



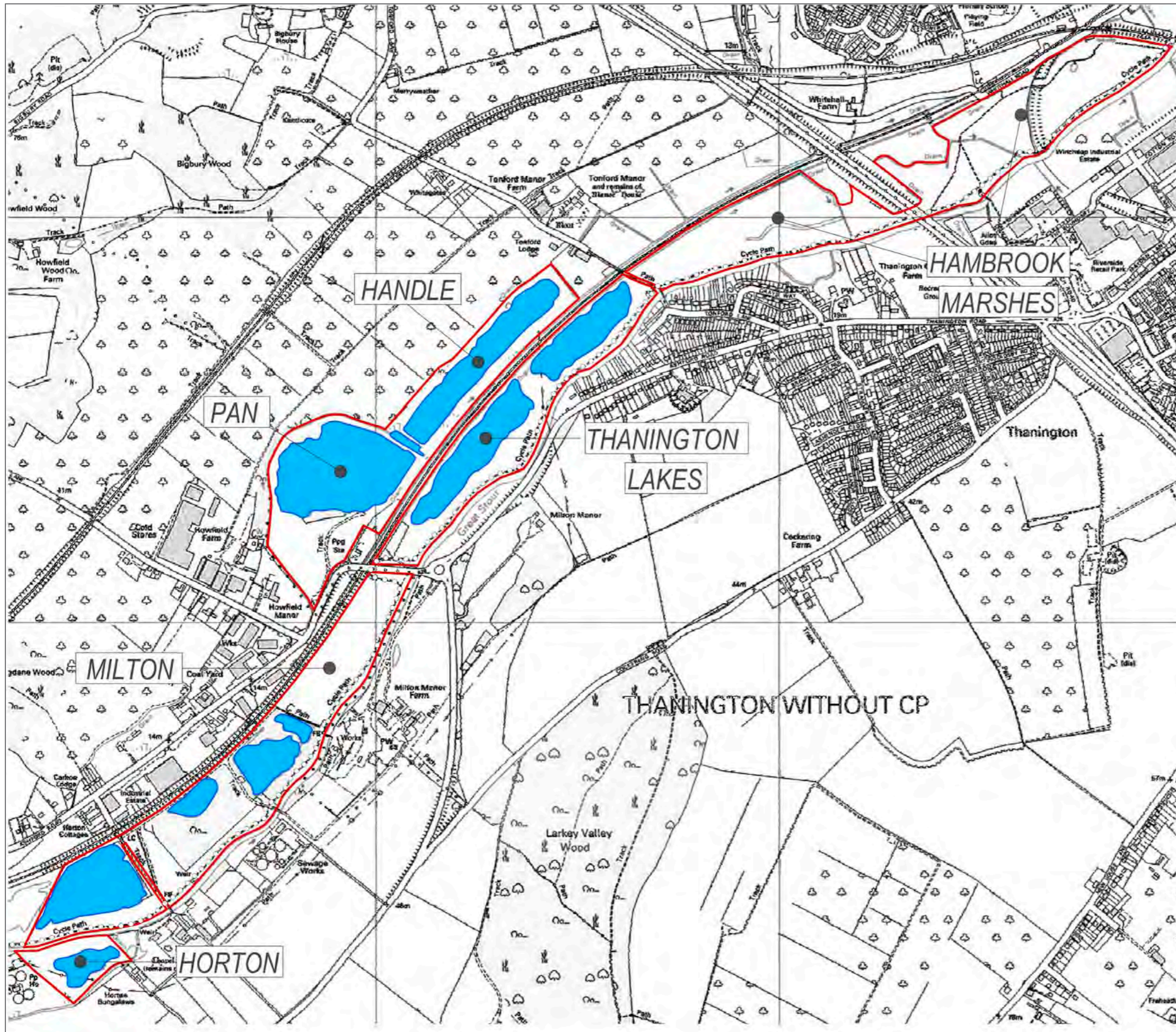
THE GREAT STOUR WAY & HAMBROOK MARSHES

MPA Biodiversity Awards 2013
Landscape-Scale Restoration Category

THE GREAT STOUR WAY AND HAMBROOK MARSHES NATURE RESERVE

The Great Stour Way and Hambrook Marshes Nature Reserve were both former Brett Group sand and gravel sites that have been worked and restored over 3 decades to areas of marsh land, fishing & wildlife lakes and path & cycle ways running beside the River Stour. The Hambrook Marshes Nature Reserve was first worked in 1979 and quarrying activity was completed at Horton (at the western end of the site) as recently as 2011.

Brett have worked in partnership with The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, Kent County Council, Canterbury City Council, Kent Enterprise Trust to develop areas that are rich in wildlife and provide facilities to cycle, walk, run, fish, wildlife watch or picnic. Whilst most of the areas are open to the general public and have designated wheelchair access, the Horton Farm area remains private and is currently managed as a fish farm with landscaping.



Contents

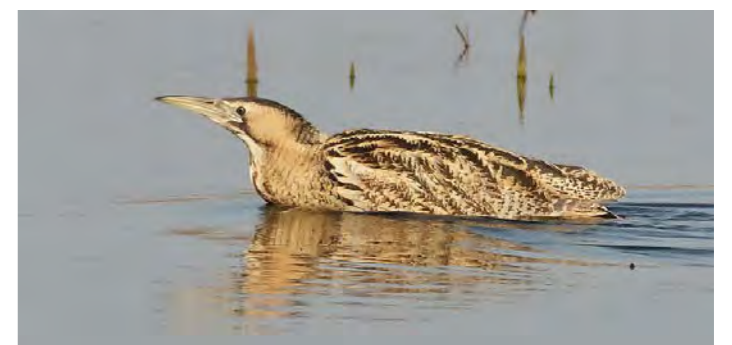
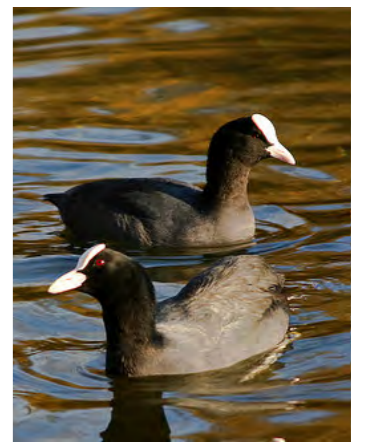
- Introduction
- Map Of Area
- The Thanington Lakes
- Hambrook Marshes Nature Reserve
- The Great Stour Way Cycle Route
- Application
- Supporting Information



THE THANINGTON LAKES

There are 10 lakes on the site – the Thanington Lakes, (4 individual lakes – Pan, Handle, Swan and Tonford), the Milton Lakes (4 smaller lakes) and Horton Lake, all of which are former Brett sand and gravel pits. The Thanington Lakes with good stocks of Carp, Bream, Tench, Roach, Rudd & Perch, are currently used by sports fishermen. The lakes contain reedbeds that complement the marginal vegetation and provide essential nesting areas for birds. There are also pockets of wet woodland and these habitats all support growing populations of invertebrates and mammals. Bird species on and around the lakes include Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Tufted duck, Mute Swan, Green Woodpecker, Moorhen, Coot, Reed Warblers and Bittern.

The initial restoration on this whole site and subsequent drive for biodiversity has been in partnership with many different local and national groups & organisations. Our aim to provide access for all to this stretch of restored land to the benefit of the local community and wildlife has been realised. We look to ensure the long term future of this valuable resource through maintaining these well established partnerships and careful future planning.



