

Willesborough Dykes Education Project

KSCP with support from Ashford Borough Council is running an Education Project on Willesborough Dykes. Schools in the Ashford area are taking part in the exciting project that will take a closer look at this unique wetland habitat. Activities will encourage pupils to study food chains and the way they work in nature through a range of activities including pond dipping, bird identification, role-playing and a whole host of animal orientated fun games. All schools involved will take part in an exhibition presenting all the things they've learnt. If you have a group that is interested in taking part contact the KSCP.

Part of the Willesborough Dykes - note anthills, a sign of undisturbed grassland



Volunteers combat pond invaders

On a cold day KSCP volunteers braved icy water to remove invasive reeds from a pond within the Bowen's Field Wetland Park, part of the Ashford Green Corridor Local Nature Reserve. The reeds were beginning to dominate and have a detrimental effect on the wildlife value of the pond.

Countryside events around the Downs & the Low Weald



Bluebells at King's Wood

- Bluebell walk** - King's Wood Car Park - Sat 26th April 10.00-12.00am. Friends of King's Wood. £2 to non members
- In search of the Duke of Burgundy** - Denge Woods, Waltham (gate TR099503) 4th May 10.30am. Butterfly Conservation. Booking Essential 01303 815171
- Ham Street Country Fayre** - Sat 7th-8th June. www.hamstreetcountryfayre.co.uk
- Moth morning (National Moth Night)** - Wye & Crundale NNR. Sunday 8th June 10.00am. Butterfly Conservation. Booking Essential 01303 815171
- Nightjar walk** - King's Wood Car Park - Wed 11th June 9.00-11.00pm. Friends Of King's Wood. £2 to non members
- Charing Church Fete** - Clewards Meadow - Sat 21st June 12.00 onwards
- Minibeasts & butterflies** - Charing Alderbed Meadow Sat 5th July 10-12.00am KSCP 01233 813307
- Pluckley Hog Fair** - Sat 5th July 11.00am -11.00pm. Recreation Ground. Entrance & parking free. www.pluckley.net 01233 840044
- Egerton Music Festival** - 4th-13th July. www.egertonmusicfestival.co.uk
- Butterfly walk** - King's Wood Car Park - Sat 19th July 11.00-1.00pm. Friends of King's Wood £2 to non members/KSCP. 01233 813307

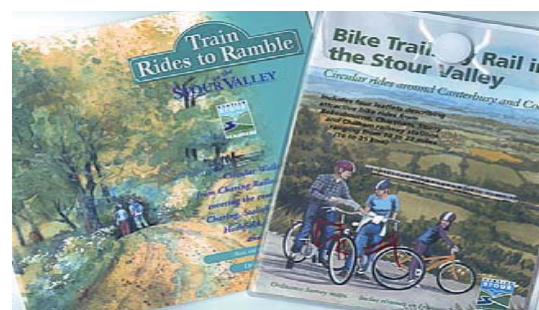
Volunteering

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'.

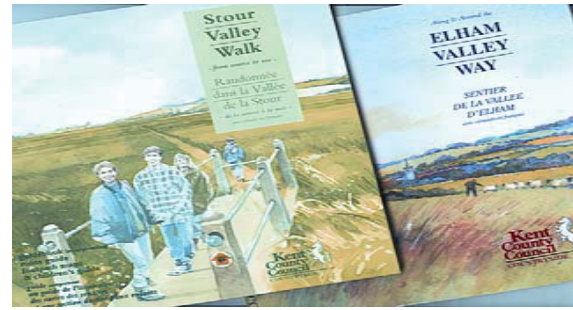
Volunteer days

- 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



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.

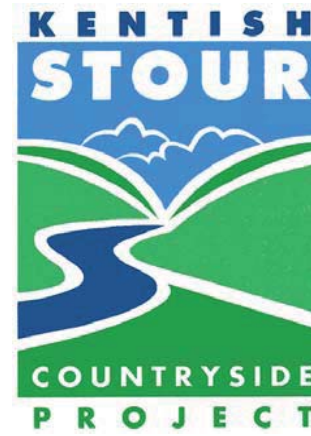


Stour Valley Walk & Elham Valley Way (£5.00) Recreational walks produced by Kent County Council with help from KSCP.



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

All available from local Tourist Information Centres, quality bookshops, KSCP, and Kent County Council (08458 247600 or env.publications@kent.gov.uk).



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

Stour View

Issue 39
Spring 2008

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.

Aiming high: the work of Clean Kent

2008 marks the four year anniversary of Clean Kent, a multi-agency initiative committed to improving Kent's environment. Facilitated by Kent County Council, Clean Kent is a partnership involving the 12 district and borough councils, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency, Highways Agency, HM Prison Service and the Kent Probation Area, as well as voluntary organisations.



Since its inception, Clean Kent has accomplished much in the fight against flytipping, littering and graffiti. Key achievements include a 15% reduction in the reported incidences of flytipping and a 40% reduction in rubbish fires. A dedicated enforcement unit has also helped deter crime as have initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Response Teams.

From working with teams to protect Kent's countryside to educational projects in schools across the county, Clean Kent aims to positively influence behaviour across all sectors of society, young and old. Education plays an important role and Clean Kent offers children of all ages a wide variety of schemes designed to teach them the benefits of protecting, respecting and preserving their environment.

Moving onwards and upwards, the next steps are to build on successes. In summarizing the campaign's achievements, Clean Kent Coordinator, Melanie Price comments: "Positive change is at the heart of Clean Kent. We've come a long way and recognise there is still ground to cover. With continued co-operation from our partners and the public, we can make Kent a cleaner, safer and more beautiful place to live and work."

