

Green attractions in Canterbury district & East Kent

Coast - blue flag beaches 2009

Tankerton

Green Flags

Double success in Green Flag scheme - 17 August 2009

Canterbury City Council is celebrating after two public open spaces in the district were awarded a Green Flag by the Civic Trust.

Reculver Country Park, for the seventh time, and **Duncan Down in Whitstable**, for the fourth time, have both scooped the prestigious award.

Both successes are down to the Countryside section of the city council's Regeneration and Economic Development department working with other organisations to manage public open space – in Reculver's case, the Kent Wildlife Trust and at Duncan Down, the Friends of Duncan Down.

The Green Flag award scheme is the national standard for parks and green spaces. It recognises the value of green spaces in communities and rewards excellent standards of park management.

In deciding to award a Green Flag, judges assess how welcoming a park is, how healthy, safe and secure it is, its cleanliness and maintenance, sustainability, conservation and heritage, community involvement, marketing and management

Reculver Country Park

Reculver Country Park is a unique place, combining undeveloped coast, historic buildings and wildlife interest.

The brand new Reculver Centre for renewable energy and interpretation opened on 12 July 2009.

Reculver Country Park is internationally important for wildlife as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) because it is used each winter by thousands of migratory birds. Without this site to rest in, these species would decline.

The Reculver Towers are a landmark and Scheduled Ancient Monument that can be seen across the coastline from Herne Bay to Birchington in Kent. It is estimated that over 100,000 people visit the park every year, and Kent Wildlife Trust runs organised school trips for up to 3,500 students each year.

The park is managed in partnership by the city council, English Heritage and Kent Wildlife Trust. The council is proud to have gained a Green Flag Award since 2002, which recognises high standards in public open spaces.

The draft Reculver Master Plan has been developed to provide a coordinated basis for implementing policy R13 of the Local Plan, which encourages enhancement of the attraction of Reculver subject to design, visual, and environmental impacts and suitable access arrangements. The overarching objective of the masterplan is 'to develop Reculver as a high quality strategic regional hub, for green tourism and education in East Kent.'

Reculver centre opening hours

| Dates | Days of the week | Opening hours |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 20 July to 31 August | Thurs - Mon | 11 til 5 |
| 2 September -1 November | Fri - Sun | 11 til 4 |
| 7 November to Easter | Sat & Sun only | 11 til 3 |
| 27 March to 11 April | Thurs - Mon | 11 til 4 |

12 April til 18 July

Fri - Mon

11 til 5

Location: Reculver Lane, Reculver, Herne Bay CT6 6SS. Telephone: 01227 740 676

Directions: Follow signs from the Thanet Way (A299). Public transport details can be found on the stagecoach website.

Duncan Down Village Green

Duncan Down is the largest green space in Whitstable. Originally earmarked for housing in the 1930s, the land is now protected as a **Village Green**, providing opportunities for local people to relax, enjoy the wildlife and appreciate the magnificent view across the coastline of Whitstable bay.

The woodland, scrubland, grassland and stream provide a mosaic of habitats from which both people and wildlife benefit. Kent Biodiversity Partnership recognises the site as a Local Wildlife Site where we are focusing on conserving nature.

The Down is managed by the Friends of Duncan Down with support from Canterbury City Council. Together, we have helped to improve the social and environmental aspects of the local community by creating and maintaining a clean, green and active community space. We are proud to have won a Green Flag award at Duncan Down since 2006.

In 2008, with support from the council, The Friends of Duncan Down were awarded £9,300 by the Lottery Breathing Places programme, which has been used to turn some encroaching areas of scrub to grassland, create a footpath through Gorrell Wood, create an **information brochure** about management for wildlife on the down, and provide training for volunteers.

Location: East of Borstal Hill, Whitstable

Directions: The Friends of Duncan Down and the council would encourage that the Down is accessed on foot. There is a gate for people with wheelchairs at Hunters Chase, off Saddleton Road.

Public transport details can be found on the stagecoach website.

Explore Woodlands and Countryside via Public Rights of Way – Managed by KCC

The Blean

The Blean is one of the largest and most distinctive areas of ancient woodland in England, covering some 3000 hectares - over 11 square miles. It is recognised through conservation designations as being nationally and even internationally important for wildlife.