From top to bottom: 1. Milton Lake – one of the Southerly Thanington Lakes 2. Swans – a permanent resident at Horton Lake. 3. Coots are frequently seen on the lakes. 4. Tonford Lake – all the Thanington Lakes are a popular place for wildlife enthusiasts. 5. Bitterns – more regularly seen on and around Thanington Lakes. **Opposite:** The large water north of Horton Lake.





From top: 1. Yellow Rattle – found in the meadows at Hambrook Marshes. 2. Hambrook Marshes – a perfect environment for Grass Snakes. 3. A Pippistrelle Bat – a focus for conservation in the area.

HAMBROOK MARSHES NATURE RESERVE

The Hambrook Marshes Nature Reserve of approximately 20 hectares is managed by the Kent Enterprise Trust and used extensively by Social Enterprise Kent to run work and training activities in nature conservation and land management. Groups using the marsh for educational and social care projects include project Salus, a charity that helps vulnerable young children, Canterbury College Countryside Management students and local primary schools to complement their classroom studies. The Hambrook Marshes Volunteer Group work to enhance biodiversity by managing ditches, harvesting willow, erecting fences, building and installing bat boxes and making lizard basking sites. They are particularly focussed on improving bat numbers and encouraging Snipe breeding. Hambrook Marshes is designated as wet marshland for most of the year and hay meadow in the dryer summer months. The grassland is maintained by low intensity sheep and cattle grazing.



Left: Hambrook Marshes Nature Reserve – a valuable place for all manner of animal and plant-life. **Below:** (From top) 1 & 2. Kent Enterprise Trust volunteers help maintain the Nature Reserve and learn valuable skills in managing areas of biodiversity. 3. One of the information boards for visitors to Hambrook Marshes.



THE GREAT STOUR WAY CYCLE ROUTE

The Great Stour Way cycle route that runs beside the river and through the Marshes was opened on May 21st 2011 and is a 3 mile surfaced shared use path running alongside the river Stour between Chartham and Canterbury in Kent. Brett helped to build the route in partnership with Sustrans (a UK Sustainable transport charity) and Canterbury City Council. The route, cycle path 18, allows access to the Kent Downs area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and provides users with an alternative route to the busy A2. There are rest benches and picnic tables along the route providing rest stops and gates suitable for wheelchair access. The river Stour is home to some special animal and bird species such as the Water Vole, Water Shrew, Kingfisher and Banded Damselflies, and plants such as the Water Crowfoot, River Lamprey, Yellow Flag Iris, Reedmace and Pea Mussel.

The gravel bottom and clear water of the river are an ideal home for our Native Crayfish. The river regularly floods into designated areas providing wet riverside grassland which is home to wading birds such as the Lapwing in winter. Maintenance of this stretch of the river is in partnership with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP), who provides regular assessments of the river and suggestions for improvement. Brett work with KSCP and other members of the committee to make sure that the river and the river side is managed well for the longer-term. Current projects include making pools to combat bank erosion and to provide a shelter for small fry, installation of a Kingfisher resting post, re-naturalisation of some areas of the riverbank and planting trees to provide shelter for trout and stickleback.



Top: 1. White-clawed crayfish, once only seen at Chartham but now also found upstream in Ashford. **Below:** 1. Kingfisher seen along the Stour Way 2. Banded Demoiselle - another species seen along the River Great Stour. 4. A Lapwing feeding on the wet grassland and banks.





Opposite. The Great Stour Way Cycle Route opened on May 21st 2011 running alongside the river Stour between Chartham and Canterbury in Kent. **From top:** 1. Access for all was a key consideration in the construction of the cycle route 2. Water Crowfoot found on the Great River Stour. 3. A welcome return of the Water Vole to the river.

Hambrook Marshes

Winter Newsletter 2011-12

Highland Cattle



Winter saw 8 Highland Cattle arrive at Hambrook to graze the field. These hardy cows can be considered 4 legged conservationists, as they keep the grass short, which attracts wading birds, such as snipe whose numbers have dramatically declined in the UK over the last few years due to farming intensification and drainage. The cows were also brought to Hambrook because of their charming shaggy appearance are have been an instant success with the locals and tourists alike, who have visited Hambrook especially to see the cows.

Community work

Despite the cold weather Hambrook Marshes supported a lot of volunteers and community groups this winter, with over 2000 hours of work and training recorded between December and February, giving people the opportunity to learn new skills, increase their confidence and improve the site for the local community to enjoy. Groups included Project Salus, a charity that works with young people, Canterbury College Countryside Management and Public Services students, Wincheap Primary School children.



Several other groups will be using Hambrook this summer, including KRAN Riverside, a charity that prepares young asylum seekers for entry to college or work in the UK and Chaucer Homecare, a specialist provider of support to people experiencing mental health, amongst others.

Funding

KET has secured funding for the Hambrook Marshes Project Officer Position for two years, which means that all of the good work that has been going on at Hambrook will continue in to the future. This has only been made possible by the NINEVEH Trust, who fund conservation and community projects nationwide and who saw the huge benefit Hambrook gives to wildlife and people alike.



KET also secured funding to create a wildflower meadow on Hambrook. As well as improving wildlife the flowers will provide a colourful setting that will benefit the public.

Working with schools and colleges

With the weather set to improve over the summer it's a great time for schools to visit Hambrook to fulfil their environment curriculum. If you would like to receive a Teachers Pack or any information about what KET has to offer please contact us on the details below. We offer a variety of activities to compliment KS1 to KS5 national curriculum and can tailor the day to suit your needs. We offer 4 free sessions to each school so it's a great opportunity to get involved.



Donations

To ensure Hambrook Marshes is managed for your benefit into the future KET needs your kind donations. To support the project please contact us on the details below or visit our website where you can donate online.

Health Walks

The Health Walks, held every Friday from 9:45am are now leaving from Staples car park, behind Hambrook Marshes. To join in please contact us on the details below.

Willow Maze



Over 100 children from Wincheap Primary School helped plant a colourful willow maze at Hambrook in February. The willow will grow into a bushy labyrinth during the summer, but children, and grown-ups alike, have already been seen navigating the maze. The maze has been planted as part of KET's vision of creating a natural play area to attract families to enjoy this beautiful part of Canterbury.

Wildlife



Despite the short days and cold nights there was a surprising amount of wildlife spotted over the winter. As well as numerous Snipe seen foraging in the flooded grassland large numbers of Lapwing visited Hambrook, as they migrated south to avoid the colder conditions in northern England. Other species included Little Egret, Grey Heron and Kingfisher, amongst others. If you spot anything interesting please email us on getinvolved@enterprisetrust.org.

Open College Network

In the coming months KET will be running two Open College Network Back to Work courses: OCN Level 1 in Horticulture and OCN Level 2 as a Hambrook Ranger. As the name suggests the latter will be based at Hambrook and people will learn about ecology and practical habitat management. The Horticulture will be based at Streamwalk Community Garden in Whitstable and focus on basic gardening skills. For more information about please contact us.

Friends of Hambrook Marshes

If you would like to have your say about the management of Hambrook Marshes, the Friends Group meets once every three months and is only £2 to join. To join please email friendsofhambrook@enterprisetrust.org.

CIWEM Award

Hambrook Marshes has been awarded 3rd place in CIWEM's Living Wetlands Award, which recognises wide-ranging projects that demonstrate the sustainable use of wetland habitats.

Haymaking Festival 2012



This year's Haymaking Festival will take place on Saturday July 14th, from 11am-4pm, at Hambrook Marshes. The event is going to be bigger and better than last year, with a variety of stalls offering something for the whole family. You will be able to get up close to shire horses, enjoy Accidental Collectives art performance, have your photo taken with birds of prey, have your face painted, learn survival skills, discover traditional crafts, buy local food and drink, including venison burgers and local ale supplied by CAM-ERA, and much more! Local musicians are welcome, and if you would like to get involved contact us on the details below.

