensibly more than content to spend the winter days in front of the pub's roaring fire. Perhaps the original 'Bricklayer Arms' name arose from the Brick works behind Canterbury Road. SWANEG member Claire Howe pointed out that due to the clay rich soil in Ashford, brick making was a large business in the area, using horse and cart to transport the clay. Claire has been told that many of the ponds that the excavation works left behind were used to swim in by local children.

In some respects South Willesborough feels to many of its inhabitants like an island surrounded by Dykes; a feeling intensified during times of floods. Ashford's association with flooding is particularly apparent in the South Willesborough Dykes area and consequently many memories centre around this theme. Anne is now one of the flood wardens in the area, helping to administer both initial warnings of floods and the sand bags that attempt to contend with them. Evidently once the heavy rain arrives, 'watching the drains' becomes a particularly popular pastime! Her duties on one occasion even extended to having to help the milkman deliver the milk when he arrived to the area without any Wellington boots!



Since a reservoir has been built in Aldington, flooding risks have greatly reduced yet the legacy of those previous, live on. South Willesborough residents Jack and Iris Edwards shudder at the thought of the smell left behind after the floods and are forever grateful for the single step 'up' into their house, as opposed to the fatal single step 'down' into the homes of other residents. They explained this difference in step gradient could so easily make the difference between being or not being flooded. However with gardens flooded and outside lavatories being the norm, there was no escaping the fun in trying to make it to relieve oneself!

Anne remembered that to help prevent flooding when she first

moved to the area, residents in South Willesborough were responsible for keeping any Dykes located in or close to their gardens clean and tidy. Cudworth Road resident Peter, had



another approach to keeping flood levels down. For on leaving the Navy, Peter brought with him a semi-rotary hand pump that combined with a piece of hosepipe, made for a perfect garden watering contraption. He was further assisted by the once availability of steps leading down to the dykes, intended to enable residents to fill up buckets of water. However, his first attempt at the use of this rather powerful form of hose unfortunately lacked success and instead the clean pink frock his wife was wearing whilst holding the hose, suddenly became a black muddy spotted pink dress when the hose burst off the pump!

A more official pipe system was installed in the particularly hot, dry summer of 1972. Digging down to insert the pipes, Anne revealed that South Willesborough suddenly became centre stage for a series of fountains displays, as high volumes of water were unexpectedly found resting under the ground surface - a sharp reminder of the area's almost continually high water table. The water situation in South Willesborough was literary at the cost to local residents like Anne, who found themselves having to pay an extra rate to live in the flood area - a cost that fortunately no longer exists.

Frog's Island

Frog's Island is a name believed to derive from the numerous frogs that used to inhabit South Willesborough when it was a patchwork of marshy fields with wildlife rich drainage ditches in between. Work by the Ashford Green Corridor on the areas surrounding South Willesborough's recreation ground, has seen the return of some of these habitats. For example the installation of 'scrapes' - shallow wet areas, close to Cudworth Road and Herbert Road have attracted an abundance of wildlife. In the summer months these scrapes sit against a backdrop of wildflowers reintroduced to the site again by the Ashford Green Corridor - the Oxeye daisy making for a particularly beautiful display. Looking at old maps of the area this green space still retains the same shape as the original fields on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps. These maps also show that land in this area was once used for orchards - a traditional landscape that has been brought back by the recently planted community orchard.

Until the late 20th century, the area now referred to as the Community Orchard land used to be grazed by horses and cattle. Mr Burgess who moved into Cudworth Road just after the houses were built in the early 1900s, informed subsequent resident of the street – Peter, that house owners put in Willow trees along the Dyke adjacent to the grazing area. These were to act as fence posts to prevent the grazing animals getting into resident's gardens and have since rooted to become trees in our present day landscape.

