

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

## New Community orchard for Ashford

**On a glorious frosty December day lots of people came out to plant a new community orchard in Watercress Fields, off Ford Way in the Ashford Green Corridor.**

The KSCP volunteers, led by Project Officer Diane Comley, were joined by staff from Ashford Borough Council and the Hang 10 youth team and at least 50 Year 4 children with their teachers from Ashford Oaks Primary School. Together they planted 45 trees, mostly Kentish apple varieties, but also plum and cherry trees.



The trees were chosen and planted to form a 'traditional orchard' as against a commercial fruit orchard. Traditional orchards are made up of larger trees that live for many years, and they have almost disappeared from Kent. They are wonderful habitats for wildlife, as well as beautiful places to visit, especially at blossom time. This new orchard will be officially opened and celebrated in the spring, when it will be given its name, selected from suggestions by local children. As a community orchard it will be a place for local residents and visitors to enjoy, including the fruit!

Before the planting year 4 Ashford Oaks Primary School visited No Man's Orchard, a traditional orchard near Chartham Hatch. They played a range of games that helped them to learn more about the value and history of orchards, including the kind of wildlife that thrive in this habitat. Plus they simply enjoyed being out in the fresh air.



A visit to No Man's Orchard before the planting.

### Partnership Sponsors



# Pledges Mill Improvement Project

Residents and visitors to Ashford may have recently noticed a lot of activity at Pledges Mill on the River Stour at the bottom of East Hill.

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with Ashford Borough Council and Ashford School to create a healthier fishery and a better environment on the River Stour.

The historic mill weir is holding the water back and creating more of a pond where a flowing river ought to be. This makes it difficult for fish to move upstream to their spawning grounds. 'Ponding' also results in a silted-up river bed.

The changes underway will make it easier for fish to migrate past the mill and will also help make the river flow more naturally. Not only will this lead to a wider variety of habitats and wildlife, but it will also help create a natural environment for local residents to enjoy. It will also slightly reduce flood risk in the area. The works have been complicated by the need to reduce impact on the day-to-day business of the mill which is currently a popular night club.



Work in Westgate Gardens above and Whitehall Meadows below.



## Meanwhile in Canterbury...

Ancient history met science fiction in the centre of Canterbury in October when a robot like machine set to work in the River Stour at Westgate Gardens. The machine, powered by 3 huge mechanical legs, crept its way along the river creating a low flow channel to benefit the river's wildlife. The channel will help creatures such as wild trout travel upstream and breed. Further along the river shallow riffles have been created where trout can spawn and deep pools dug where they can rest in the shade. The work forms part of a series of improvements for wildlife spearheaded by the KSCP with funding by the Environment Agency and assistance from Canterbury City Council.

The work is part of a European wide policy to improve the quality of our rivers. Other improvements to the wider floodplain included new shallow pools (scrapes) in the meadows along the river which provide feeding areas for wintering waders such as redshanks once known as the 'sentinels of the marshes.' Hopefully the work will lead to the right conditions to bring back the colourful wetland plants and animals which once thrived beyond the city walls.

