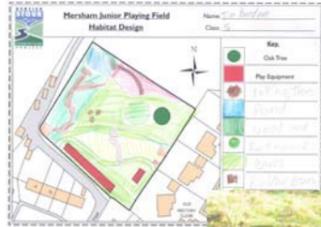


Mersham Playing Field Visited by Young Nature Detectives



TOP: One of the children's designs
RIGHT: A young ecologist at work



Mersham Junior Playing Field is set to change, as Mersham Parish Council is about to rejuvenate the area with a range of new play equipment that blends with the natural surroundings and create habitats for local wildlife. With ecologist Martin Newcombe and KSCP, local children have been involved by surveying the site for existing wildlife, including birds, bugs, mammals and plants. Their findings have been combined to create colourful and inventive designs for wildlife habitats that will encourage more nature onto the playing field. Year 6 student Phoebe Balfour said, "It was fun, especially when we had to search for evidence of a deer, weasel and badger..." Their teacher, Miss Hughes added, "It was a great opportunity for the children to study habitats in a real-life situation, and think about how we can improve the provision for local wildlife." Mersham PC is working with Ashford Borough Council and RLCI funding to complete the project.

Wildlife Walk at Evegat Business Centre

A walk taking in a range of habitats including woodland, farmland, wetland and lakes has been opened to the public at the Evegat Business Centre, Smeeth. An interpretation panel, located in the main shopping area, provides fascinating details of the wildlife that thrives on the site. The walk is very enjoyable and through the warmer months flowers including ragged robin brighten the pathway. Buzzards are often seen freely gliding above the woodland too. For more information on the site, or to get a free leaflet please call the Evegat Business Centre directly or KSCP.



Wildlife thrives on the wetland trail

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

Events

There are many events in the Ashford area this spring. For complete listings please go to the following web sites:

- Denge Wood Butterfly Project**
www.dengewoods.org
- King's Wood**
www.friendsofkingwood.org
- Spokes (cycling)**
www.spokeseastkent.org.uk
- KSCP events**
www.kentishstour.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



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, clear maps and directions, packed with information and illustrations.



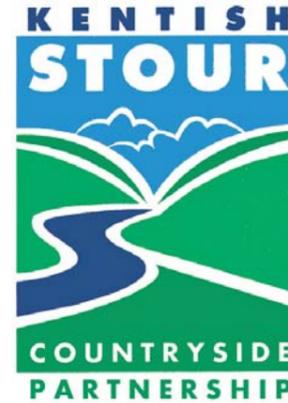
Stour Valley Walk & Elham Valley Way (£5.00) Recreational walks produced by Kent County Council with help from KSCP.



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).

Stour View for Ashford & The Low Weald, Downs, Canterbury & Wantsum is produced in January, May and September. Stour View is printed on Elemental Chlorine Free paper from wood pulp from sustainable forests and includes recycled fibre.



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

Stour View

Issue 42
Spring 2009

Ashford & The Low Weald

Once 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.

Fragrance and Flavours for Wildlife

KSCP has been working with Givaudan, the 'producers of fragrance and flavours', to enhance the ecological value of the company's land next to the River Great Stour and Willesborough Road. We have carried out a number of conservation projects on the 'Great Stour Meadow' over the last few years, including putting in ponds, river bank work, and erecting owl boxes. In the last year, we have sown more wildflower seeds in the meadow, created a hibernaculum for reptiles, planted Black Poplar cuttings and almost a dozen mature native trees. Quite a few enthusiastic Givaudan employees helped out with some of the work and took responsibility for building a dipping platform over one of the ponds. Givaudan are planning to run educational projects there with local schools / community groups in the near future. If you are part of a company with some land that could be better utilised for wildlife why not follow Givaudan's excellent example and contact the KSCP. The Environment Agency has also been working along this stretch of river, improving it for wildlife using material from the bed of the river to re-profile the bank of the river, so creating a more natural, meandering flow and a more diverse habitat.

Top: Givaudan staff at work. Bottom: Environment Agency work at Givaudan



A Goodbye and Thank You to the Rail Link Countryside Initiative



Wildflower meadow creation in the Ashford Green Corridor, supported by funds from RLCI

The construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link through Kent and London, led to the creation of a fund for environmental improvements to the transport corridor and this fund was administered by the RLCI. After 12 years in operation the fund has finally been exhausted. Many community groups and organisations benefited enormously from RLCI funding and in turn wildlife and people living in the transport corridor. For example, in this newsletter alone, we report on the new North School pond, the Mersham Playing Field habitat creation project and Evegat Farm wetland trail. RLCI have funded hundreds of projects that have made a real difference to the wildlife and landscape quality in the corridor, and to peoples' understanding and enjoyment of their surroundings. Their funds and the support of their Project Officer, David Standen, will be missed!

