

New panels at the Warren

Two interpretative panels have been installed at Ashford Warren. The Borough Council commissioned the KSCP to produce them. The Warren is an important site for its unimproved acid grassland, of which very little is left in Kent. The site also possesses some impressive veteran trees, which the KSCP did a survey of in 2006. However, the site is adjacent to the proposed park and ride and with the growth of Ashford it will require local people and its managers to protect it from damage.



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

The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in & around Ashford & The Low Weald

Stour View

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Ashford & The Low Weald

A traditional rural market town, Ashford is changing rapidly. The River Great Stour, being the only major river in East Kent, is a special asset, along with its green corridors running through the town into the countryside. Outside of the town are the pretty settlements at the foot of the downs, and of the Low Weald and Greensand Ridge. There is a good hedgerow network and many ponds on the clay soils. Views from the Greensand Ridge across the Weald are stunning.

Swadelands at Bull Heath

Pupils from Swadelands School spent another summer week at the Heath Countryside Corridor site 'Bull Heath'. The KSCP organised a week of activities based around practical conservation work and educational games. The site is a former sand quarry which is now managed as nature reserve. Pupils cleared paths and pulled up ragwort but probably enjoyed the games in the afternoon most of all.



Volunteers visit Germany

Craig Edwards and Kimberley Clark from the KSCP travelled to Germany to participate in a nature conservation workshop with young people from the Bad Munstereifel region and Fougere in France. Young people discussed the similarities and differences between nature conservation sites in the three twinned regions in a workshop before presenting their findings to the Mayors of the three towns. The discussions demonstrated the high value of protection that each town places on natural areas, as well as the social, economic and environmental benefits that come from having green space. Craig said "The workshop highlighted the diverse landscape in which all of the people in Ashford live and work from the ancient woodland of King's Wood to the riverside Ashford Green Corridor. It showed us potentially exciting methods of countryside management, which if implemented can only help to improve sites for wildlife and local people."



Take a seat at Charing Alderbed Meadow

Volunteers from the KSCP joined Martin Pym of the Charing Alderbed Meadow Committee to construct an ecological bench! The seat, which Martin put forward from a magazine article he had seen, is constructed of logs and soil with a sawn piece of oak for the seat itself. Work placement students from Homewood and Highworth Grammar Schools constructed a table to go with the bench! Meanwhile the annual small mammal survey found all seven species of vole, mouse and shrew previously found on the site. For details of future activities on the site contact the KSCP.



A bank vole, one of the species found on the community small mammal survey day.

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 & North Dover: Meet 9.15 at KSCP or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.
- Sundays:** Projects in Canterbury and Lower Stour: Visit website for details.

KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside



Train Rides to Ramble (£3.99) & Bike Trails by Train (£2.50) Circular walks and cycle rides from railway stations in the Stour Valley. Full colour, clear maps and directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Stour Valley Walk & Elham Valley Way (£5.00) Recreational walks produced by Kent County Council with help from KSCP.



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



Protecting future generations

Volunteers from the KSCP have been busy for many years building tree guards at Godinton Park. The Parkland is being restored by planting trees that will hopefully grow on to be magnificent specimens like some of the oaks you can see today in the Park. However, it will take at least 100 years for the trees to become mighty specimens. The tree guard is made of chestnut stakes and chestnut paling. Over the last year volunteers have also planted hedgerows, cleared invasive laurel and improved the river habitat for fish in Godinton Park. For more information on visiting Godinton House and its Gardens see: www.godinton-house-gardens.co.uk

Project Sponsors



Ashford Green Corridor



The Ashford Green Corridor Officer post has finally run out of funding. The post was established in 2002 with a grant from the New Opportunities Fund and major support has been provided by the Rail Link Countryside Initiative, Heritage Lottery Fund, Brett Environment Trust, Ashford Borough Council, European and central government money and KCC. There will be a report on its many achievements in the next newsletter. Meanwhile Emma Griffiths has moved on to join Natural England's team on a National Nature Reserve Project. Some projects are still being completed including education material, a Community Heritage Project and interpretative panels and others are reported on below. Work will continue but there won't be a dedicated member of staff. Thank you to all those who helped the Ashford Green Corridor Officer achieve so much.