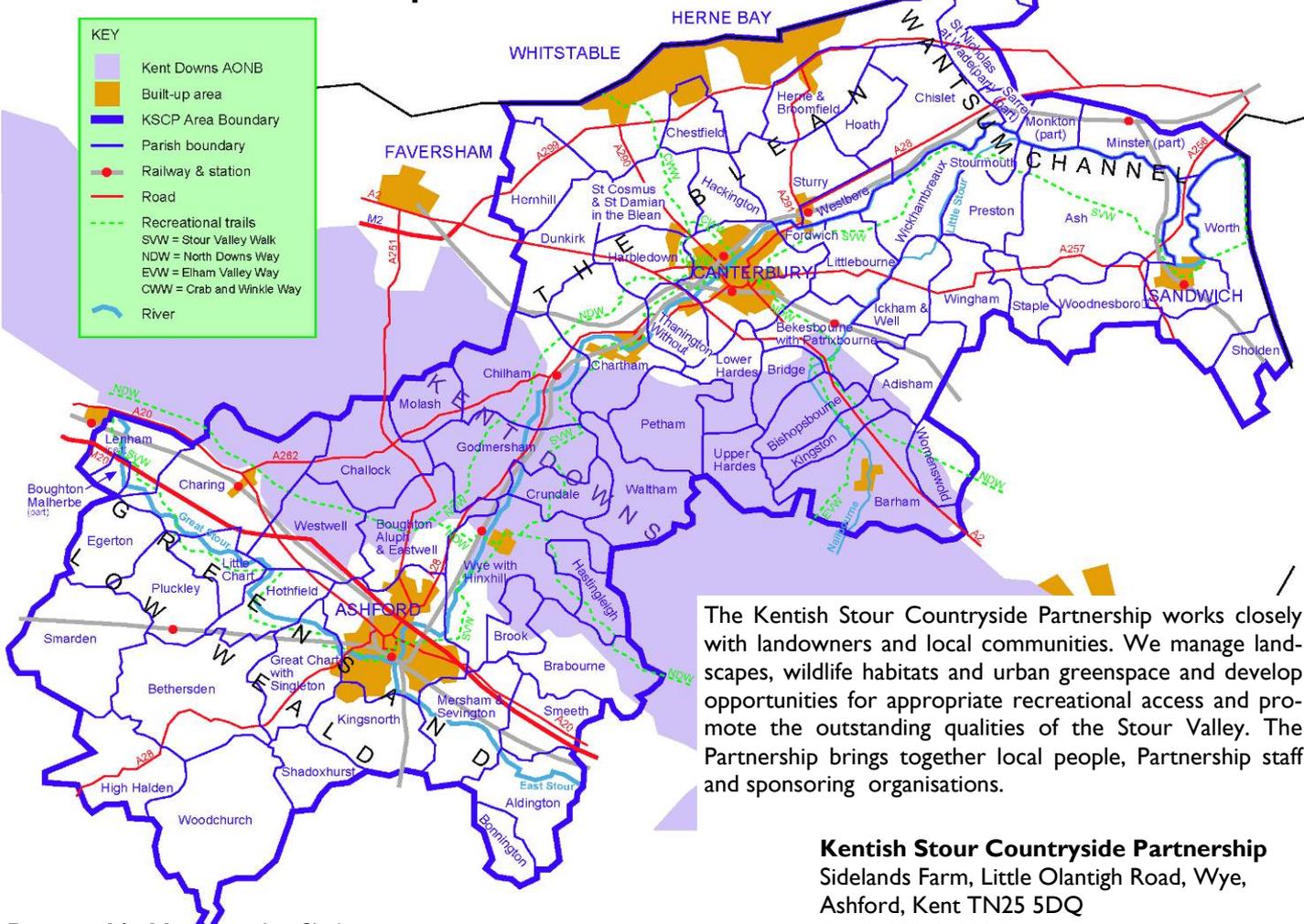
## Update on the



Canterbury City Council have extended the path along the riverside under the Rheims Way to exit onto Whitehall Road. Meanwhile Kent County Council Rights of Way should be in a position to start work on the next stage of the path from Chartham to Godmersham in the summer.



## About the Partnership



The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership works closely with landowners and local communities. We manage landscapes, wildlife habitats and urban greenspace and develop opportunities for appropriate recreational access and promote the outstanding qualities of the Stour Valley. The Partnership brings together local people, Partnership staff and sponsoring organisations.

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**Partnership Manager:** Jon Shelton  
**Ashford Countryside Officers (P/T):** Debbie Adams & Diane Comley  
**Canterbury & Wantsum Countryside Officer:** Carol Donaldson

## Friends needed for the Donkey Paddock, Sandwich

The Donkey Paddock in Sandwich is in need of some friends. The parcel of land along Woodnesborough Road opposite the Rope Walk is known to many local residents as the donkey paddock after the long eared equine which grazed the area for many years.

In recent years the meadow had become overgrown with bramble, however in the winter of 2011 Sandwich Town Council along with volunteers from KSCP set to work to transform the area into a wildflower meadow. Bramble and litter were removed and the site was sown with an attractive mix of wildflowers.