The Blean has remained wooded for over a thousand years. Mostly owned by the church and its institutions until the twentieth century, it has a rich and unusually well documented history as a working woodland with coppice materials supplying many important local industries.

In recent years several conservation organisations have come to own the majority of the woodlands and now manage them for both wildlife and visitors.

Various self guided circular walks are available. For more information on the Blean visit www.theblean.co.uk

The Blean complex forms a key part of the Living Landscape for Blean; it forms the largest concentrated tract of semi natural woodland in England.

Thornden Meadow, Thornden Wood Road, Herne Bay, CT6 7N

O.S Map 179 TR 150645

Ten hectares of agriculturally damaged neutral grassland 1½ miles (2.4 km) south of Herne Bay on the northern edge of Thornden Wood.

Most of the neutral grassland plants and animals have been wiped out by the previous agricultural practices and it is going to take many decades to rectify the damage. Access is via a public footpath across the site.

South Blean near Chartham Hatch, CT3 4NA

Location: OS Map 179 TR 095568

286 hectares of pine plantation, alder woods with springs, derelict acid bog, streams and ponds crossing Hunstead, Joan Beech and Denstead woods.

The site is situated near Chartham Hatch, 3 miles (4.8 km) west of Canterbury. Access is currently very difficult with no car parking and is only permitted along public footpaths. The reserve is undergoing major habitat restoration works involving the removal of over 11ha of pine plantation and invasive trees and scrub from the bog and adjacent heath. The aim is to restore a more diverse mixture of native woodland, including beech, oak and birch, with open areas of heathland, acid grassland glades and wet habitats including bog.

Wildlife update: The wooded heath and acid bog area at Hunstead Wood continues to be grazed with Trust goats and Highland cattle. Cutting and burning, followed by chemical treatment, is controlling invasive rhododendron. Staff and volunteers planted boundary wildlife belt hedges and a nursery of 10,000 trees and shrubs in the Hunstead Wood access purchase during January and February.

West Blean

O.S Map 179 TR 144633 : Nr Herne Bay. Post code: (east end) Herne Common Road - CT6 7LQ, (west end) Thornden Wood Road - CT6 7NZ

West Blean (including Thornden Wood) forms an important part of a wider conservation jigsaw, linking the Blean Woods National Nature Reserve in the west with East Blean Wood in the east, and thereby establishing a continuous nature conservation complex, owned and managed by a partnership of local and national bodies.

40% of the reserve is densely planted conifer plantation and 40% is sweet chestnut coppice plantation. The remaining 20% is mixed native deciduous woodland. Nightjars and nightingales are present. Common cow-wheat, the food plant of the caterpillar of the heath fritillary is already present in some parts of the wood.

Directions: Sandwiched between Blean Woods and East Blean Wood some 5 km north of Canterbury City centre.

By road: There are woodland car parks on Thornden Wood Road which runs between Greenhill (Herne Bay) towards Canterbury. From the south, leave Canterbury through Tyler Hill and continue for a few miles until you see a turning on the right marked Greenhill, which is Thornden Wood Road.

Public Transport: Buses 4 and 6 from Canterbury and Herne Bay.

East Blean Woods National Nature Reserve – Hicks Forstall Road, Herne

O.S Map 179 TR 194642 : Nr Herne Bay. Post code: (east end) Hicks Forstall Road - CT3 4JS, (west end) Hicks Forstall Road - CT3 4NA

Opening times: Open all the time Managed by: Kent Wildlife Trust Telephone: 01622 662012

East Blean, (including Childs Forstal) covers over 122 hectares of ancient semi-natural woodland situated on poorly drained London clay, with a small area of gravelly soil in the south. Carpets of bluebells and patches of heather are found in the acidic areas; while orchids and other species are located in more alkaline areas.

Butterflies and nesting birds, including warblers and woodpeckers, are just some examples of the diverse wildlife found at the reserve.

The underlying clay results in much surface water and mud in inclement weather. The soil is mostly fairly acid, as shown by the carpets of bluebells and patches of heather, but more alkaline elsewhere, with characteristic species such as spurge laurel, sanicle and common spotted-orchid. The wood has been heavily managed in the past, and was a prime source for sweet chestnut. When conditions are open, after the coppice is cut, much of the ground is colonised by common cow-wheat, which is the food plant of the caterpillar of the nationally rare heath fritillary butterfly.