Volunteering

Hambrook's volunteer group has done lots to improve the site over the winter, including harvesting willow, managing ditches, erecting fencing, making lizard basking sites and much more. We have many more exciting activities planned for the Spring, including installing sluice gates, making bee hives, building gates and surveying for Hambrook's abundant wildlife. Anyone can volunteer: we meet every Thursday, from 10am - 4pm. Its a great way to learn new skills, keep fit, meet new people and give something back to wildlife and the community.



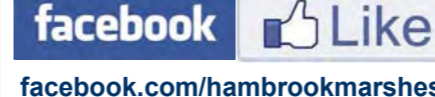
Conservation Volunteer Coordinator



Kent Enterprise Trust would like to give a warm welcome to Kate Harrison, the new Conservation Volunteer Coordinator at Hambrook Marshes. Kate will be working closely with the Project Officer, helping to develop the project and make Hambrook a better place for wildlife and the community. As well as developing a much need wildlife survey program, Kate will help lead volunteer and school groups and assist in the day-to-running of Hambrook.



Tel: 01227 844 500
getinvolved@enterprisetrust.org
www.sekgroup.org.uk



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Stour View

CONSERVING, ENHANCING AND PROMOTING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN GREEN SPACE OF THE STOUR VALLEY

Welcome to Westgate Parks

A partnership of organisations, lead by Canterbury City Council, is working on improving the Westgate Parks area for people and wildlife through an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 'Parks for People' Programme.

Westgate Parks consist of Westgate Gardens and the land upstream beside the River Great Stour. They run from Canterbury's busy city centre into the countryside. With the help of local groups, the KSCP have carried out wildlife surveys and ran community wildlife events this summer.

Westgate Parks are becoming busier mainly due to the recent surrounding housing development and the popular new shared use path the Great Stour Way. It's important to provide people with high quality outdoor space but at the same time not to reduce the wildlife living in the area. The area is important for bats, wild trout can be seen in the river and, in the not too distant past, otters were seen.

The parks have a rich heritage and one of the main aims of the project will be to explain this through events and activities. Hopefully, next year we will be doing projects that involve volunteers in such activities as sensory and culinary gardens, archaeology and wildlife conservation.



For more information on Westgate Parks visit:
www.westgateparks.co.uk



Weighing a pygmy shrew on a wildlife recording event in Westgate Parks.

Partnership Sponsors



Conningbrook Lakes

An update from Terry Jones at Ashford Borough Council

Over the summer proposals for a new country park at Conningbrook Lakes in Ashford were unveiled at a public exhibition in County Square, Ashford, and on 28th July an 'Open Day' at the Julie Rose Stadium gave over 850 visitors the opportunity to try out some of the activities that will be available when the park eventually opens. On 19th August, for the second consecutive year, Conningbrook and the Julie Rose Stadium hosted the **Brett Ashford Triathlon**.



An open day activity at the Conningbrook/ Julie Rose Stadium.

The establishment of a family-orientated country park at Conningbrook Lakes is a long held vision of Ashford Borough Council, which is working closely with the Brett Group to transform the former mineral extraction site. A range of local clubs, community groups and other stakeholders have been consulted to determine what facilities will be included in the country park, while nature conservation groups, such as the KSCP and Kent Wildlife Trust, have been asked for their views on protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats within the park.

The plans for Conningbrook will include some residential development to make it financially self-sustaining, and the proposals are for an attractive lakeside village, that is the subject of a planning application that will shortly be submitted to Ashford Borough Council by the Brett Group.

More details will be provided in a future issue of Stour View. In the meantime, further information is available from a website developed by the Brett Group, which is the major land owner and partner in the project - www.conningbrooklakes.info

Wildsites



KSCP are applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project called 'Wild Sites on Your Doorstep'. The project will help local people in the Ashford and Canterbury areas to learn about and care for wildlife all around them. We want to run a programme of events at nature reserves and other wildlife sites with a wide range of partners, using photography, drawing, painting and creative writing to get people involved in the environment close to where they live.

The photographs, paintings, and text generated during activities will become content for new learning materials that will help even more people to discover their local wildlife in the long-term. If you have an interest in the project please contact KSCP.