John Flisher remembers both the early football tournaments on the football pitch in the area known as Frog's Island and the fact that the site was once a cornfield. The South Willesborough Invictors used an old railway coach as their changing room and played every Saturday afternoon. Whilst discussing early football days on John Flisher's walk, he bumped into a long term friend, Brenda, who has also grown up in South Willesborough. Brenda makes reference to the recreation ground on Frog's Island having

also once been a farm field. During the mid 1960's, accompanied by a friend, Brenda often rode on horseback through the fields discovering numerous chickens on route!

Aylesford Stream

The Aylesford Stream flows from the east, under the railway, past the area known as gas house fields and onwards to join the East Stour. To the east of Aylesford Green, the stream splits into two channels, one being a mill race. Old maps show a corn mill where Sevington Lane crossed that stream and a weir is still visible today. As it runs through Aylesford Green, the water course remains quite natural as it slowly meanders through the surrounding woodland and grassland. Whilst the woodland is home to small mammals such as wood mice and bank voles, the wild plant species vegetation provides good habitat for damselflies, dragonflies and birds.

South Willesborough resident Jack Edwards introduced an important feature that had once inhabited land close to the Aylesford Stream and went by the name of 'Oakie'. This was of course an oak tree - one most fortunately equipped with a large, sturdy frame and perfectly positioned adjacent to the deepest part of the stream. Such an ideal combination made swinging from the tree on a rope a cherished pastime for youngsters. Jack himself being between the age of nine or ten at the time, joined other like minded children on warmer days to take the plunge into Aylesford Stream.



Anne's own pursuits of childhood fun can only be considered 'slightly' drier and the actual level of dryness was in fact dependent upon success rates. They began from leaving her childhood home in Mead Road in the direction of Norman Cycle factory in Beaver Road. Here young Anne would turn into an alleyway, pass through that which was once allotments and head across fields.

Her journey did not end here, instead it was off down to Aylesford stream once more. Unlike the full hearty desires of Jack Edwards to get wet, Anne's fun depended upon alternative skills of balance and tactical judgment. For the aim of the game was to head back in the direction of home, only this time via the stream bank side, permitting as little water as possible to enter the contestant's Wellington boots. With friends in tow, the journey back would be a mixture of concentration and laughter and more often than not ending, as Anne put it, - "with wet socks an' all!".

The Aylesford Stream is unperturbed by the presence of the railway line which cuts through Ashford and instead quietly meanders under it into Willesborough. Mary Bingham, member of the Brabourne and Smeeth Footpath Association, has given a written account of her memories of living and playing around Willesborough

approximately fifty years ago. In the process of compiling the account, Mary had amusing time discussing anecdotes on the telephone with her three brothers - Peter, David and Philip Staples.

From her birth in 1939 until becoming married in 1962, Mary lived in Willesborough and played with her brothers in several surrounding areas for many years. The house where they lived, built in 1935 and named 'Four Winds', was one of a pair located opposite Willesborough Church. At that time there were fields in front which reached as far as the railway crossing in Hunter Avenue and allotments to the side. The children watched the various crops in season and always had green space in which to play. Games of cricket and football were enjoyed but November the 5th was always a big excitement. A huge bonfire would be built, much of the necessary wood being gathered from another place they played in - The Broomfields, an ancient woodland on Kennington Lane that is still there today. Mary's brother with many friends would form a torch light procession and the bonfire would be lit to great cheering - there were no fireworks in those days of course. When the land was eventually in Council hands, a designated adult had to be named to be responsible and this was often Mary's father, Mr Harry Staples. This area is now the site of houses called Blake Court built around the 1970's.

The area beside the house was the site for allotments until the mid 1940s when prefabs were built. Peter Staples can remember the final one arriving by crane, pitching over their house that connected with Osborne Road. Until that point the road had been a cul-de-sac and Mary's house had not had a number. Therefore over night they changed address without moving house and became 244 Osborne Road! Allotments were then prepared behind the cemetery in Church Road but the cemetery has since acquired this land. Eventually the prefabs were demolished in the 1960s, and Philip Staples was employed in helping to clear the debris. Permanent houses were built on the site from around 1968 onwards.