Paths are largely suitable for electric scooters. The nearest train station is Sturry (3 miles).

Directions: By Road: From the A291, take Hicks Forstal Road near Wealden Woods to Hoath. The reserve car park is situated at the east end of woods.

Public Transport: Bus 4 & 6 Canterbury and Herne Bay along the A291 (½ mi/0.8 km).

Bigbury Wood

OS Map 179 TR 095568 : Nr Canterbury

Within Howfield Wood there is Bigbury Fort – a pre-Roman hill fort and scheduled ancient monument. Some historians think that Bigbury was the site of a battle recorded by Julius Caesar.

Blean Woods National Nature Reserve – Rough Common

Opening times: Open all the time (car park hours 8am to 9pm). Telephone: 01227 455972

Managed by: RSPB, KCC, Woodland Trust, Natural England, Canterbury City Council and Swale Borough Council

One of the largest areas of deciduous woodland in south-east England, Blean Woods has a wealth of wildlife for you to discover. Around 35 pairs of the fabled nightingale sing, beautifully, each spring, from dense coppice that also holds willow warbler, blackcap and garden warbler.

The 180-year-old oakwood supports three species of woodpecker as well as nuthatch, tree creeper, tawny owl, woodcock and many common species. The heathland is home to nightjar, tree pipit and whitethroat.

In summer the wide rides and sunny glades are alive with butterflies and other insects. And in June, look out for the very rare heath fritillary butterfly - whose caterpillars feed on cow-wheat.

- Paths are largely suitable for electric scooters
- The nearest train stations are Canterbury East or Canterbury West (2 miles).

Visit the RSPB website for more information on Blean Woods National Nature Reserve.

Clowes Wood, nr Tyler Hill, Canterbury, Kent – owned by Forestry Commission. OS Grid Reference: TR136630 Total area 236 hectares.

The majority of the wood is conifer with mixed broadleaf and open ground. Clowes Wood has a range of habitats that support a variety of wildlife including Nightjar, Butterfly, Dragonfly and Newts.

The Crab and Winkle railway line used to run through Clowes Wood, it was the first regular steam passenger railway in the world. It opened on the 3rd of May 1830 and most of the original route is now a cycle and footpath route, the Crab & Winkle Way.

How to get there: The nearest train station is Canterbury East. A taxi or bus will then be required. From Canterbury, travel through Tyler Hill village to reach Clowes Wood.

Victory Wood Near: Yorkletts, Kent - owned by Woodland Trust. Size: 140.26 ha (346.59 acres)

Grid ref: TR095615. OS map sheets: OS Landranger 179, Explorer 149, Explorer 150

Victory Wood, formerly Lamberhurst Farm, was bought by the Woodland Trust in November 2004, and consisted at the time of purchase of 133.04ha of grade 3 arable land and 7.59ha of existing woodland. There had been a proposal by the previous owners to make the site into a Landfill Site, but planning permission was not granted and thus the land came on to the market and was bought by the Woodland Trust. The spectacular site for the flagship Victory Wood near Canterbury has wonderful views overlooking the sea and the Isle of Sheppey near the mouth of the Medway where Victory and six other ships were built.

In fact, from the site you would have been able to see these ships sail out on their maiden voyages. After the battle, Nelson's body was also landed nearby before being carried to Greenwich. It is tremendously exciting both for its historical connections to the Trafalgar story and the sea and for the contribution it will make to the Kentish landscape and natural history.

Victory Wood sits in the North Kent Plain Natural Area just to the north of the North Downs AONB and south of the Thames Estuary, and there are proposals by Canterbury City Council to include this land into the Blean Woods Special Landscape Area. Victory Wood is situated between 2 separate areas of Ancient Woodland, Blean Wood on the western side, and Ellenden Wood to the east and all are part of the Blean Woods Complex or The Blean. The Blean contains woodlands covering over 3,000 hectares, and are the largest continuous wooded area in Kent, forming a mosaic of woodland and farmland in an arc along the north side of Canterbury.

To the north of Victory Wood lies Graveney Marshes and Sea Salter Level which are dedicated as SSSI and RAMSAR sites due to their importance for wildfowl and as a salt marsh habitat.