Partnership 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 Partnership.

Windmills – living and lost

Everyone loves a windmill - they're picturesque, historic and each one is different. In the KSCP area, by our reckoning, there are eight mills that are more or less intact, including some of the finest examples in Kent. In addition there are a number of other windmills that are either ruined (Bekesbourne, for example) or altered and adapted so much that they no longer resemble mills (Lenham Heath).

While the area we cover is certainly blessed with some magnificent mills, these are but a fraction of the number that used to exist. Our surviving mills are all 19th century, and at this time most villages would have had their own mill; many had two. In the 1930s, historian William Coles Finch found evidence of over 400 windmills in Kent.

All intact windmills are clearly marked on Landranger and Explorer series Ordnance Survey maps, so it couldn't be easier to plan a walk to see your nearest one. If you want to go inside a mill and even see one working, a number of them are open to the public. Herne, Sandwich, Sarre, and Willesborough windmills all welcome visitors, mostly between Easter and September. For precise opening times and other information go to http://kentwindmills.homestead.com/Open_times.html. The other 'intact' mills in our area are at Charing, Reculver, Westwood (near Bossingham) and Whitstable. Please respect the fact that they are privately owned.



Willesborough windmill



Planting a shaw at Cold Blow Farm with Les Blongios

European Funding comes to Kent

A consortium of environmental organisations in the South East including KSCP, have once again joined forces with environmental organisations in Northern France to successfully bid for Interreg funding. There are many geological and ecological similarities between our regions, including chalk downland, marshes, broadleaf woodlands and coastal features. This funding makes a whole range of projects and exchanges possible, so that we can learn and benefit from our different experiences and management techniques.

KSCP volunteers went over to France in October to work with Les Blongios on one of their conservation projects, and in November they came to Kent, braving the freezing winds and snow, to help us on a woodland re-creation project just outside

Wye at the aptly named Cold Blow Farm. We all appreciated the steaming cup of venison stew the farmer Crispin Beale served up at lunchtime!

Fascist winter palaces for wildlife

What connects Joseph Stalin with King's Wood near Ashford? The answer is 'Super Kingdom', a new artwork by London Fieldworks (namely artists Bruce Gilchrist and Jo Joelson), commissioned by Stour Valley Arts. This impressive piece consists of three large structures inspired by the palatial residences of Stalin, Ceausescu and Mussolini. It is hoped that the structures will provide overwintering sites for wildlife. The piece has been nominated by the Architects' Journal for their 'small projects award' and features on the cover of the latest edition.

London Fieldworks' work explores the relationships between art, science and nature. For more information go to www.londonfieldworks.com. 'Super Kingdom' is just the latest in a long line of contemporary environmental artworks commissioned for King's Wood by Stour Valley Arts. For details of the location of 'Super Kingdom' and other pieces, go to www.stourvalleyarts.org.uk.