New leaflet with trails

An informative leaflet has been produced which illustrates the importance of the Green Corridor to Ashford. It also contains information on walks through the Green Corridor including one taking in areas outside the Green Corridor including the Warren and Godinton Park. Obtain the leaflet by visiting Ashford library and other outlets in Ashford or contacting the KSCP.



A Himalayan task!

KSCP volunteers have spent a few days attempting to prevent the spread of Himalayan Balsam in the river corridor in Ashford. This non-native plant is in the top three of riverside invasive plants, the other two being Giant Hogweed, which thankfully is not present along the Stour, and Japanese Knotweed which is only present in a few locations. Other river catchments have been completely swamped by these invasive species and it is important to try and stop them spreading so that habitats with more diverse plants and animals are not removed. Himalayan Balsam can be identified by its pinky red, hollow stem and its purplish pink to pale pink, slipper shaped flower, which is born on long stalks. It is the tallest annual plant found in the British Isles, growing to more than 2-3 m in height. Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds which are released explosively from the seed pods, travelling distances of up to 7m. The seeds, which are also transported by water, can remain viable for up to 2 years.



Ashford Green Corridor Summer Events Programme

Martin Brockman, a local woodsman, spent an afternoon with 19 children as part of the Ashford Green Corridor summer events programme. Children learnt about trees and made African rattles, claves (sticks made into percussion instruments), and simple whistles from wood, some of which was gathered from the surrounding woodland. The event took place in the shade of the willows at Buxford Meadow near Singleton. Following the making of the musical instruments some of the children sang a song with their instruments. The activities programme is sponsored by a grant from Kent County Council and the Rail Link Countryside Initiative.



