

Plant spotting April/June - lady orchid *Orchis purpurea*

Lady orchid *Orchis purpurea* is a tall elegant species often growing to a staggering height of 60cms (two feet). Confined almost exclusively to chalk soils in Kent the flower spike contains individual flowers described as women in crinoline ball-gowns (Mabey 1998). The main flower is a graceful rose/pale pink with the head forming a much deeper purple.

Jocelyn Brooke, writer and botanist born in Sandgate documents his memories in the 1940's of Lady Orchids being sold on Kent street corners for sixpence a bunch. It is, of course, illegal to pick them today. He regards it as one of the most beautiful of our native orchids as he describes in one of his many books:

'Coming upon it suddenly, on the fringe of some Kentish woodland, its showy spikes standing out so vividly against the dingy thickets of dog's mercury, one is struck above all by its "exotic" quality'. (Brooke 1950)



Countryside events around the Ashford & Canterbury Downs



An event at No Man's Orchard

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

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

Bridge Summer Fete - Bridge Primary School on Conyngham Lane - Sat 14th June starts at 12.00

Charing Church Fete - Clewards Meadow - Sat 21st June 12.00 onwards

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

No Mans Orchard, 60 years on - No Man's Orchard, Chartham Hatch - Sat 26th July 10.00-4.00pm. 01233 813307

Volunteering

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

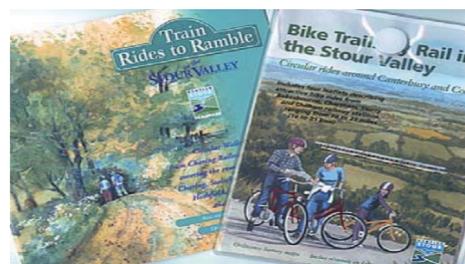
For our detailed programme, 'phone us on 01233 813307 or go to our website and click on 'get involved'.

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 newsletter for people living in & around the Kent Downs AONB close to Ashford & Canterbury

Stour View

Kent Downs AONB

Issue 39
Spring 2008

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

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally protected landscape. It is special for its dramatic chalk escarpments like the Devil's Kneading Trough at Wye, secluded dry valleys, networks of tiny lanes and sunken byways, historic hedgerows, ancient woodlands, oast houses, unique and precious wildlife and sites of historic and cultural interest.

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."



Dor's open for new properties in Wood

KSCP volunteers have been helping to protect one of Britain's most beautiful yet secretive mammals, the dormouse. For over five years, King's Wood has been part of a monitoring programme, which is used to estimate the national dormouse population, and during this time it has contained the second highest population in Britain. After a period of continuous use the existing dormouse boxes were well worn, so new boxes were purchased with funds from the Friends of King's Wood and installed by KSCP volunteers.



Project Sponsors



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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 Project 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



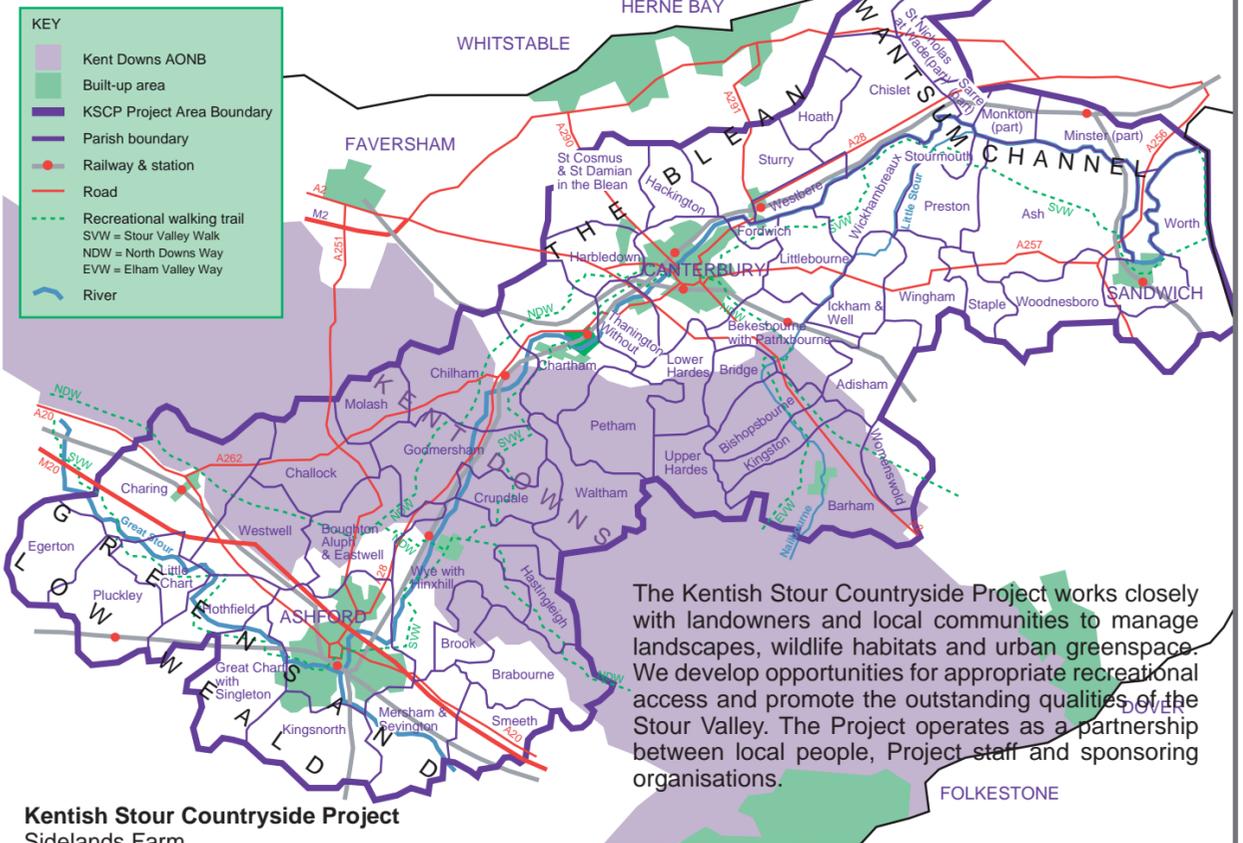
Creation of a woodland pond adds habitat diversity



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



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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.

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

Denge Woods Project

Butterfly Conservation's South East Woodlands Project is now underway. One of the three large project areas is in the east Kent Downs, between Ashford and Canterbury. Covering over 2000 hectares of ancient woodland, including the Denge, the project aims to reinvigorate management and improve conditions for woodland butterflies, moths and other wildlife. Fran Thompson, the Project Officer will be giving advice and holding management workshops for landowners wanting to improve their woodlands, and training for volunteers wishing to help survey butterflies and moths in the area. There will be a public information evening on the 28th of February 2008 at 7.30 pm in Petham village hall for anyone wanting to know more. More information can be found on the website www.kentdowns.org.uk or you can contact Fran on 01303 815171.