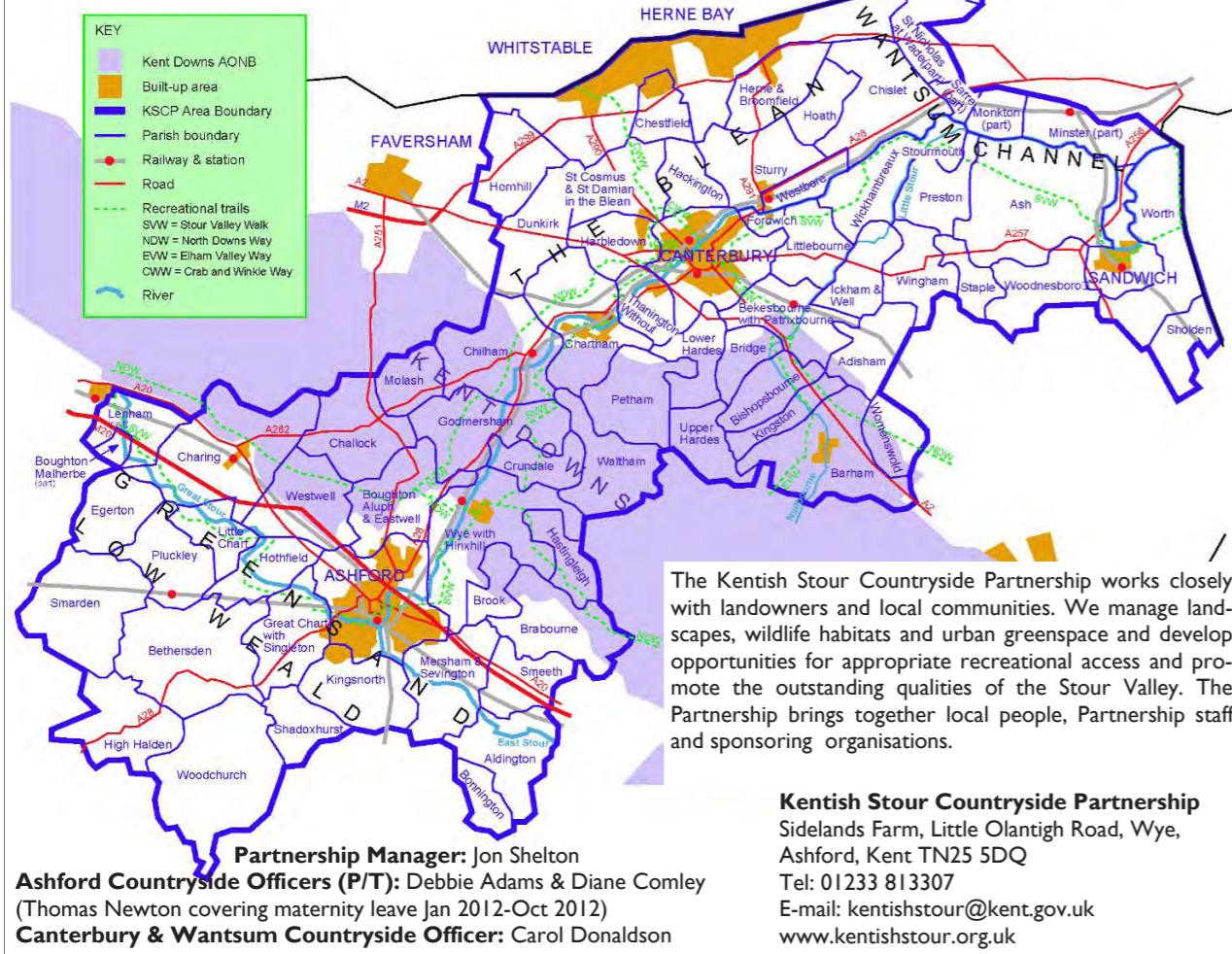


News update on the

KSCP are making some improvements to the Great Stour Way by removing 5 cattle grids on the Kent Enterprise Trust land. These were originally installed with the expectation that cattle would graze across the path. We are also looking at making Tonford Bridge usable by wheelchairs and mobility vehicles. Look out for the 3 new interpretive panels on the Great Stour Way providing information on Whitehall Meadows, River Great Stour, Chartham Paper Mill and Thanington Lakes. Canterbury City Council are going to extend the path in the autumn along the riverside under the Rheims Way to exit onto Whitehall Road.



About the Partnership



Looking after your heating oil

By Lisa Westcott from the Environment Agency and the East Kent Catchment Improvement Group

Every year, leaks and spills from oil storage tanks and pipework cause many pollution incidents. These leaks are damaging to the environment and may be a serious health risk to people. Spilt oil can pollute rivers and groundwater supplies. Groundwater (water stored in the ground) is a major water resource in Kent, it provides 75 per cent of our public water supply. Groundwater is vulnerable to pollution because pollutants, like oil, can be transported underground over large distances quickly.

Cleaning up oil spills is very difficult and expensive, it can run into tens of thousands of pounds. Dealing with a spill will cause you and maybe your neighbours a great deal of inconvenience. Oil leaks can be due to the tanks being old and damaged or if there are problems with the feed pipes that carry the oil from the tank to the house. Often problems occur after the oil tank has been topped up ready for winter.

Over the last few years the Environment Agency has dealt with a number of leaks from domestic heating oil tanks in Kent. We want to prevent any more incidents where people and the environment are put at risk.

Everyone can help by:

- checking their own oil tanks and feed pipes regularly
- ensure tanks are secure from vandalism and theft
- keep a record of how much oil is being used, if it is more than usual this may indicate a leak
- check insurance covers against costs of cleaning up accidental loss of oil

If you would like more information or advice please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or if you need to report a leak or spill, call the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

News updates from the Stour Valley

Environment Agency staff have helped on two projects over the summer with KSCP. At Buxford Meadow they built a chamber otter holt, a hibernaculum and made some habitat improvements to a small channel leading into the river. At Queen Mother's Park, along with members of the East Kent Catchment Improvement Group, they installed ragstone to improve riverside habitat.

The Blean Walk People have been getting out and walking the new Big Blean Walk over the summer and some have just been enjoying reading about it from the new leaflet produced by KSCP.

KSCP have helped Canterbury City Council in the production of a new interpretive panel at Long Rock, Whitstable. The panel explains the site's importance for wildlife and the need to control dogs in certain areas.

KSCP are working with a range of partners including local authorities, fishing clubs, landowners, the IDB and the Environment Agency to improve parts of the River Stour Catchment currently ranked as poor or of medium quality. KSCP are focussed on improving habitat through techniques such as in channel works, installing woody deflectors and the creation of new channels. Partners come together through the East Kent Catchment Improvement Group.

The next stage of the Great Stour Way is the development of a shared use path from Chartham to Godmersham. Applications for funding will be made this year now that necessary permissions are in place.

In Ashford a new orchard is going to be planted this year in a section of Watercross Fields. KSCP is working with a youth group - Hang10 and Ashford Borough Council to involve the local community with the project. Public consultation led to moving the site of the orchard in response to some local residents concerns. The project is funded by KCC, Ashford Borough Council and Affinity Sutton. The local primary school Oak Tree Primary are keen to get involved and will be going on a trip to No Man's Orchard near Canterbury this autumn to see what an old traditional orchard looks like and what theirs could look like one day. There will be a community opening event at the new orchard in the Spring of next year.



Environment Agency staff at Buxford



The long Rock Panel at Whitstable



No Man's orchard

Volunteering

Come along and lend a hand with a variety of enjoyable and worthwhile practical conservation projects throughout the Stour Valley!

For our detailed programme phone us on 01233 813307 or go to www.kentishstour.org.uk and click on 'get involved'

Wednesdays (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at the KSCP offices or 9.30 at the back of the Stour Centre.

Thursdays (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices or 9.45 outside the old Habitat entrance, Rheims Way, Canterbury.

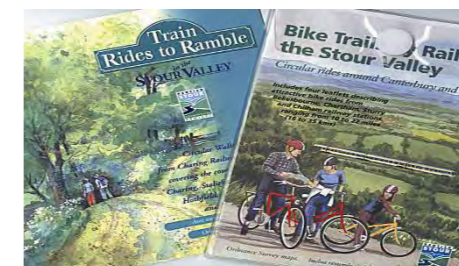
Countryside events in the Stour Valley

For information about events in the Stour Valley visit the following websites:

KSCP: kentishstour.org.uk
 The Blean Initiative: theblean.co.uk
 Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org
 Wildwood (Herne): wildwoodtrust.org
 Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk

KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside

All available from quality bookshops and KSCP. For information on other publications and free downloads visit kentishstour.org.uk



Train Rides to Ramble (£2.00) & *Bike Trails by Train* (£1.50) Circular walks and cycle rides from railway stations in the Stour Valley. Full colour, maps & directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Big Blean Walk (Free) A guide to this walking route with map.



Wildsites (£1.00) A guide to 31 wildlife sites in the Stour Valley.



The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in Ashford, Canterbury and the surrounding countryside

Stour View

Issue 44
Summer 2011

CONSERVING, ENHANCING AND PROMOTING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN GREEN SPACE OF THE STOUR VALLEY

The Great Stour Way open and busy!

The new Canterbury to Chartham riverside path, the Great Stour Way, was officially opened on Saturday 21st May by David Brazier - Kent County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste.



The three mile riverside path, which is already proving extremely popular, includes a new bridge over the river Great Stour behind Staples/Wincheap Park and Ride and is part of the National Cycle Network. It is a gateway for the people of Canterbury to the Stour Valley and to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

KSCP has been the lead organisation pushing the development of the route forward over the last 18 years. KCC Highway Services are responsible for the route and Canterbury City Council and Sustrans have also been instrumental in its development. KSCP has worked with many partner organisations, landowners and community groups. KSCP volunteers have also contributed hundreds of volunteer workdays to the project. The KSCP chairs the working group and was successful with over £250,000 of applications for external funding for the project.

Wetland creation in Kingsnorth

KSCP, working with Ashford Borough Council, has created six ponds and two seasonal wet areas on the edge of Park Farm in the South of Ashford. The ponds have been located on naturally low-lying areas of ground. KSCP volunteers have planted wildflowers at one of the ponds including ragged robin, marsh marigold, water plantain, ladies smock, purple loosestrife and flag iris.



The work has been part funded by the European Regional Development Fund Interreg IV programme.

Partnership Sponsors



Tackling misconceptions – improving our rivers

Although much of the work we do at the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership involves working out in the open air, there are things we can all do to benefit our natural environment without leaving our homes. Take the quality of the water in our rivers. When most people think of river pollution they think of sources like factories, farms and industry. Yet in many cases, the pollution comes from a much less obvious place - **our homes**.