'Superkingdom' structures

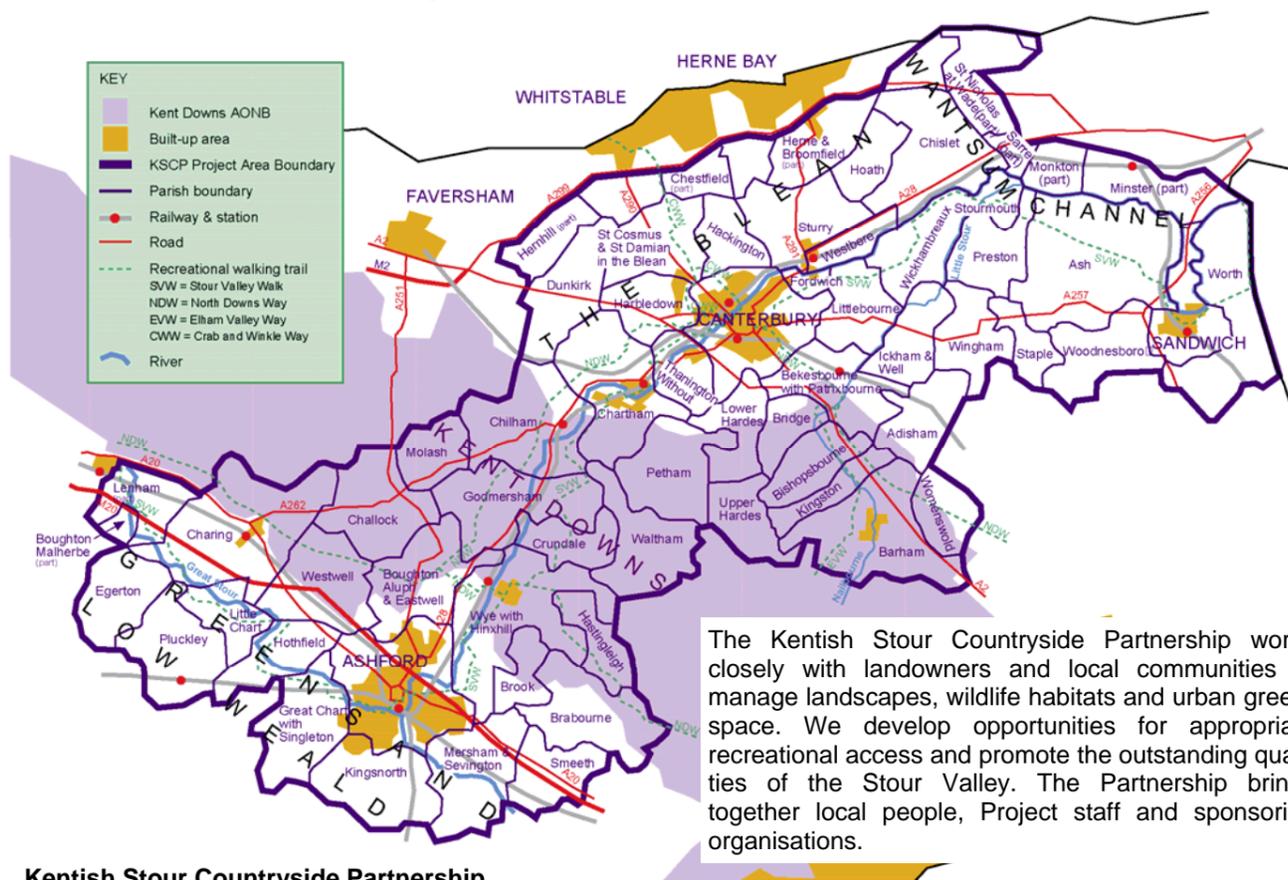
The Goatsucker



Nightjar

This is an old name for the Nightjar, taken from a false belief that it milks goats with its huge mouth. From late April to mid-May, this elusive summer visitor returns to its strongholds in south-east England after over-wintering in Africa. With pointed wings and a long tail, their shape is similar to a Kestrel or Cuckoo. Nightjars fly at night, and are very hard to see during the day as their grey-brown mottled feathers and habit of sitting still on the ground make them almost invisible among fallen leaves. They are far easier to spot at dawn or dusk, 'hawking' moths and insects or singing in trees. Their call is often described as 'churring'. Nightjar populations decreased sharply after World War two, probably because of loss of habitat, disturbance and a decrease in large insects, but recently better management practices, especially in woodlands, have seen this secretive bird's numbers start to increase. They require open ground to nest so the KSCP, along with many other conservation bodies, have been creating heathy glades and open areas in woodlands to improve the plight of this very special bird. In the Stour Valley they can be seen in open woodland in King's Wood and the Blean; see events listing for guided walks.

About the Partnership



The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership 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 Partnership brings together local people, Project staff and sponsoring organisations.

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Ashford Countryside Officer: Debbie Adams
Canterbury & Wantsum Countryside Officer: Carol Donaldson (P/T)
Project Officer (P/T): Diane Comley

Four is the magic number

Fancy following a trail through an area rich in wildlife habitats, greenspace and historic landscapes? No need to head miles into the countryside – if you live in Ashford, just follow route four. This waymarked trail is one of eight walk routes featured in a leaflet we have published to help people explore the Ashford Green Corridor, a series of riverside parks and greenspaces.



Look for these walk four Waymarkers. The route is only partially waymarked, so you will need the 'Explore the Corridor' leaflet to follow it. Contact the KSCP for a copy.

Walk four links the Green Corridor with the semi-rural, historic landscapes of Godinton Park and the Warren. Highlights of the trail include: the secluded wildlife haven of Buxford Meadow; the historic village of Great Chart; the majestic parkland of Godinton with views of the grand manor house; the ancient trees and acid grassland of the Warren; Victoria Park and the beautiful Hubert Fountain; the wild riverside of Watercross Fields; and the wildfowl of Singleton Lake.

Dipping Into Environmental Education at the North School



Students inspect the new pond

The North School with its positive focus on encouraging understanding and enjoyment of rural skills, has taken a further step into the green classroom. With funding from RLCI, KSCP and the school, a large wildlife area incorporating a pond and wildflower meadow has been created. This outdoor classroom provides a vital opportunity for students to study fundamental understanding of life cycles, food chains and advance their knowledge of ecological principals. The wildlife area, combined with the existing school farm, has formed a landscape that typifies the wider environment, thus producing a realistic and safe learning zone for the students. The project, managed by KSCP and carried out by local contractors, has been closely followed by students at the school.