

You are crossing...

The West Brook

The source of the West Brook is a small spring deep in the Blean Woods. From there it flows for three and a quarter miles before reaching the sea a short distance from this panel.

The woodland where the West Brook begins its journey is very valuable - West Blean Wood is protected by law. Kent Wildlife Trust are grazing large areas to create habitats for rare species such as the heath fritillary butterfly.

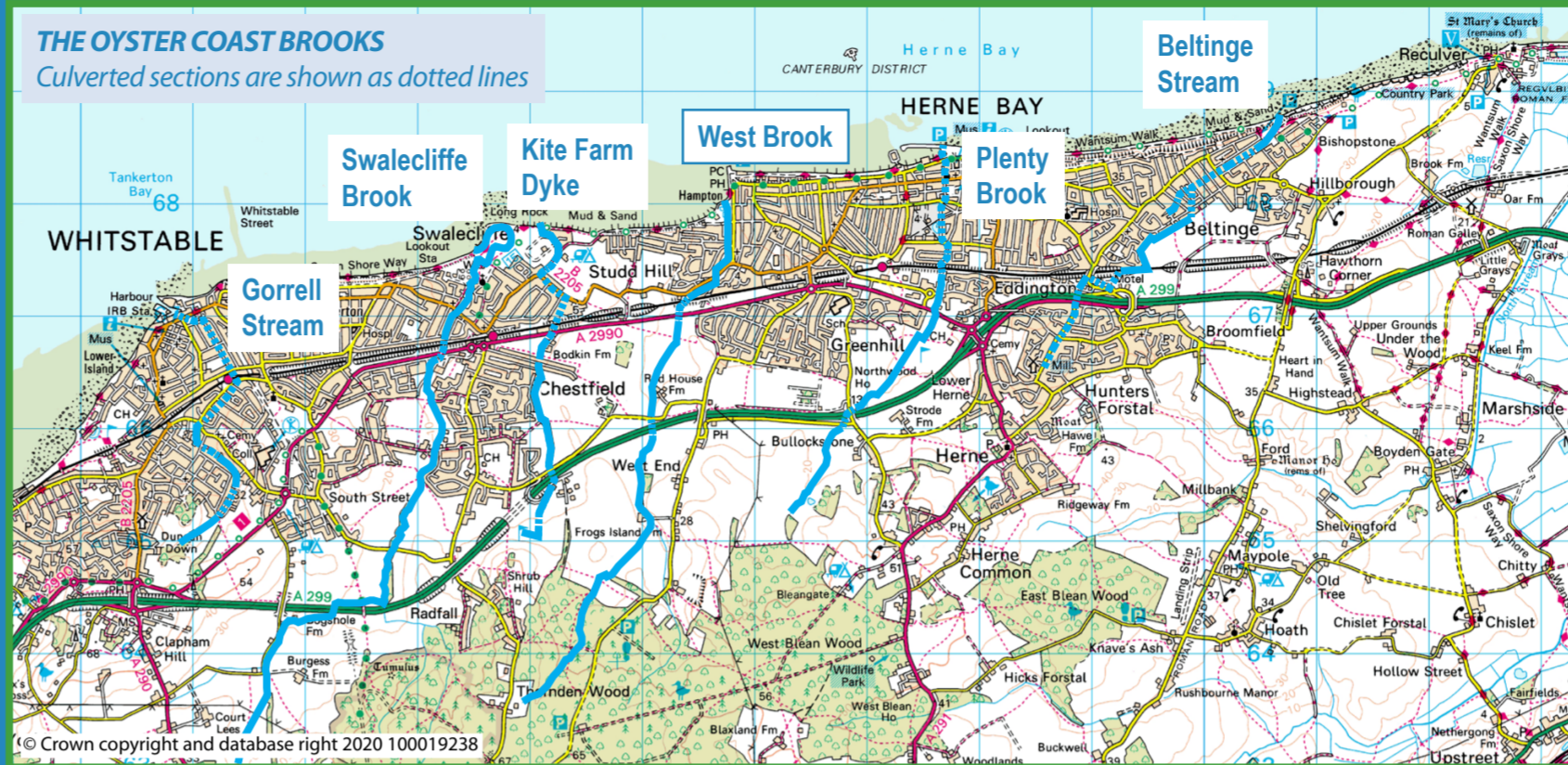


The West Brook has brackish water here - the plants growing on its banks are salt tolerant species

On leaving West Blean, the West Brook passes through Thornden Meadow Local Wildlife Site, protected for its plants characteristic of old meadows. It then flows through agricultural fields before encountering its first large man-made structure - the A299 Thanet Way.

The river now meanders between two contrasting old and new land uses. To its east lies Red House Farm Pasture - a piece of old grassland that has escaped the intensive cultivation of modern agriculture. To the west is Molehill Solar Farm, a 52-acre site containing 60,000 solar panels producing green electricity.

The brook then flows under the A2990, and the London to Margate railway, before entering the outskirts of Herne Bay. Finally, it enters Hampton Pier Recreation Ground, before flowing into the Thames Estuary. The river's water levels are influenced by the estuary's tides, and there is a flood control structure here to manage levels.