Those of us that live in modern, urban housing are probably served by what is known as a separate sewerage system. This means dirty water from household appliances is taken by a foul sewer to a wastewater treatment works where it is treated to make it safe to be returned to the environment. Whereas rainfall that falls on our property is generally piped away in a surface water drain to be discharged directly into our rivers. This is not normally a problem as surface water is usually quite clean.

However, sometimes mistakes happen and the foul water from domestic appliances such as sinks, baths, washing machines, dishwashers and even toilets, are connected to the surface water system rather than the foul system. This is known as a 'misconnection' and results in polluted water entering our rivers and streams untreated.

Did you know? Over a quarter of a million homes in England and Wales are pouring their dirty water straight into our rivers and streams.

Southern Water Services, the Environment Agency and Ashford Borough Council have been working together in Ashford to encourage householders to check their plumbing to make sure it is not harming our environment. Checking for a misconnection is usually quite easy and to help you a dedicated website has been set up:

www.connectright.org.uk

If you find a misconnection it is often simple and cheap to sort out the problem. If you are unsure what to do you can contact your water company or a registered plumber for advice.

King's Wood - Explore & Enjoy

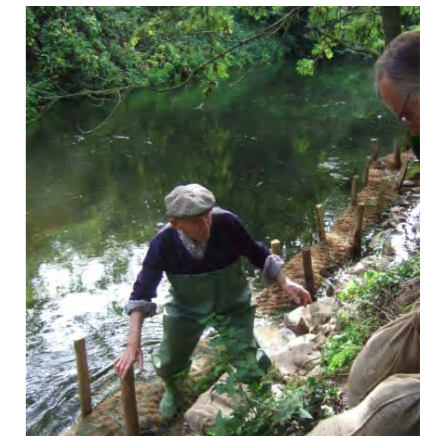
This is the title of a series of four walks from the villages around King's Wood promoted on a new free leaflet by the Friends of King's Wood and KSCP. Walks start from the attractive villages of Boughton Lees, Chilham, Godmersham and Molash and feature some of East Kent's outstanding views and scenery. The walks are intended to encourage people to eat and drink and buy local food in the villages as well as enjoy a walk in the countryside. There is also lots of information about the history and wildlife of King's Wood and points of interest along the routes.



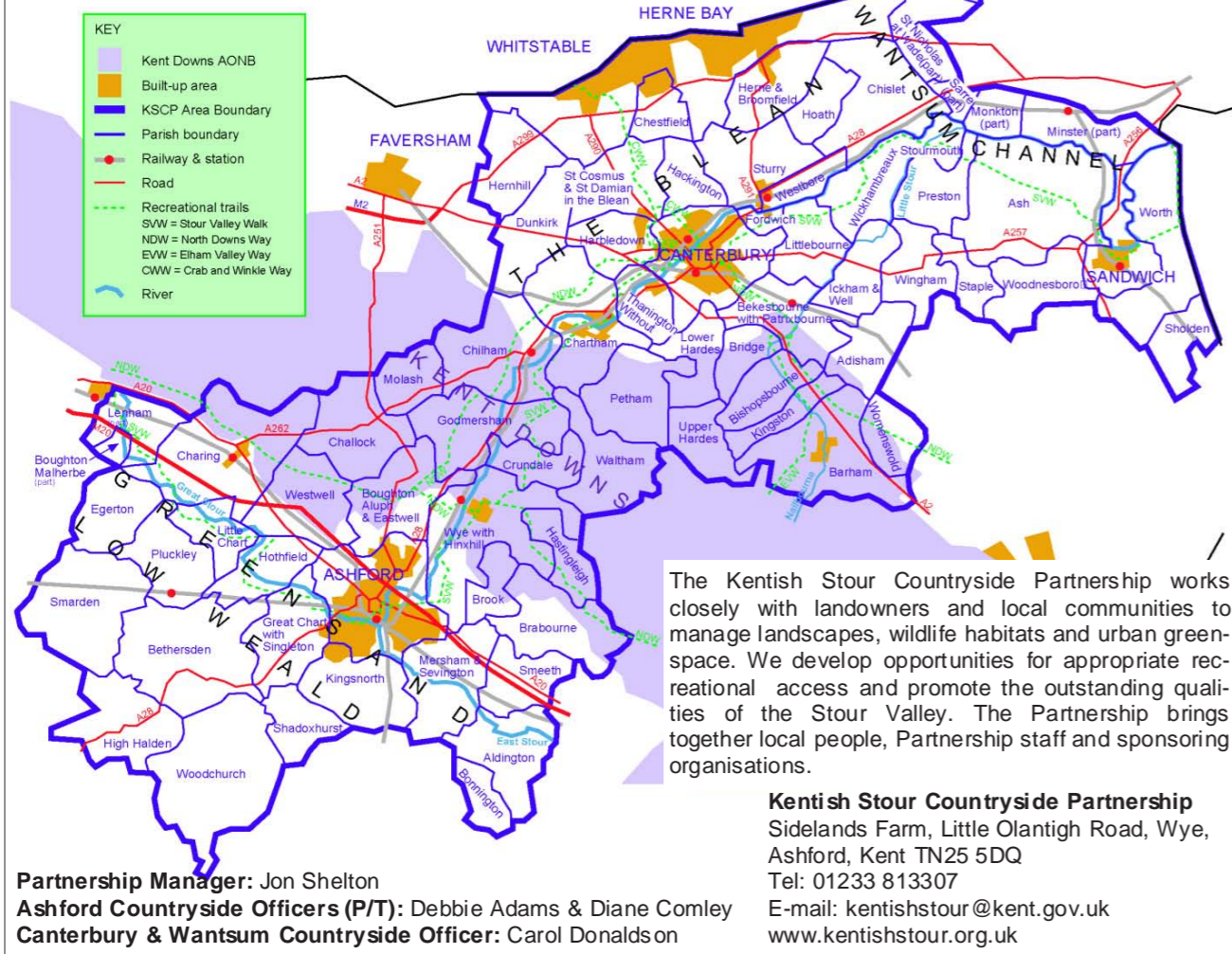
The leaflet is colourfully illustrated and Ordnance Survey mapping is used. Walks range from just over three miles to eight miles and are waymarked with standard Rights of Way arrows. Information about public transport is also included. The leaflet was funded by an Awards For All Big lottery grant to the Friends of King's Wood. The leaflet is available from local Tourist Information Centres and the villages featured on the walks. To download the leaflet or one of the walks visit www.kentishstour.org.uk

River Serpent appears in Chartham

Is it a serpent? Is it a work of art? Is it a stately home for water voles? These are just some of the questions asked of Canterbury countryside officer Carol Donaldson as she works with volunteers in the River Stour near Chartham. The structure is in actual fact an erosion barrier built by the KSCP volunteer team to protect the riverbank and new Great Stour Way path from the eroding effects of turbulent high water that occurs after heavy rain. The barrier is built from chestnut stakes and hazel faggots (bundles of twigs left over from coppicing woodlands) rolls of coir fibre top the structure that will be planted with vibrant native wetland plants. Keep an eye out this summer as the serpent is set to grow!



About the Partnership



Entente Cordial

This spring our intrepid volunteers headed across The Channel to join forces with Les Blongios Conservation group to clear scrub from orchid rich chalk downland. The two groups of Conservation volunteers have been working together for ten years as part of the Landscape and Nature for all projects supported by the European Regional Development fund Interreg IV programme. A team from Les Blongios (the bitterns) arrived in Kent to work at Wraik Hill and Duncan Down near Whitstable. The team worked to protect the flower rich grassland and plant native trees. The exchange visits not only provide willing hands to undertake habitat management work but allow French and English volunteers the chance to share ideas and a love of the countryside on both sides of The Channel.



