

A globally important river-

The Great Stour

You are standing next to one of only 200 chalk rivers on the planet!

The UK is home to 85% of the world's chalk rivers. They are rich in wildlife, with clear waters and abundant plant life, but most have been altered by human activity.

What is a chalk river?

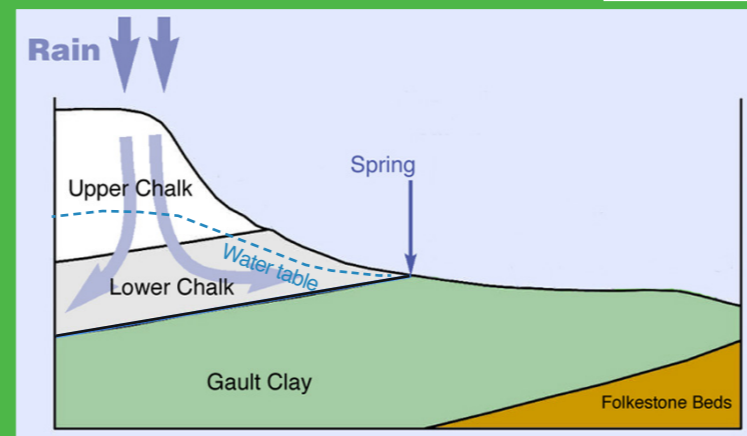
Chalk rivers are found in places with chalk hills, like the North Downs. They are fed by 'aquifers' – natural stores of water in the porous rock. This underground water emerges as springs.

Because they are fed mainly by springs, chalk rivers have stable water levels and temperature – ideal for wildlife. The water is very clear because it has been filtered by the chalk.

The Great Stour upstream of Ashford is not a chalk river in the strictest sense – although it is fed by the aquifer, it flows over the Greensand (a belt of sandstone and clays) not the chalk. The map shows where true chalk rivers can be seen.

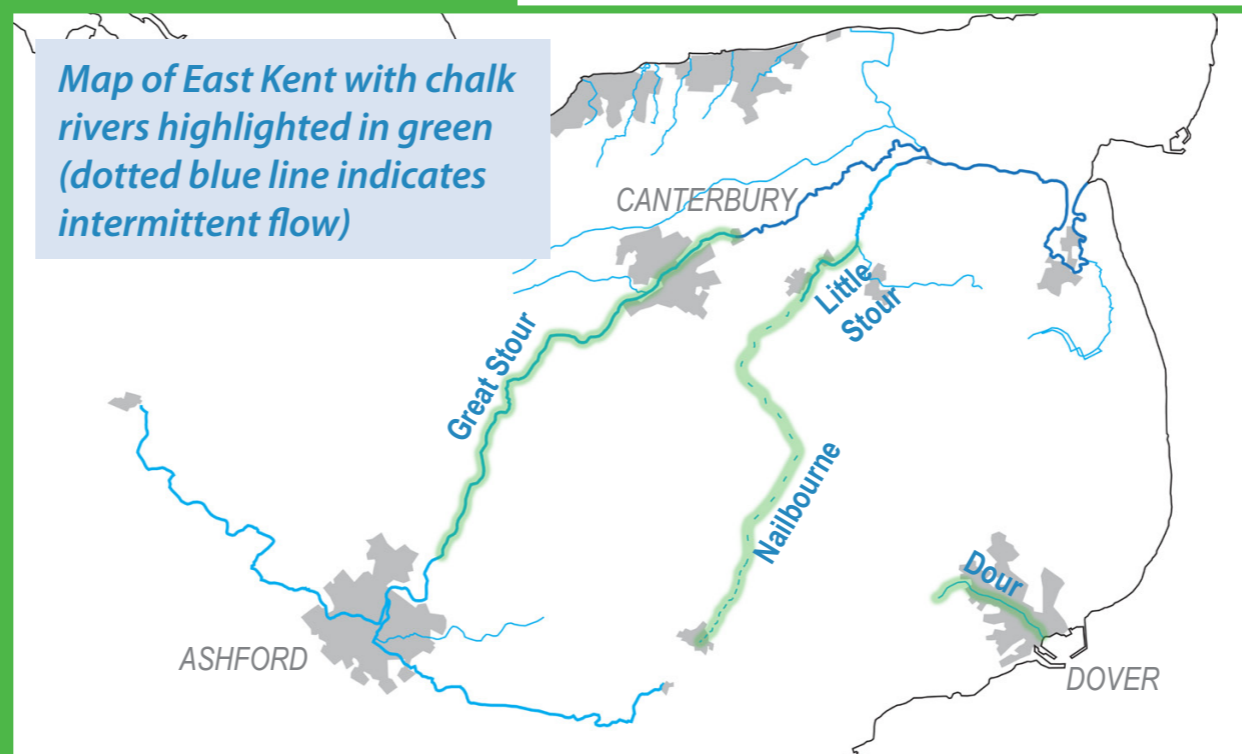


Water crowfoot - a plant of chalk rivers that flowers in swathes of white in the Great Stour



Chalk river geology:

Rain water filters through porous chalk before reaching a layer of clay it can't pass through, and forms an aquifer. The water table is the boundary between the aquifer and unsaturated ground. Where the water table meets the surface, springs occur.



Map of East Kent with chalk rivers highlighted in green (dotted blue line indicates intermittent flow)

Save water, save rivers

The same aquifer that feeds the Great Stour also provides water for our homes and businesses, and one of the main threats to chalk rivers is low flow caused by the demand for domestic water supply.

If you want to help chalk rivers, follow these simple water saving tips:

- Take showers instead of baths.
- Put a save-a-flush-bag in your toilet cistern (they are available free from Southern Water).
- When boiling a kettle, only put in the amount of water you need.
- Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth.
- Fix dripping taps quickly and be on the look out for water leaks.
- Wait until you have a full load before you run your washing machine or dishwasher and use water-saving 'eco' settings.
- Install a water butt in your garden and use it to water plants.
- Use watering cans rather than hoses or sprinklers on the garden.

Find more information and download a leaflet about the Stour Catchment from our website www.kentishstour.org.uk



Please help us to look after this river and its wildlife. Take litter home. Keep dogs and children out of the water. No fishing - private fishery.