The meadow began to bloom in 2012 but without some tender loving care the bramble will soon reclaim it. Carol Donaldson of KSCP explains, "We hope to create an open sunny meadow of value to butterflies and bumble bees while leaving some of the bramble as a source of food and cover for the birds. Without regular management the bramble will take over the whole area. Many local residents have commented positively on our work while we have been at the site and it would be great if a few people could now get together to cut back the bramble on a regular basis to give the wildflowers a chance."

To help the KSCP has a community tool chest which can loan tools and other equipment to groups in order for them to undertake the work. "Once the wildflower meadow begins to grow it has the potential to create a colourful attraction for the town," says Carol, "it just needs a few friends to help it on its way." **Please contact KSCP or Sandwich Town Council if you are interested in helping.**



# News updates from the Stour Valley

KSCP are nearing completion of the improvements to the Winding Pond in Clowes Wood on the **Crab and Winkle Way**. Following habitat improvements to the pond in 2011 and access work in 2012, a new interpretive panel was erected in the autumn. Now KSCP and the Crab and Winkle Line Trust are looking for funding to replace the bespoke seat and for a new leaflet for the Crab and Winkle Way.



The existing seat at the Winding Pond, now in need of replacing.

**Dates for your diary!** The Kent Wildlife Trust are co-ordinating a celebration of the **Blean Woods** involving other partners from the Blean Initiative. Events are due to take place from May 27th culminating with a Blean Festival at the Canterbury Academy (formerly Canterbury High School) on Sunday 2nd June.

Unfortunately the panel concerning the importance of wildlife at **Long Rock, Swalecliffe** that was mentioned in the last edition of Stour View was stolen in October. Please contact the police if you have any information about this. Canterbury City Council will be installing a replacement panel in the spring.



The panel at Long rock, Swalecliffe.

The outbreak and spread of **Chalara dieback of Ash** (*Chalara fraxinea*) has been heavily reported in the national and local media. A number of cases in east Kent have been confirmed. For up to date information on the outbreak and to see the symptoms guide go to [www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara). If you suspect any cases of the disease please contact the Forestry Commission: Phone: 0131 314 6414 [plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

KSCP are carrying out visitor surveys of **Westgate Parks** for Canterbury City Council's Heritage Lottery Fund application and there is also an online questionnaire which people can complete at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/WMNKH73](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WMNKH73) An application to HLF should be ready to submit in February.

Goodbye to **Becky Richards** and **Alex Bowser** who have left the Kent Enterprise Trust for new challenges. Also thanks to **Thomas Newton** of KSCP, now working in Somerset, for covering Debbie Adams maternity leave so expertly.



Goodbye from Thomas.

## Volunteering

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

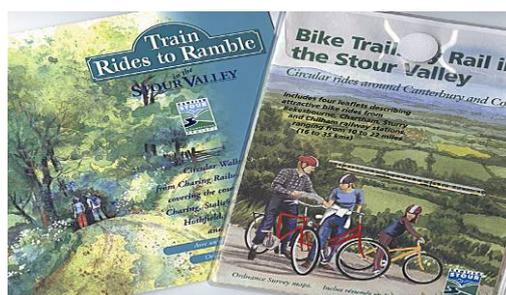
For our detailed programme phone us on 01233 813307 or go to [www.kentishstour.org.uk](http://www.kentishstour.org.uk) and click on 'get involved'

**Wednesdays** (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at the KSCP offices or 9.30 at the back of the Stour Centre.

**Thursdays** (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at KSCP offices or 9.45 outside the old Habitat entrance, Rheims Way, Canterbury.

## KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside

All available from quality bookshops and KSCP. For information on other publications and free downloads visit [kentishstour.org.uk](http://kentishstour.org.uk)



**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.



**Big Blean Walk** (Free) A guide to this walking route with map.



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

## Countryside events in the Stour Valley

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

KSCP: [kentishstour.org.uk](http://kentishstour.org.uk)

The Blean Initiative: [theblean.co.uk](http://theblean.co.uk)

Friends of King's Wood: [friendsofkingwood.org](http://friendsofkingwood.org)

Wildwood (Herne): [wildwoodtrust.org](http://wildwoodtrust.org)

Spokes (cycling): [spokeeastkent.org.uk](http://spokeeastkent.org.uk)