Internal Drainage Board Watercourse Survey

The River Stour Internal Drainage Board is responsible for the management of many streams and ditches in the Stour Valley. Now as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan they are working with KSCP to conduct a six-year survey of all the watercourses they manage. The work is all about conserving and improving the banks and channels for wildlife such as water voles and rare wetland plants such as tubular water dropwort. In 2010 29,500m of watercourse was surveyed stretching from Ashford to Reculver and Sandwich. The River Stour IDB are doing a good job for wildlife but this additional work moves them to the top of the class!

What are you doing next Wednesday?

Whether you are retired, between jobs, looking for work experience or just plain free to be able to give us a hand we would love to hear from you. Every Wednesday KSCP runs a practical task somewhere in or close to Ashford. Tasks range from planting trees, sowing wildflowers and laying hedges to picking up litter and installing bird boxes. All our tasks help in our work to create, enhance or manage wildlife habitats and improve access for the community to enjoy these sites. Volunteers enjoy being outdoors, learning practical skills, working with a range of people, getting a bit of exercise and knowing that they have made a difference. We provide the three Ts where ever possible - the tools, some training, and transport. As we are based in Wye volunteers either meet us here or at the task site. If you think you would be interested look below for details.



WILLESBOROUGH AND NEWTOWN RESIDENTS might be interested in joining their own local environmental group known as SWANEG (South Willesborough and Newtown Environmental Group). A fantastic bunch of people, SWANEG members meet up the first Monday evening of every month and do about one task a month in the green and wild corners of this part of Ashford. If interested call Sean on 070795 8544710

Calling all landowners

KSCP's Landscape Enhancement Partnership Scheme, enables landowners to undertake improvements to benefit landscape quality and wildlife habitats. Payments averaging £1000 are available to help fund such work as hedge-row planting, wildflower meadow creation and pond restoration. Awards average about 50% of the cost of undertaking the work. The scheme is likely to close at the end of October. Contact KSCP for further information.

Farmers' Markets in the Stour Valley

- Chartham Farmers' Market** - Chartham Village Hall, every Thurs. 2.30-6pm
- Egerton Farmers' Market** - Egerton Millennium Hall, access via Rockhill Road or Elm Close - every Fri. 2-4.30pm
- Sandwich Farmers' Market** - Guildhall Forecourt - the last Sat. of each month 9-1pm
- Whitstable Farmers' Market** - St Mary's Hall, Oxford St, 2nd & 4th Sat. of the month 9.30-2 pm
- Wye Farmers' Market** - Wye Green - first and third Sat. of the month

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 - Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org
 - Wildwood (Herne): wildwood-centre.co.uk
 - Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk

Volunteering

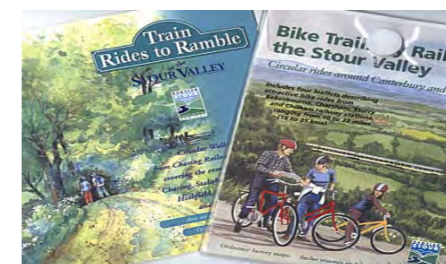
Come along and lend a hand with a variety of enjoyable and worthwhile practical conservation projects throughout the Stour Valley! For our detailed programme phone us on 01233 813307 or go to our website and click on 'get involved'.

Volunteer days

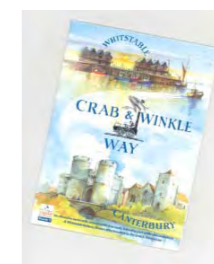
- Wednesdays** (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at the KSCP offices.
- Thursdays** (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.

KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside

All available from quality bookshops and KSCP. For information on other publications and free downloads visit kentishstour.org.uk



Train Rides to Ramble (£2.00) & **Bike Trails by Train** (£1.50) Circular walks and cycle rides from railway stations in the Stour Valley. Full colour, maps & directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Crab & Winkle Way (Free) A guide to this walking/cycle path with map.



Wildsites (£1.00) A guide to 31 wildlife sites in the Stour Valley.

Useful contacts

Kent County Council
Responsible for the maintenance of the Great Stour Way.
☎ 08458 247800
www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport.aspx

Canterbury City Council
Own and maintain the riverside land from Westgate Gardens to Whitehall Meadows.
☎ 01227 862000
customer.services@canterbury.gov.uk
www.canterbury.gov.uk

Explore Kent
For more information on walking and cycling in Kent.
www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
Responsible for ongoing projects on and adjacent to the Great Stour Way.
☎ 01233 813307
kentishstour@kent.gov.uk
www.kentishstour.org.uk

Kent Enterprise Trust
Own and manage Hambrook Marshes.
☎ 01227 844500
getinvolved@enterprisetrust.org
www.sekgroup.org.uk/ket/hambrook-marshes

Spokes East Kent Cycle Campaign
Campaign for better cycling facilities in East Kent.
spokes@spokeseastkent.org.uk
www.spokeseastkent.org.uk

Mid Kent Fisheries
Manage the Thanington Lakes fishery.
☎ 01227 730668
info@midkentfisheries.co.uk
www.midkentfisheries.co.uk

Sustrans
The UK's leading sustainable transport charity.
☎ 0845 1130065
www.sustrans.org.uk

Visitor information

Canterbury Visitor Information Centre
☎ 01227 378100
www.canterbury.co.uk

Buses and Trains

Traveline
☎ 0871 2002233
www.traveline.org.uk

National Rail enquiries
☎ 08457 484950
www.nationalrail.co.uk

This leaflet has been printed on paper from a renewable and sustainable source.

The Great Stour Way has been made possible by a number of individuals and organisations, some of which are:



Produced by the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership.
Published December 2011.

Designed by Clarity Interpretation 01303 249501
www.clarity-consultancy.co.uk

The Great Stour Way

An attractive, three mile, traffic free route, following the course of the River Great Stour.



The Great Stour Way was opened on May 21st 2011. It is a three mile surfaced shared use path between Canterbury and Chartham running alongside the river. The path is part of the National Cycle Network, route 18, and for people from Canterbury it's a gateway to the Stour Valley and to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

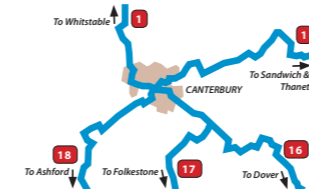


Opening of the Great Stour Way.

Planning and management of the project was carried out by a working group of organisations – Canterbury City Council, Kent County Council, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and Sustrans. The path was also made possible with the co-operation of local landowners including the Brett Group and Kent Enterprise Trust, and support from Spokes East Kent Campaign, and the Parish Councils of Chartham and Thanington Without.

The construction of the path included a new bridge over the River Great Stour, linking it to the Wincheap Retail Park, and three new smaller bridges.

The main funders of the scheme were Kent County Council, Sustrans through the Links to Schools Programme, and Brett Environment Trust.



Canterbury is the cycling hub of Kent with fantastic routes going to Whitstable - the Crab and Winkle Way, Sandwich, Dover and Folkestone.

Construction of part of the path started in 1993, so landowner negotiations, planning, fundraising and construction took 18 years! Over this time volunteers from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership have planted shrubs and climbers; installed bird boxes; built an otter holt; sowed wildflower seed along the edge of the path; and built a sustainable erosion barrier to stop the path disappearing into the river at Chartham.