Victory Wood is so named because it is the Flagship site for the Trafalgar Woods Project of 2005 to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) organised by the Woodland Trust and the Society for Nautical Research. Victory Wood was formally launched or opened on 21 October 2005 when the site hosted a commemorative Trafalgar Day Planting Event with Kent's Sea Cadets.

The Woodland Trust purchased Lamberhurst Farm as it was in an ideal location to link Ellenden Wood to Blean Wood by converting part of the land to woodland. This plan was very apt as the southern part of Lamberhurst Farm between the 2 woods had been wooded up until the early to mid 20th Century, when the ancient woodland was cut down in a piecemeal way and converted to agriculture.

A recent archaeological report carried out for the Woodland Trust examined archive documents to help us understand the history of this site and whether what we proposed in terms of tree planting and other management activities would harm any archaeological remains. From this report the following information was obtained:

- The area we call Victory Wood was known in recent years as Lamberhurst Farm, but this name can be traced back to the 12th century when it was called Lambertyslonde, or Lambert's Land, when this land along with Ellenden Wood and Blean Wood formed part of the estates of Faversham Abbey, founded by King Stephen in 1147.

- There were no known Roman settlements or buildings on the site, although there were Roman tile making facilities in the area. Much of Lambertyslonde was probably wooded at the time of the Roman occupation.

- In medieval times the northern part of Lambertyslonde was gradually cleared for agricultural use to a line approximately running from sub-compartment 6b north eastwards to Ellenden Wood. This line formed the edge of the ancient woodland from Medieval times through to the late 1940's. A small area of woodland was left at the northern end running as a strip parallel with Dargate Road which was still wooded in 1797, but was cleared during the 19th century. This may have coincided with a parish boundary at the time. There are records showing that the cleared area or the Lambertyslonde Assarts were split into 10 fields all with their own names.

- The remaining ancient woodland south of the assarted fields over what is called Clay Hill, was all cleared in a piecemeal way between the late 1940's and the mid 1970's, and formed grazing land for a dairy herd at Lamberhust Farm, and more recently converted into arable land.

- Linking in with the woodland clearance in the 20th century, approximately 10 - 12 acres of Clay Hill was stripped of sub-soil clay to repair the sea defences at Reculver after a storm in 1954.

- There are two old track ways which crossed what is now Victory Wood, which are shown on the 1797 Ordnance Survey maps. One passed through what is now sub-compartment 6a in an east-west direction continuing westwards towards Ellenden Wood, and linked with a second route which came in at Denstroude Corner, in the southeast corner, and ran northwards towards Highstreet. This second route may have provided an important route linking Seasalter (where salt was produced) with Canterbury, not only to transport salt but also faggots of underwood down to the salt works and also further in land to Canterbury. Both these tracks passed of out use by the 1908 Ordnance Survey maps, however both form part of our public access routes across Victory Wood.

The terrain at Victory Wood is undulating with the ground rising up to a long ridge at the southern end. This gives on a clear day, spectacular views north towards the Isle of Sheppey and the Thames Estuary and south over the Blean Woods Complex. Our existing area of ancient woodland can be found at the south west corner adjacent to the public highway. At the base of the ridge a deep ditch, called the Hawkins Hill Ditch, runs northeast-south west draining the land towards Ellenden Wood. At the edge of Ellenden Wood is a small pond situated on the ditch line.

There are three pedestrian access points: from our main car park, at the southern end of Ellenden Wood off the public highway at Denstroude Corner and through the existing area of ancient woodland in sub-compartment 6a at the southwest corner of our land off the public highway.

The Woodland Trust has identified 4 Key Features for this site:

- Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
- Secondary Woodland
- Open Ground Habitat
- Informal Public Access

These Key Features are permanent and will not be changed and "drive" all the work which we will carry out on site.

The site is 141 hectares (350 acres) of arable fields that sit between some spectacular ancient woods called the Blean. This is a really special area of ancient woodland second only in national importance to the New Forest.

These fields were once covered in trees and were only cleared for agriculture after the Second World War. When they are replanted, they will once again join up areas of precious ancient woodland.

We are going to plant more than 100,000 trees on this 335 acre site over the next few years to create 'Victory Wood'!

The Trust has launched a fundraising appeal to raise £2.25 million to make this happen. We are very grateful to everyone who is contributing towards this appeal and particularly John Marston, whose individual gift made the purchase of the site possible.