New Countryside Officer for Ashford



Debbie Adams joined the KSCP last October after graduating in 2007 from the University of Greenwich with a BSc in Landscape Management. Debbie's previous roles have included Countyside Ranger at Bewl Water, British Wildlife Keeper, farm worker and most recently a Farm Environment Consultant in East Sussex.

Conservation on the continent



Plans are underfoot for a French foray for KSCP volunteers with two planned exchange weekends in early 2008. February will see KSCP voyage across to Nord Pas de Calais to renew relations with French environmental conservation group "Les Blongios" before the return weekend 22nd-23rd March when the French will join us for a weekend of hedge planting in Hastingleigh.

Project Sponsors



Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate. The publishers can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Kentish Stour Countryside Project.

Horse grazing for wildlife

As one of the fastest growing industries in the UK the cumulative effect of stables, hard-standing, menages, paddocks and muck lumps is having an effect on the landscape of the Stour Valley. Most noticeably large swathes of landscape are becoming transected by a variety of fencing materials. Meadows full of wildflowers and rich with butterflies, insects and birds once common in the countryside are becoming alarmingly rare. Being a horse owner is a specialist skill in its self, but further understanding is required of landscape management. By putting simple management practices in place you can create a vibrant and healthy environment for your horse and wildlife. For more details on pasture management please contact the KSCP.



Temporary fencing



Brown argus larva requires food-plants such as common rock rose



Herb rich horse grazed sward

Local produce for sale - traditional bean/pea sticks

Would you like to purchase some traditional bean and pea sticks for your garden or allotment? Not only will they look attractive but you'll be supporting a local product and avoiding, in some cases, bamboo imports. The KSCP carry out coppicing of hazel each year and we are offering to deliver bean and pea sticks while stocks last. The bean sticks will come in bundles of 10 costing £5. They are 8 feet (2 metres) long and most should last three years. Pea sticks - bundles of 20 at £3, are 3-4 feet (1 metre) and will probably only last one season. Contact the KSCP to place an order, delivery early April to locations within or close to the KSCP area.



A guided walk for the Ashford International Chinese Association

Welcome to the wildside

Natural England has recently launched the Welcome to the Wildside Project, this is a community based project focussing on three National Nature Reserves - Wye (near Ashford), Ham Street Woods (near Ashford) and Stodmarsh (near Canterbury). The project will be putting on a variety of activities ranging from art workshops, to woodland management walks, catering for different ages and abilities. There will also be volunteer days to get local people involved in the nature reserves. For further information 01233 811205 or emma.griffiths@naturalengland.org.uk

Conservation grant

Lenacre Farm at the foot of the Downs has successfully planted 300m of native mix hedgerow and excavated a new pond on their holding with help from a KSCP conservation grant. In addition to this, a long stretch of ditch was re-profiled to encourage better drainage from the surrounding pastoral land. The ditch was re-profiled to incorporate meanders and a variation of water depths to provide suitable habitat for a range of aquatic flora which will greatly increase existing amphibious activity on this valuable landscape.



Meanders in the re-profiled ditch



Creation of a woodland pond adds habitat diversity



KCC members fund minibus

Contributions from the Kent County Council Small Community Capital Grants fund has allowed the KSCP to purchase a three year old minibus that will be used by its volunteers. Jon Shelton from the KSCP says 'We had our previous crewbus for 15 years and it served us really well over all that time, to the point that I think the volunteers were sorry to see it go. We would like to loan the minibus to local groups such as schools and youth groups around our base in Wye, to ensure that most use is made of it, so please contact us if you are interested.'

About the Project

KEY

- Kent Downs AONB
- Built-up area
- KSCP Project Area Boundary
- Parish boundary
- Railway & station
- Road
- Recreational walking trail
- SVW = Stour Valley Walk
- NDW = North Downs Way
- EVW = Eltham Valley Way
- River

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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Project Manager: Jon Shelton
Ashford Countryside Officer: Debbie Adams
Canterbury & Wantsum Countryside Officer: Matt Hayes
Assistant Project Officer (PT): Craig Edwards

Ashford AGC Community Heritage Project

The KSCP has spent the last year talking with Ashford people about the heritage of the Green Corridor and it has now published its findings on www.ashfordgreencorridor.org.uk. The Corridor is both a wildlife corridor, with riverside habitats linking town and countryside, and a green transport corridor, providing routes for walkers and cyclists through its green spaces. The Community Heritage Project has revealed that it is also a corridor linking the present with the past - a gateway to Ashford's heritage. The project focused on oral history - people's own recollections and memories of places as they used to be and events affecting the town's rivers and associated landscapes. Funding for the project was made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund. There are many stories about Sidney Bowen, after whom Bowen's Field is named. Norman Ibbotson told us that Sid was a cattle trader as well as a farmer, and Bowen's Field was used to keep cattle overnight after being transported, before going to market. But it wasn't just cattle that Sid traded in: he once imported 100 donkeys from Ireland that promptly escaped from his farm, wreaking havoc in people's gardens all over Ashford. It took two days to eventually round them all up!

Bowen's Field today

Little Burton is riverside linked to Ashford

The final work to provide the much needed footpath/cycle link between Queen Mother Park and Ashford Rugby Club leading to Little Burton has taken place. The link goes under the M20 and avoids a big detour onto the busy A28. It means easier access to the railway station and town centre and of course improves the enjoyment of the Ashford Green Corridor - have fun!

The final work taking place near the Sewage Works