Construction of the new bridge. (Keith Hanna, Spokes.)

Seats have been installed along the path and an impressive picnic table with carved river wildlife by the old Elham Valley Railway embankment.

Because livestock is present along the path there are a number of cattle grids and wooden kissing gates. The cattle grids allow cyclists to pass over whilst the kissing gates have been designed for large mobility vehicles.



Keep dogs under control

The river and grasslands have important wildlife which can be disturbed by dogs. Birds nest alongside the river and in the grassland. In winter wading birds such as lapwing and snipe require the wet grassland to feed. Many of these species are declining and need our help to survive.

Your dog could be put down if found to be worrying livestock.

Please clear up after your dog.

Keep to the surfaced paths

Brett gave permission in 2010 for new public access between Tonford Lane and Milton, however, there is no permission for the public to move off the path, other than public footpaths, between Tonford Lane and Chartham.

Take your litter home

Be courteous to all users of the shared path

Cyclists please slow down when approaching walkers. Walkers please be aware that cyclists may sound their bell or call out in order to warn you that they are approaching.

RADAR gates

The metal gates on the Great Stour Way at Tonford and Chartham are RADAR gates. They were installed combined with motorcycle inhibitors, at the insistence of the landowner, to prevent motorbikes from using the path. They can be opened fully with a RADAR key available to registered disabled people from Canterbury Mobility Shop, 6 Iron Bar Lane CT1 2HN ☎ 01227 450743 or from RADAR: ☎ 020 7250 3222 or www.radar.org.uk

Be aware of the possibility of flooding

The Great Stour Way is built in a floodplain. There will be times when part of the path will be covered in floodwater.

To report criminal activity or misuse contact Kent Police ☎ 01622 690690.

Follow the Countryside Code - Respect, Protect, Enjoy.

The Story of the Stour

The river - always there, yet ever changing.

The Great Stour was flowing long before early humans set foot here. Its deposits of gravel and sand have preserved evidence of these Palaeolithic peoples, and the long extinct animals they hunted. Since then it has undergone great change - swollen by the melt water of passing ice ages, its estuary shifting with the rise and fall of sea levels, and increasingly altered by man.

A river is a dynamic, living entity. It does not sit still in the landscape. It slowly but constantly erodes and deposits material, meanders forming, banks shifting. Change also occurs more rapidly, with the cycle of the seasons. Climate, geology and soils all play their part.

But there is another factor shaping the river, its



Joe Munds and Stephen Brett holding a mammoth tusk discovered at Hambrook Marshes when it was quarried (1979-85). (Kentish Gazette.)

effects ever increasing...it's us. It's water abstracting, gravel quarrying, sewage treating, agricultural run-off producing, flood managing, river channel straightening, alien plant introducing humans. Yet somehow the Great Stour has dealt with everything we have thrown at it, and we have learnt to look after it better.

No longer a wild river but still a home for wildlife.

This diverse, dynamic river offers many opportunities for nature to exploit. The main channel is home to plants, such as water crowfoot, that have leaves adapted to absorbing carbon-dioxide from flowing water.

The gravelly bottom and clear water are ideal for a once plentiful crustacean, the white-clawed crayfish; our only native crayfish is now uncommon, protected and restricted to just one stretch of the Great Stour. Fish species present include bream, barbell, three-spined stickleback and brown trout. You are likely to see families of mute swans or mallards on the open water in spring.

In the still river margins, things are quite different. Emergent plants like yellow flag iris and reedmace can take root in the shallows. Dragonflies and damselflies use their stems to emerge from their larval stage in the water; watch out particularly for the banded demoiselle. You should see other invertebrates moving on the water's surface such as

water measurers and water boatmen. Living in the riverbank is a special resident of the Great Stour – the water vole. Sadly only present in small numbers, this once common aquatic mammal has declined due not least to the presence of American mink – an introduced predator that can wipe out whole populations of voles. The river banks are also home to a community of plants that like damp conditions such as purple loosestrife and fleabane.

The river ecosystem doesn't stop at its banks, because it regularly floods out of them. Wet riverside grasslands are home to wading birds such as lapwing in winter. Ponds, backwaters and ditches are habitats for aquatic plants, birds, invertebrates and amphibians. Floodplain trees, particularly mature willow and alder, are roosting sites for birds and bats. Flooding is inevitable, and as natural a part of a river as the fish that swim in it. Happily, in the most recent chapter of this story, we are learning that the more natural a river is, the better for wildlife and for us.



Alien plants

Himalayan balsam is an attractive plant introduced to Britain in 1839. Over time it has established itself in the wild and become an invasive species. It is being actively controlled on the Great Stour. Unfortunately it's not the only problem alien species affecting our rivers.



Grass snake

This is the only British reptile that likes a swim, in fact it specialises in aquatic prey such as amphibians. It is often seen slithering from the riverbank into the safety of the shallows, crossing the river or swimming in a lake.



Lapwing



Water vole



Banded demoiselle

Chalk rivers

This part of the Great Stour is very special in that it is a chalk river. Most of Europe's chalk rivers are found in south and east England, famous for their crystal clear waters and fly fishing. Their gravelly bottoms, lack of silt, stable temperature and stable flows combine to provide conditions for very specialised wildlife communities, including water crowfoot, white-clawed crayfish, water shrew, brown trout, mayfly, brook lamprey and pea mussel.

1 Chartham Paper Mill

Chartham Paper Mill is, in common with many mills, the last in a very long line of buildings. A good place for a mill in the time of the Domesday book is usually a good place for a mill hundreds of years later. What changes is what is being made there. The mill recorded here in 1086 would probably have been grinding corn. By 1438 it was a fulling mill. The conversion to a paper mill took place in 1730. In the 1850s the mill entered the modern age - the most up to date machinery was installed, including the first air drier ever used in paper making, and the artificial channel you see today was created.

2 Tumbling Bay

Tumbling Bay is an old local name for this point where the artificial mill channel joins the Great Stour. Older Chartham residents relate a story of a local boy called Faulkner who rescued a friend from drowning here. He was given a bravery award by the Scouts. You may have noticed a barrier structure along the bank. It was constructed by volunteers from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to prevent erosion.



3 Horton/Chartham Lakes

At Horton, across the river, six Anglo-Saxon graves and traces of a building were discovered in 2001. The people who lived (and died) here knew this place as *Horatun* - the muddy farmstead. Their dwelling stood just 200m from the present manor house, which is late 15th century. To the rear and left of the house you might be able to glimpse the bellcot of the 13th century chapel - it is one of the few twin arch bellcots in Britain. The lakes close to this section of the river are an industrial legacy. They date from the earliest phase of gravel quarrying here after WWII (see The Importance of Gravel).



Horton Chapel when used as a barn (early 1900s).

4 Milton Church

Take a short diversion along the footpath here to see the earliest and latest chapters in the story of this tiny settlement. The story starts with St John's Church. It dates from the 13th century, when the manor was held by Sir Robert de Septvans. To get to it you walk through the most recent chapter - an aggregate processing site. Milton never really grew beyond its origins as a farm with a mill (Old English - *myln ton*). In 1588 12 people were taking communion at the church, in 1640 it was 10. By the 1980s, when the church became disused, there were just 6.

