

Ride and read! Two new leaflets for the Blean

The Blean, between Canterbury and the coast, is one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in England. Not only is it nationally important for wildlife, but it has a rich and unusually well recorded history. The Blean Heritage & Community Group has published a leaflet focusing on the fascinating history of The Blean. Meanwhile the KSCP has re-produced the popular Crab and Winkle Way leaflet with a new easier to read map with lots of information. Both leaflets are available from Tourist Information Centres and local libraries. Alternatively e-mail blean.initiative@canterbury.gov.uk or telephone 01227 862015.



Wild about Water Voles

Wading waist deep in slimy ditches is all in a days work for Countryside Officer, Carol Donaldson as she plots the distribution of Water Voles in the Lower Stour Valley. The partnership undertook a small number of site surveys across the area last summer. The results should help to determine how Water Voles have fared since the last major survey in 2005. This work follows on from two very successful Water Vole workshops where landowners and wildlife professionals got to learn first hand about the Water Vole's importance, why the Stour catchment is one of the country's top Water Vole spots and how best the land can be managed to make sure it stays that way. A Water Vole management guide for landowners has also been produced which aims to simplify advice often offered to landowners on wildlife management and Carol has been out and about, along with Paul Cobb from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, offering individual landowners advice and guidance.



Looking for Water Vole signs

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

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'.

Countryside events in the Stour Valley

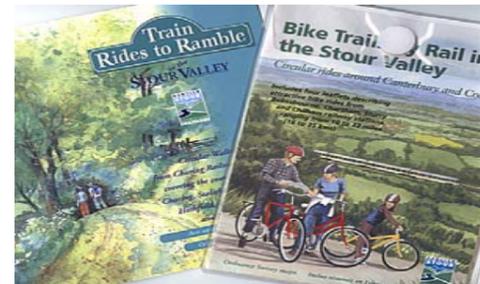
For information about events in the Stour Valley visit the following websites:

KSCP: kentishstour.org.uk
 The Blean Initiative: theblean.co.uk
 Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org
 Denge Wood Butterfly Project: dengewoods.org
 Wildwood (Herne): wildwood-centre.co.uk
 Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk
 Canterbury Environmental Education Centre: naturegrid.org.uk

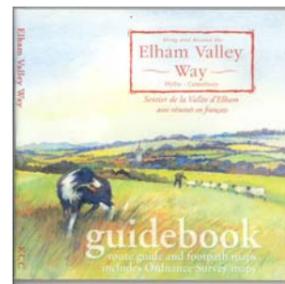
Volunteer days

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.

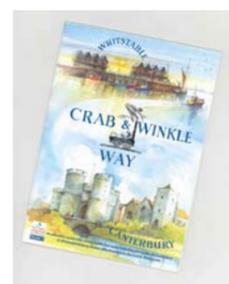
KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside



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, maps & directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Elham Valley Way (£5.00) Recreational walk produced by Kent County Council with help from KSCP.



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.

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

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The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in & around Canterbury & the Wantsum area

Stour View

Canterbury & Wantsum

Issue 43
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CONSERVING, ENHANCING AND PROMOTING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN GREEN SPACE OF THE STOUR VALLEY

Canterbury is surrounded by special ancient woodland and protected landscapes and has the only major river in East Kent flowing through the city. The River Great Stour is a beautiful asset for the area and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The most important wildlife site along the river is Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, being a premier reedbed habitat. Between Canterbury, Reculver and Sandwich is the old Wantsum Channel, reclaimed from the sea, with pretty villages lining what used to be the old shoreline.



Cbeebies come to No Man's

Those with small children might like to know that the autumnal orchard link being shown on Cbeebies was actually filmed at No Man's Orchard! The BBC required an orchard with large trees and was suitably impressed with No Man's to use it for their location shoot. KSCP lent the production a couple of old fruit picking ladders and then Cbeebies spent the whole day filming in the orchard. No Man's Community Orchard is alongside the North Downs Way between Harbledown and Chartham Hatch and is owned by Harbledown and Chartham Parish Councils.

River restoration

In parts the Great Stour has chalk stream characteristics. Chalk rivers in the UK are classified as priority habitats and need to be maintained. Past management on the Great Stour, however well-intentioned, has changed the habitat resulting in the loss of some of the chalk stream characteristics. The river has been straightened, over-widened and over-deepened causing sluggish stretches. These are prone to silt deposition which smothers the natural gravel beds reducing the habitat available for fish to spawn. The river is also less able to cope with low flows during dry summers. During 2008/09 the Environment Agency has been restoring the river to a more natural condition at two sites in Ashford and one in Canterbury. Over 1km of river has been restored. An example of this restoration work can be seen from Vauxhall Bridge to the east of Canterbury.



Water Crowfoot in the river by Vauxhall Bridge

Canterbury-Chartham shared use path, work underway!