Willesborough Windmill also featured in Mary and her brothers' winter games. There was a wonderful slope they sledged down - Mary noted that it seemed there was always snow every winter. The guiding of the sledge needed to be very accurate, as at the bottom was a very deep pond. They were never sure whether the ice would bear the sledge plus two or three weighty children. Running below the windmill slope was a wide sandy track of land, which was cut out before the war and later became the Ashford Bypass and eventually the busy M20 motorway. The sand was good enough to dig in and make sandcastles, visits to the seaside being very rare.

The Aylesford Stream, through the field in Bentley Road was another place they used for paddling and fishing for tiddlers and tadpoles. One particularly wet summer it became deep enough to swim in. Philip Staples remarked that it was in fact rather muddy and smelly, on account of cows grazing in the field! Whilst drying off, the children watched the trains passing on the Folkestone line, one of which was the celebrated 'Golden Arrow'.

Boys Hall

Boys Hall is a Jacobean Manor house originally built in 1616 by the Boys family, with Victorian additions made in 1833. When originally landing in England from France at the time of the Norman Conquest, the name of the Boys family's was De Bois, but it was gradually anglicised. From the outside the characteristic gables and tall chimneys stand as a clear historical monument of the period, yet present day owner, Marcus Collings, revealed evidence inside the hall that further enriches the history behind them.

Marcus Collings, kindly welcomed Ashford Green Corridor Officer Emma Griffiths to the hall to divulge any information that may prove of relevance to this heritage project. Walking into the dining room he showed how the huge fire place now sits in the corner of the room. This would have been an incredibly unusual design of the time and suggests the room was once much larger. This is supported by evidence that a fire once broke out in the room in the 18th century - a time when no fire brigade existed. As a consequence a further two supporting gables and a large proportion of the room was lost.

Marcus also explained that there was once a medieval roundel house nearby called Sevington Moat in the spot now known as Boys Hall Moat. However after a child fell into the moat and drowned, the roundel house was knocked down in 1631 and bricks and timber from the site were used to extend Boys Hall, completing it in 1632. Marcus is in the process of trying to help piece together the full history of the Boys family and house, for a book being produced. However upon leaving Boys Hall many of the Boys family moved to America, which certainly makes the task of contacting decedents far more difficult!

Marcus Collings revealed that although the Boys family who lived in the hall for many years were great farmers and landowners, they were also heavily involved in smuggling, as was common for landed gentry at that time. South Willesborough resident Peter revealed that folklore claims an old tunnel runs from Boys Hall Moat to the present Boys Hall which would of course have been ideal for any such smuggling! Boys Hall would have been surrounded by a vast acreage of farmland but with road and housing development this has since been reduced to 3 acres, now beautifully landscaped. These gardens make a perfect backdrop for the Wedding functions that have begun to take place there this year, introducing a new historical element to the hall in their wake. The landscaped gardens range from a Victoria Rose garden to a Croquet Lawn and even a wildlife area. The owners, who have meticulously restored the hall over the last few years, are keen to also enrich the wildlife in the garden and have introduced a wild meadow around the Roman Lake. Marcus explained that the lake would have been full twenty years ago, however this is no longer the case.

There is one final point that will no doubt capture many people's imagination concerning Boys Hall - its association with ghosts! These additional inhabitants evidently include the drunk who enjoys a good dance around the dining room, angry Thomas in the stable block and a certain monk, not to mention the mystery surrounding a body found under the floor boards in the Lumber room!!!

Upon leaving Boys Hall, there is no riverside to follow as this next stage in the journey for this part of the Ashford Green Corridor is situated away from the river course. However the area still remains an important part of the green corridor due to its rough grassland and native trees. The mature ornamental trees situated adjacent to Boys Hall provide roosts for bats. The route then opens up into to a viewpoint of both Boys Hall Moat below and some recent development beyond, such as the railway line. Alongside the railway runs the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, directly illustrating a new era of change in Ashford. As the path continues an overgrown and dried up pond quietly lurks close by. This pond appears on the first edition Ordnance Survey map making it over a hundred years old. Over the foot bridge lies Boy's Hall Moat, which is the next stop in this journey.

