

Where two rivers meet...

The Great and Little Stour

You are standing close to the point where the Great Stour meets the Little Stour. Both rivers have made long journeys to get here, starting as springs that emerge from the chalk of the North Downs.

The source of the Great Stour is a spring-fed pond at Lenham. From here it meanders west to Ashford, and is joined by the East Stour. It then flows north-east, through the North Downs as a chalk stream, before arriving at Canterbury.

East of Canterbury, at Fordwich, the Great Stour becomes tidal, and flows into the marshlands of the Lower Stour. It is then joined by the River Wanstum. The Little Stour is the last major tributary to flow into the Great Stour before it continues, now known simply as The Stour, via Sandwich, to reach the sea at Pegwell Bay.

The Little Stour starts its journey under a different name – the Nailbourne – an intermittently flowing stream that has its source at Lyminge. Between Lyminge and North Elham it flows regularly, but is now seldom seen in Barham, Bridge and the other villages of the Elham Valley.

The Nailbourne becomes the Little Stour where it is joined by the Silverdyke, near the village of Littlebourne and beyond this point has consistent



The confluence of the Great Stour and Little Stour here at Pluck's Gutter

flow (though much less then in the past when it drove a number of water mills). Through Wickhambreaux and Seaton it is a lovely chalk stream. It is joined by the Wingham River before meandering past Preston Marshes. The river then loses its curves, having been artificially straightened as it approaches Pluck's Gutter.

A river mouth five miles from the sea

You may have noticed there is a village close to Pluck's Gutter called Stourmouth – strange when you consider the mouth of the Stour is more than five miles from here, at Pegwell Bay! But this wasn't always the case.

In Roman and early medieval times, the mouth of the Stour was here. The Stour flowed into the Wantsum – the wide sea channel separating Kent from the Isle of Thanet – and the point where you are standing would have been under water! Over time the Wantsum silted up and was reclaimed as farmland, creating the landscape you see today.



The Little Stour at Seaton

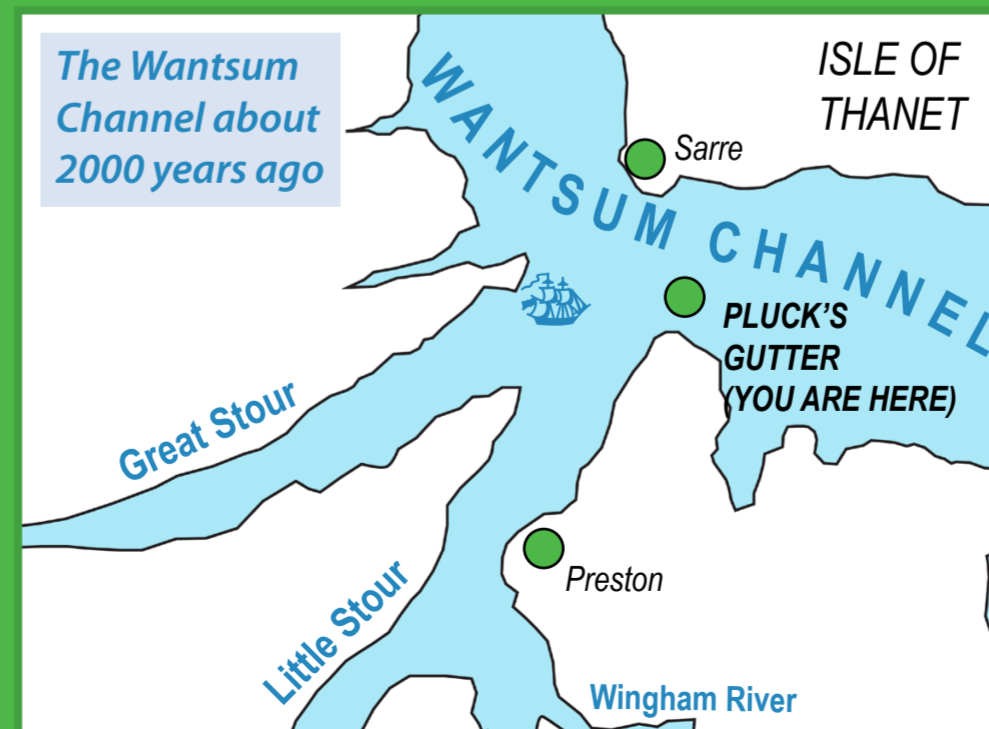


Love the Lower Stour!

Pluck's Gutter is a great place from which to explore the rivers and marshlands of the Lower Stour. Today this is a landscape of intensive agriculture that has lost many of its wetland characteristics, but some areas remain that are rich in wildlife and there are also some fascinating heritage sites.

To the west, you can follow either the Great Stour or Little Stour to Grove Ferry and the internationally important wetlands of Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve. At Grove Ferry you can also pick up the Saxon Shore Way, which will take you through Chislet Marshes (a Local Wildlife Site) to the historic site of Reculver.

To the east, you can follow the Saxon Shore Way along the south bank of the Stour, through the Ash Level Local Wildlife Site, all the way to Richborough Roman Fort and the historic town of Sandwich.



Thanks to the Dog and Duck for permission to install this panel.

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



To report pollution: Environment Agency hotline - 0800 807060