The Importance of gravel
You probably don't spend much time thinking about concrete and tarmac, but they are of course the foundations of our modern world. Rivers like the Great Stour have played a vital role in supplying them. Gravel and sand, laid down by rivers hundreds of thousands of years ago, have helped to build our towns and roads. This part of the Stour Valley has been profoundly shaped by efforts to extract those materials. In the post-war building boom, quarrying companies bought up land along the river. Processing works sprung up to turn the gravel into construction materials. At A.H. Hooker's Chartham Works they washed it, sorted it with perforated cylinders, and crushed it using magnesium-steel hammers; some was baked to produce different colours for pebble dash and road chippings. The Brett Group's Milton Manor Quarry was set up in 1978 and is still going today. Many disused quarries were carefully landscaped and flooded to create the beautiful lakes you will see along the Great Stour Way.



Brass of Sir Robert de Septvans in St Mary's Church, Chartham.



Great crested grebe.

5 Milton - riverside

Those who regularly pass this way say this is the best place to see kingfishers along this part of the Great Stour. If any bird has earned its name, it's this one. They hunt by diving into the water from riverside perches. No easy feat as the fish are small and constantly moving, and the bird has to assess their depth and account for the refraction of the water. On top of that, its eyes are closed as it hits the surface! The presence of kingfishers is a sign of a healthy river - polluted waters do not support enough small fish to feed them.



This bridge carried the Elham Valley Line across the River Stour, very close to where you are standing. (Arthur Wells.)

11 Bingley's Island

Look across the Great Stour from Whitehall Meadow and you will see the tall vegetation and willow scrub of Bingley's Island. So who was Mr. Bingley and why did he have an island named after him? In fact there never was a Mr. Bingley. The name comes from an Old English name recorded in 814 - *binnan ea*, which means 'within a river'. The island is now a Local Nature Reserve.



12 Whitehall Meadows

If the Victorian artist Sydney Cooper could see Canterbury today he would surely be astounded at how much it had changed since he created his paintings of the Great Stour. But here at Whitehall Meadow he would perhaps feel that something of that pastoral idyll still remained.

In Cooper's time there were numerous wet meadows like Whitehall in the Stour Valley. The 20th century wasn't kind to them and many were lost to agricultural drainage and gravel extraction. Whitehall escaped these changes and is today a Local Nature Reserve, managed in the traditional way by annual mowing and grazing. A range of plants that like damp conditions do well here, including the locally

scarce brown sedge. In winter, visitors can enjoy flocks of teal, snipe and lapwing, that flock here because the meadow is allowed to flood - another bit of traditional management that we think Mr. Cooper would approve of.

PARKING FOR THE GREAT STOUR WAY (numbers on main map)

1. Staples, Wincheap Retail Park, CT1 3TQ (off A28), free in the overflow car park, by the side of the store (by kind permission of Staples). Please access the Great Stour Way via the front of the store.
 2. Wincheap Park and Ride CT1 3TY (off A28), £2.50 all day.
- Access the path between Staples and the Park and Ride, at the opposite end of the retail park from the entrance. Cross over the River Great Stour and turn right to go towards Toddler's Cove, Canterbury (0.6 miles) or go left to Chartham (2.4 miles).
3. Toddler's Cove Car Park, Whitehall Road, CT2 8NL 10p for up to 2 hrs. Over 2 hrs, 90p hour ie. 3 hrs £2.70, 4hrs £3.60. Directions to Toddler's Cove Car Park: In St Dunstons St. (near to Westgate Towers) turn into Linden Grove, right into Whitehall Bridge Road, left into Whitehall Close leading to Whitehall Road.
 4. Chartham Village, CT4 7HX
Parking is available in the village, please consider local residents. The path starts by the river opposite the Paper Mill and next to the Village Hall, Station Road.

Prices correct as of December 2011.
For up to date details on parking and charges contact Canterbury City Council on 01227 862000 or visit www.canterbury.gov.uk



Yellow rattle - found in meadows at Hambrook Marshes.

Whitehall Meadows

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Canterbury Meadows by T.S. Cooper, 1875. (© Canterbury City Council Museums.)



6 Thanington Lakes

Thanington Lakes is home to an array of fauna and flora, tranquil, restful, visually appealing...and completely man-made. Yes, these watery wildlife hotspots are about as natural as the A28 that rumbles past them. And the same goes for all the other lakes you will see along the Great Stour Way. They are the product of industry - disused gravel pits (see The Importance of Gravel below).

But just look what nature has done with these man-made foundations! Gaze across the tranquil waters and you might see tufted duck and great-crested grebe. The lake margins are a profusion of wild flowering plants including purple loosestrife and fleabane. Reed warblers nest in the reed fringes. Whirlygig beetles dance on the water, while dragonflies hawk overhead. There are many lakeside willows, and look out for some dead trees which are just as important for wildlife as living ones.

7 Tonford

In the 15th century, property development wasn't about location, location, location, it was about crenelation, crenelation, crenelation! This was when wealthy landowners put battlements on their manor houses to make them look like castles. That's exactly what Sir Thomas Browne of nearby Tonford Manor did in 1449. To be fair, his extravagance did pay off, because Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon stayed there in 1512. Traces of these fortifications can still be seen today.



In the footsteps of invaders
In 54BC, Julius Caesar led a Roman legion across the English Channel. He described their first encounter with Britons, at a river 12 miles from their landfall, which must have been the Great Stour. They were confronted by the Cantiaci, a Celtic tribe, but the Romans pushed them back into the woods where Caesar described man-made defences - probably nearby Bigbury Hillfort. So it seems the point where the Romans crossed was somewhere along this stretch of the Great Stour. Some say it was at Tonford as it is so close to Bigbury. This episode was not an invasion but an expedition, and the Romans went on to trade with the British Celts. But less than a century later they would be back, and this time to stay.

8 Thanington

By anyone's standards, Thanington has been around for a while - an Anglo-Saxon reference to *Thenningden* dates from AD791! Across the Great Stour you can see the Medieval heart of the Parish - the Court Lodge Farm and the Church. There's a theory that this was the country churchyard about which Thomas Gray's famous *Elegy* was written... but it is just a theory.

The Manor of Thanington has been owned by many wealthy families, who can be traced right back to Domesday. In the 16th century tragedy struck one of these families - the Hales. Eldest son James was imprisoned and tortured on the orders of Mary Tudor. On his release he returned to Thanington, but drowned himself in the Great Stour soon after.



Milton Manor Works.

9 Elham Valley Line/Wincheap Meadows

Common lizards love to bask on this bank of earth that crosses the marshes, but it wasn't put here for them. It is the embankment of a long lost railway, the Elham Valley Line. It branched off the mainline here, curving across Hambrook, the Great Stour, and then Wincheap Meadows, before heading on its way to Folkestone. Read the information panel to find out more. Looking across the river to Wincheap Meadows, you can see the land is much less open than Hambrook Marshes. Trees and scrub have crept in over the years because, unlike Hambrook, these fields are not grazed and the meadow plants have slowly disappeared.

10 Hambrook Marshes

Hambrook Marshes are named after the last farmer to own them, in the 1930s. He grazed his cattle here and every day walked them across a ford in the Great Stour, and up Cow Lane (where else?) to his dairy in nearby Wincheap.

In 1950 the marshes were sold to the Brett Group, a local quarrying company. But it wasn't until 1979 that the quarry machines moved in. Quarrying lasted just six years, then the pits were filled in and the land restored to grassland.

In 2004 the marshes were sold again, this time to a charity called the Kent Enterprise Trust. They engage a diverse range of groups and individuals in improving the land, through conservation work and other practical projects. They have done much to protect and enhance habitats on the marshes. The wet grassland is maintained by low intensity grazing. It floods in winter, providing habitats for migratory birds, and shallow 'scrapes' have been created to hold water for them.

As you walk through Hambrook, you will see a number of information panels that will tell you more about its history, and wildlife.