Boys Hall Moat

This 13th century moat is one of the most important heritage sites in the Ashford Green Corridor and is protected as a Scheduled Ancient monument. It was of course the site where a previously discussed country house once occupied, that then owner, Thomas Boys, used the bricks and timber from to build Boys Hall. The moat is well preserved and still manages to hold water all year round. It is an excellent wildlife area, with many wetland plants, birds and insects. With a good combination of wet and dry grassland habitats, there is a healthy grass snake population. A long, narrow pond, possibly a former fish pond, sits close by and the ditches and terraces visible to the west of the moat are also protected. These are the remains of a garden that was created next to the house.

South Willesborough resident Ann remembers playing in the moat itself and then climbing the surrounding trees to dry off and enjoy a spot of people watching - those passing by underneath were often unaware of these young watchful eyes above.

Church Road Playing Field

The playing field in Church Road, still in use today, was another place of enjoyment for Willesborough resident Mary Bingham. The walk there entailed looking for conkers from several huge trees, on a site where two bungalows now stand. The field was partly used for cereal crops and Mary can remember watching the huge harvesting machines at work.

Journey's End

Church Road Playing Field marks the end of the Ashford Green Corridor's boundary and as a consequence the closure of this heritage journey. It is hoped that the journey was an enjoyable one for both those who shared their memories and facts concerning the Ashford Green Corridor and for those who have read this written documentation of them.

Once again the Ashford Green Corridor Officer would like to thank all those involved in the project, including:

The local Ashford residents and community groups for their guided walks and entertaining talks

The owners of Boys Hall and Singleton Manor for literally opening their doors to assist in tracing history

The residents of Oakleigh House sheltered accommodation and retirement housing for allowing themselves to be interviewed by children armed with Dictaphones

The Oak Tree Primary School teachers and pupils for bringing such enthusiasm, creativity and energy to the project

Ashford library for arranging copyright permission of photographs and exhibiting the final piece

And finally the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting the project!

Appendix 1

Ashford Birdwatching Club

Ashford Birdwatching Club was first established on 8th February 1983 after a series of evening classes at Associate House in 1982 run by Malcolm Pater. The Club is therefore now in its 25th year. It meets every Wednesday evening from 19.30 to 21.30 for slide shows and talks at the W.I Hall, Faversham Road, Kennington from September to April inclusive and the club is always pleased to welcome new members. Their message to new people is “Come and join us. It doesn’t matter if you’ve never done any birdwatching. We are a friendly and welcoming group and this is a great way to see and learn about birds”. At the heart of their organisation is the message that appreciation of birds encourages people to appreciate wildlife and the environment on their doorstep and in the countryside

Brabourne and Smeeth Footpath Association

As the village has changed in character over the years and leisure time is at a premium we have had to move with the times. KCC have taken over the responsibility for stile upkeep and dealing with obstructions so this no longer forms a part of our activities. We do report any broken stiles, obstructions etc of our footpaths direct to the PROW office in Ashford. However, we are continuing with our monthly walks, most of the leaders coming from within the committee and we have introduced ‘All Day’ walks to explore other areas e.g a Town Trail of Rye coupled with a walk in the Peasmarsh area. We organise social occasions which encourage older members who founded the association to join with active walking members and keep in touch with our affairs. The Newsletter is published twice a year in the Spring and Autumn. We are proud that our association has flourished over 34 years now having a membership of 72 households throughout the village whose population is approximately 2500 people.

The association has records dating from the original Newsletter issue in January 1973

The Great Chart Society

The Great Chart Society was formed in 1989 under the Chairmanship of Campbell W Miller of Chilmington Green, who a few years earlier had initiated an ad-hoc protection group concerned with environmental threats arising from road developers. Whilst retaining a watchdog function, it extends its activities into historical and other cultural areas, visits and social events.

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