The Oyster Coast Brooks

The Oyster Coast Brooks is a collective name given to the small rivers that flow into the Thames Estuary between Seasalter and Reculver. Their name comes from the long history of oyster production for which this area is still known.

This is quite a built-up coastline, so all the Brooks flow partly through towns. As these towns have expanded, some of the rivers have been encased in underground 'culverts'. Both the Gorrell Stream and the Plenty Brook flow unseen for long stretches under streets and pavements. Even where they are not underground, they often flow in hidden, hard to access channels. People are often unaware of their existence.

But these hidden rivers need our help - there are problems with low water levels and pollution from a number of sources. The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership is working with landowners and partner organisations on these issues, but there are also things that local people can do.

How you can help

- Use less water - our domestic water comes from the same sources that feed the Oyster Coast Brooks.
- Check your plumbing - make sure water from your bathroom and kitchen goes into the wastewater and not the surface water drain.
- Volunteer - join the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership in looking after rivers.

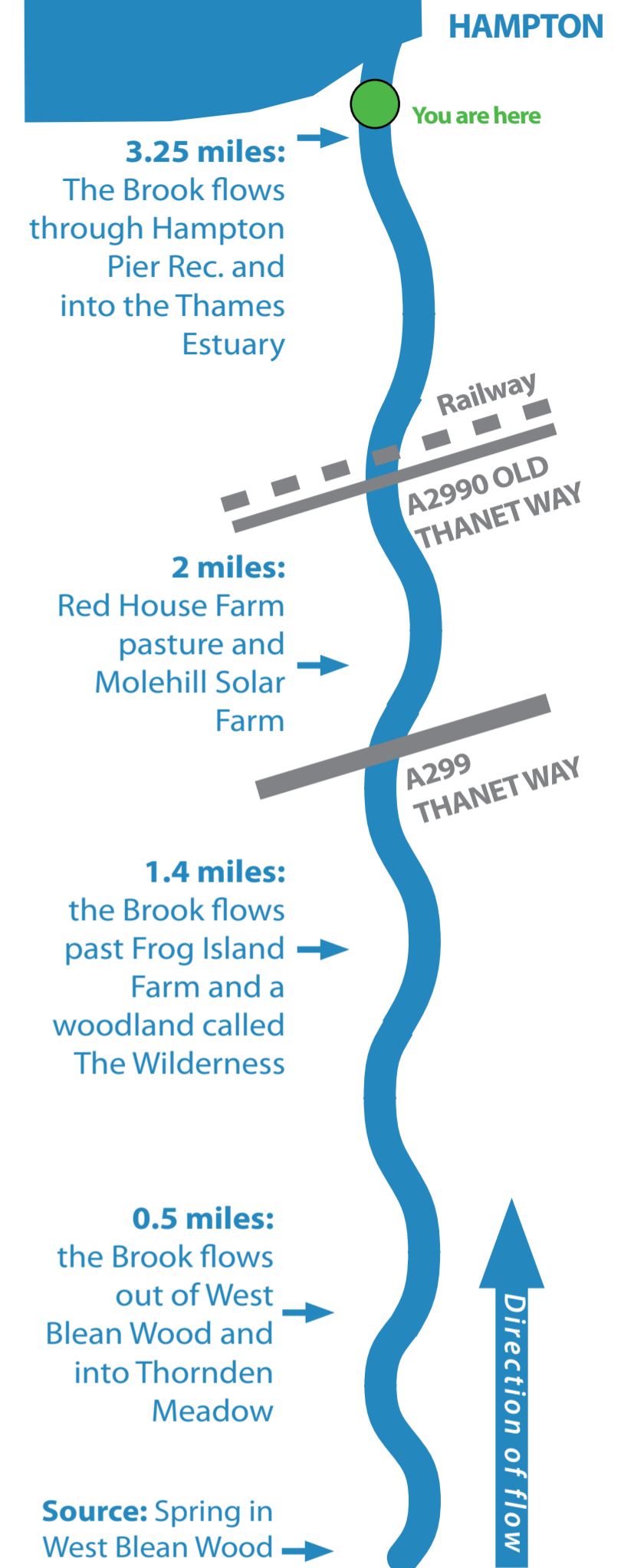
The lost hamlet of Hampton-on-Sea

Hampton-on-Sea once stood on the coast close to the mouth of the West Brook. It started life in the 1860s as a row of workers' cottages built by an oyster fishery company. The company also built a long pier to moor their boats, five times the length of the existing one. Unfortunately, it created tidal currents that would eventually have devastating consequences.



The fishery wasn't a success and when it folded the land was bought by local developers with visions of building a new resort. But this never fully materialised, as a threat to the coastline became apparent. The Pier was causing an

'eddy' that was eroding the soft clay cliffs. As land disappeared and the sea moved ever closer to the houses, the pier was partially removed. But erosion continued, and between 1909 and 1911, Hampton-on-Sea gradually disappeared into the waves.



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

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