

The Glebe Pond

Source of the Great Stour

This pond is where the largest river in East Kent starts its journey. It is a journey of 58 miles, that will take the river through rural beauty spots and urban centres, through fertile farmland and nature reserves, historic villages and industrial sites past and present, before finally reaching the English Channel at Pegwell Bay. This is the journey of the Great Stour.

The Glebe Pond is one of three springs near here that form the source of the river. From this point the river travels in a roughly south-easterly direction. Despite flowing over the rocks of the Greensand Belt, it has many of the characteristics and species of a chalk stream.

The river looks very natural in parts but is not without its problems. High demand for water supply can lead to low river levels, and it is thought it used to carry much more water than now. Excessive silt smothers the gravelly river bed and affects fish spawning. There are high levels of phosphates and other agricultural chemicals. A partnership of local farmers is tackling some of these issues, and are at the forefront nationally of farming in different ways.

The Great Stour in the Ashford Green Corridor - a network of riverside urban green spaces



After flowing through attractive settlements like Little Chart, and scenic Godinton Park, the Great Stour then enters its first major town – Ashford – running through the Ashford Green Corridor. It changes direction, now heading north-east, before being joined by a major tributary, the East Stour.



The Great Stour at Godmersham

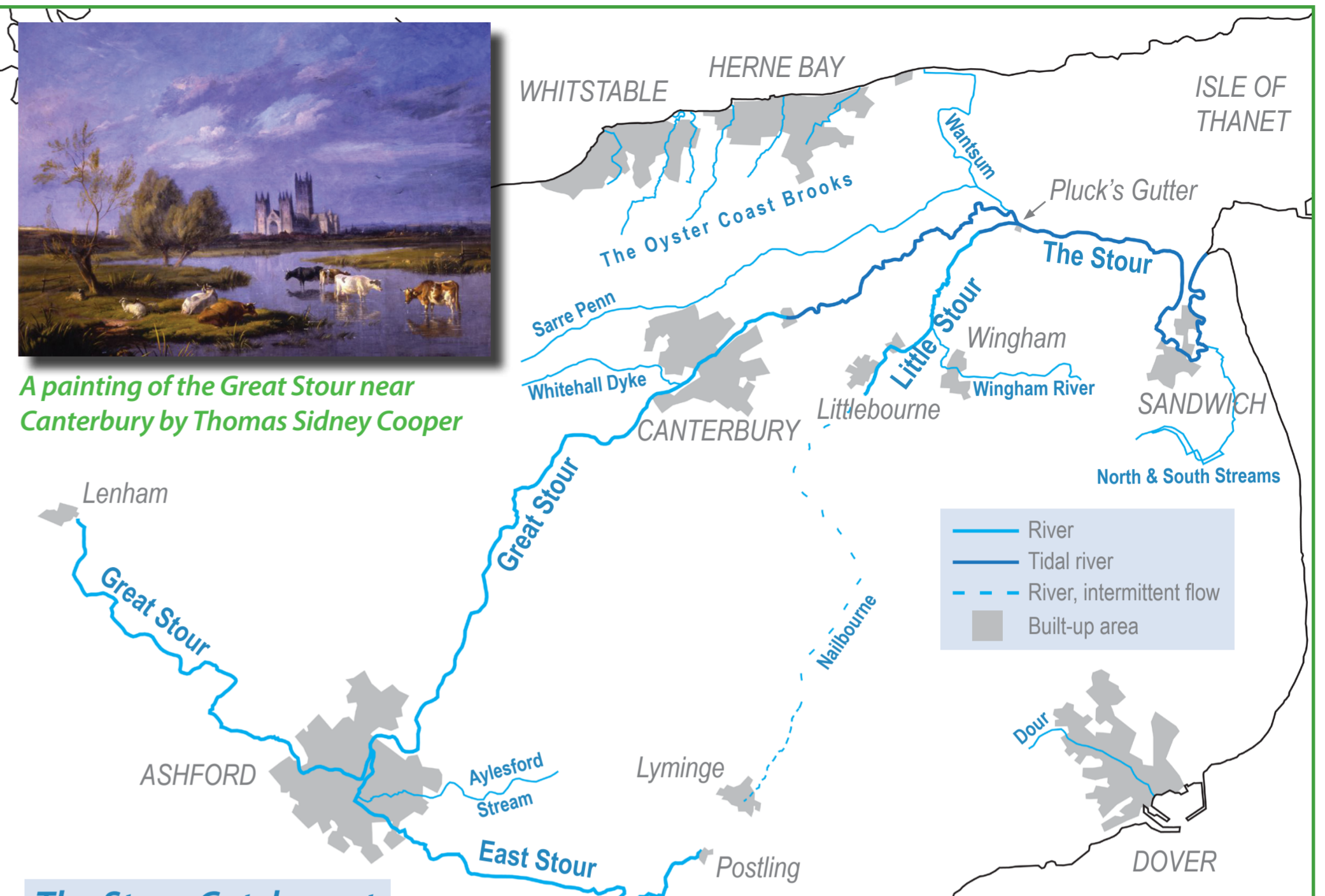
The Great Stour leaves Ashford then flows into a breach in the North Downs called the Wye Gap. From this point, it becomes a true chalk stream, flowing through the Downs in a wide valley. Beautiful riverside spots include the Olantigh Estate, Godmersham, and Chilham Mill.

Running past Chartham and several flooded gravel workings, the Great Stour flows into the historic cathedral city of Canterbury, passing Hambrook Marshes and the Westgate Parks on the way. Idyllic scenes of the river around Canterbury were captured by the famous artist Thomas Sidney Cooper in the 19th century.

Upon leaving Canterbury the river flows on to Fordwich, Britain's smallest town, where it becomes tidal. It then enters the Lower Stour, a marshland landscape where intensive agriculture contrasts with important wildlife areas. At Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, superb wetland habitats support internationally important communities of birds, plants and invertebrates. The Lower Stour as a whole is a stronghold for the declining water vole and has seen the return of otters and beavers.



A painting of the Great Stour near Canterbury by Thomas Sidney Cooper



The Stour Catchment

The Stour Catchment includes not only the Great Stour itself but many tributaries and other rivers of East Kent

At Pluck's Gutter, the Great Stour is joined by the Little Stour, and becomes The Stour. From here it flows across a landscape that was once the sea – the Wantsum Channel separated Kent from the Isle of Thanet during the Roman and Early Medieval period. The Stour flows on through Sandwich, a well-preserved medieval town rich in heritage.



The Stour downstream of Sandwich

The Stour is now nearing the end of its journey. Here the river and its associated habitats are protected as part of much larger conservation areas. The bird life is second to none and diverse habitats support a rich variety of plants and insects. At Pegwell Bay, the Stour finally completes its journey to the sea.



The Stour close to its estuary

We would like to thank Lenham Meadows Trust for permission to install this panel

www.lenhammeadowstrust.org

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



Lenham Meadows Trust
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