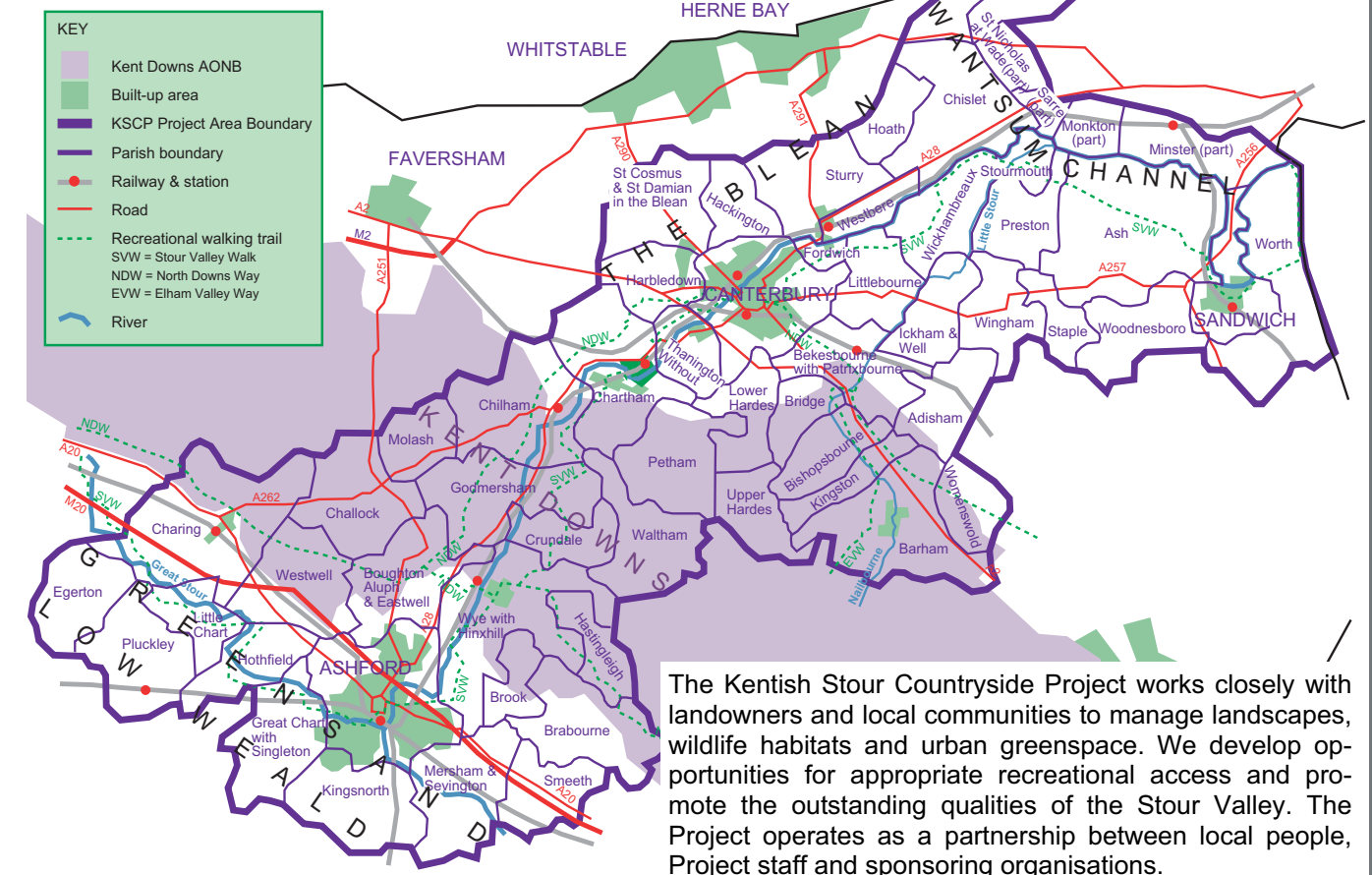
Sculpturing history

Queen Mother's Park in the Ashford Green Corridor is now host to some new and exiting sculptures. Funded through a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, local greenwood artists Martin Brockman and Mark Sidders were commissioned to create sculptures which would capture and convey the history of Queen Mother's Park from its wild, woodland beginnings, to its present day Local Nature Reserve status. The sculptures were created using English Oak from Sylvan Environmental Enterprises Ltd woodland. You may have spotted the end results – a host of sculptured native plants and animals.



Positioned in a triangular format, the first of the three stand-alone sculptures recalls an age when fewer people inhabited the area and elk and wolf roamed freely. Have a look on the reverse side and the elk's antlers might not be what they first appear! The second tall sculpture represents a herd of cattle, capturing the agricultural phase of the park's history and the livestock market origins of Ashford. Emma Griffiths, Ashford Green Corridor Officer said that the remaining stand-alone sculpture - "celebrates the present day status of the site as a LNR, with its carvings of wildlife that might be enticed into the park through continuing conservation work". The final piece – a bench made from an oak framework and sweet chestnut seats, evokes memories of the orchard that once stood in this part of Ashford.

About the Project



The Kentish Stour Countryside Project works closely with landowners and local communities to manage landscapes, wildlife habitats and urban greenspace. We develop opportunities for appropriate recreational access and promote the outstanding qualities of the Stour Valley. The Project operates as a partnership between local people, Project staff and sponsoring organisations.

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(covering secondment)
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Get out and about with the Canterbury Festival

The internationally renowned Canterbury Festival runs from 13th-27th October and the KSCP is offering a number of walks and one cycle ride as part of the programme. Visit www.canterburyfestival.co.uk or ring 01227 378188 to find out more. Get fit, stay healthy, learn about your surroundings or just simply enjoy your beautiful countryside!



A walk along the North Downs Way.

More ponds for Brabourne



Construction, February 2004.

Another pond was created by the KSCP last winter in Brabourne bringing the total to five for this Parish since 2004. The pond was created with the help of one of KSCP's Conservation grants. All five ponds are at the foot of the downs.



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