Planning permission was given for the 5 km riverside path on the 23rd June and Kent Highway Services started work a week later from the Canterbury end of the route. Partnership Manager, Jon Shelton, who has steered the project along a very 'winding route' for 15 years is very pleased with the outcome. Jon says 'this has been a complex project that has involved local authorities, Sustrans and local cycling group, Spokes. I'm sure many people will really enjoy using the path and I am now looking forward, like many, to cycling the route next year'. KSCP have raised £250,000 towards the cost of the project which should be completed in 2010. Thanks also to the landowners along the route for giving permission for the path.



Construction of the riverside path at Whitehall Meadows

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.

Don't ignore it – report it!

During the autumn hopefully many of you will be out enjoying the rivers in and around the Stour Valley; whether bird-watching, fishing or just enjoying the tranquillity of a stroll along the riverbank.

But do you know what to do if you see an 'environmental incident' such as pollution, fish in distress, or a blockage? The message is 'Don't ignore it, report it!'

To report an environmental incident please call the Environment Agency's **Incident hotline** on **0800 80 70 60** (Freephone*, 24 hour service). You should not use e-mail to report an incident, as this could delay the response.

*Calls from mobile phones are not free and will be charged at normal network.

Apply now for your Free Trees

The Free Tree Scheme has been expanded in 2009 to cover the Borough of Ashford as well as Canterbury and Thanet. Individuals and/or organisations can apply for up to 25 native trees. The scheme is sponsored by Network Rail, Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council and Thanet District Council.

For an application contact 08458 247600 or visit kentishstour.org.uk and look for the Free Trees Link. Closing date is 30th October 2009.



Forging newt territory

It's not a lizard, it's not a small gecko and it is not a Chinese Water Dragon, it is in fact our own native crested king of the British countryside. Measuring up to 17cm, this largest of Britain's newts is a glorious sight. As a species, newts have faced drastic population declines across the country as their natural habitat of ponds, rough grassland and hedgerows have been lost or fragmented through the actions of development, over management, fish stocking and agricultural intensification.



Great Crested Newt

All newt species require water in which to lay their eggs. The females lay up to 250 eggs, wrapped in the leaves of submerged aquatic plants and grasses in the spring of each year, before returning to their terrestrial lifestyle in late summer. Many of the eggs are predated by fish, water beetles and snails. The presence or absence of Great Crested Newts provides a barometer of the health and diversity of the surrounding environment. Linking ponds through towns or the countryside with tracts of green land will actively promote the survival of this nationally protected handsome species.



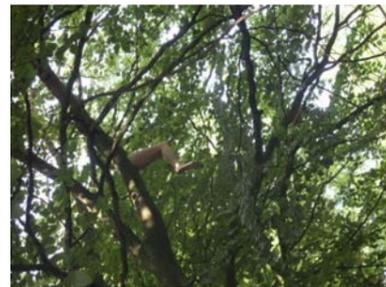
Newt habitat

Miracle of the Legs & Carboretum - Stour Valley Arts latest commissions

During 2008 Australian Gregory Pryor worked closely with people who use King's Wood and he recently returned to install his proposal, carvings of a leg each of three forest users - a local woman who walks in the forest early each day, one of the foresters who works in the woods and a child who came to a Stour Valley Arts workshop and told her mother 'it was the best day of my life'. These vigorous and active legs, constructed by Whitstable artist Will Glanfield, have now been attached to three different beech trees in King's Wood, symbolically re-invigorating the trees and suspended like sacrificial offerings. *Miracle of the Legs* will be an addition to the collection of works in King's Wood, which is free and open at all times.



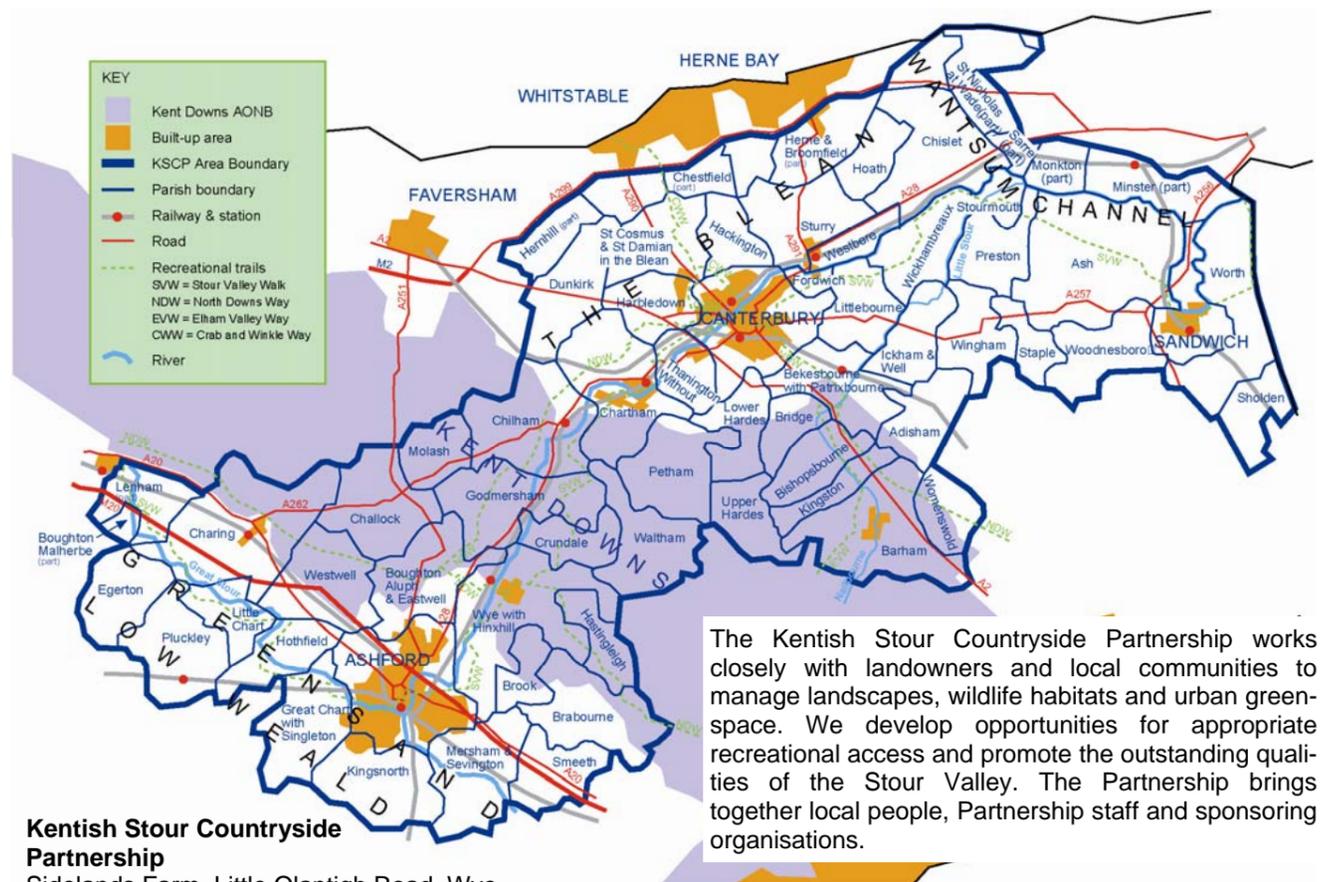
Carboretum



Miracle of the legs (Darius Wilson)

The main King's Wood car park is the unlikely setting for Edward Chell's new work, which continues his interest in overlooked pockets of the English landscape, those green spaces generally seen through the windscreen of a car. *Carboretum*: From Acer to Quercus makes a playful link between the ways in which labelling is used for botanical specimens and within corporate car parks. KSCP volunteers helped to install this piece and it can be seen until early next year.

About the Partnership



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Heath Fritillary bouncing back in the Blean

According to a report produced last year, work that KSCP, English Nature & the Forestry Commission initiated over the winter of 2002/03 has resulted in a major new population of Heath Fritillary in Clowes Wood in 2008. The butterfly first appeared in the wood in June 2004, when it had not been seen for over 10 years. Numbers have steadily risen since, until last year when it became a major colony. Meanwhile the RSPB had amazing numbers of Heath Fritillary at Blean National Nature Reserve this year with over 1300 being recorded in one location.



Heath Fritillary

A Biodiversity Action Plan for the IDB

The Stour Internal Drainage Board (IDB) has commissioned the KSCP to write a Biodiversity Action Plan for their area. The River Stour IDB is concerned with flood protection and land drainage but it also has a duty towards biodiversity.



Reed Bunting, a bird that breeds in the ditches of the Lower Stour Valley

It undertakes an annual programme of maintenance works to ensure water levels are kept at an appropriate and safe level and through this work there are also opportunities to manage land for wildlife. The plan should be finished in 2010. For more information www.riverstouridb.org.uk

Water for Wildlife Project

A Water for Wildlife Project Officer, Beth Nightingale, was appointed earlier this year with funding from Natural England and the Environment Agency based at Kent Wildlife Trust in Maidstone. Beth will be helping to deliver something called the 'Wetland Vision'. The Wetland Vision is a national mapping project that has identified historical, current and potential sites for restoring a mosaic of wetland habitats connected together by wildlife corridors. The Lower Stour is a target area. Historically the Lower Stour would have had a lot more marshland where as today there is a lot of arable land. The project aims to develop better wildlife corridors with ditches and margins, and on the least productive and wettest land to restore grazing marsh. Many people think of wetlands as very flooded land and although some are, many are only wet during the winter and perhaps early spring. They can still be farmed providing livestock grazing or hay crops, and in fact to maintain their benefits for wildlife they need to be managed in this way. If you'd like to find out more please contact Beth on 01622 662012 or email beth.nightingale@kentwildlife.org.uk