A ceremonial planting with invited guests and sea cadets took place on the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

A week long schools planting programmes took place in November 2005 and will be repeated for some years for local schools to take part in.

Community planting days took place on 19th and 20th November 2005. Other community planting days will take place in the future.

Larkey Valley Wood, Cockerling Road, near Chartham. Grid ref: TR 125 553

This beautiful ancient 45-hectare woodland was given to the city council in 1932 by the then Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Alderman Frank Hooker in order that it should be reserved to the Public forever. The wood is now a Nationally important SSSI and a honorary warden helps to look after it. In 2007 this woodland became accredited with FSC (Forest Stewardship Council certification) status showing that the woodland is managed to sustainable and best practice standards.

From October to March each year, anyone can volunteer to take part in the coppicing activity that takes place through much of the woodland. This is a traditional system by which trees are cut close to the ground so that new shoots can grow from the base. This allows increased light into parts of the woodland so that a wide range of plants, insects, birds and mammals can thrive.

The wood has spectacular displays of wildflowers from March to May, including many species of orchid. Regular monitoring of the wood has shown that this is one of the best in the country for dormice.

In 2008, the Kentish Stour Countryside Project installed new waymarkers at the woodland, providing three new signed walkways for visitors. New information boards have also been installed in the car park and at the pedestrian entrance off Cockerling Road.

Further information on Larkey Valley Wood can be found on the [Thannington Without Parish Council](#) website

Location: Larkey Valley Wood is located less than 4 km from the centre of Canterbury on the Cockerling Road.

Directions: From the A28 Ashford Road/Thanington Road join Stranger's Lane opposite St Nicholas' Church. At the end of Stranger's Lane turn right along the Cockerling Road for 0.7mile (1.14km) until you reach the woodland car park situated to the left of the road.

Curtis Wood

Curtis Wood has been owned by Canterbury City Council since 1993. When the land was transferred to us it was protected as recreation and woodland space under the Open Spaces Act 1906.

Curtis Wood is an area of mainly oak, ash and hawthorn scrub and woodland, valued for its Early Purple and Butterfly Orchids. There is an area of semi-improved neutral grassland to the northwest of the wood, which is cut annually for hay. The woodland is within a conservation area and protected by a tree preservation order

(TPO). In 2007 this woodland became accredited with FSC certification, reflecting the council's sustainable management objectives

Curtis Wood is situated to the south west of Curtis Wood Park and there are footpaths to link the two areas together. Goldspots Pond lies north east of Curtis Wood Park. The Friends of Broomfield and Herne Ponds have coordinated task days, fundraising and wildlife surveys for this area.

Local residents and children use the area for recreation and nature watching.

Location: On the Canterbury Road, Herne between the Curtis Wood Road and Curtis Wood Park Road.

Directions: Follow the A291 Canterbury Road to the woodland which is located between Curtis Wood Road and Curtis Wood Park Road, on the outskirts of Herne village.

Bossenden Wood and Moated Site

The Radfall

The 'Radfall' is one of the former droveways thought to date back to at least the 5th century, it consists of two earth banks (called woodbanks) with ditches beside them 15 to 20 metres apart. These cross the Blean, varying in width and the height of the banks.

There are several former drove-ways known as Radfalls crossing The Blean. They are bounded by woodbanks on either side and the wood reeves were required to keep the middle, at least a rod's width, clear for the passage of animals. The reeve was allowed to keep this wood for his own use as a perquisite, a perk of the job.

As you walk along this Radfall you will notice that the woodbank to the south (your right) is much larger than that on the north. It marks the boundary of Church Wood, formerly owned by Christchurch Cathedral Priory. Great Den Lees (to the north) was owned by Eastbridge Hospital and it is surmised that the size of the woodbank often reflected the wealth of the landowner.

Some 300m along The Radfall Road, where a track has been cut through the two banks, you will find a grand old oak pollard. Pollards are cut above the head height of browsing animals and were once numerous, serving as signposts for the woodsmen. This one marks the boundary between three woods, Church Wood, Great Den Lees and Grimshill Wood.

Parks/public open spaces

Whitehall Meadows and Bingley Island

This area dates back to the Domesday period. Today, it is one of few areas of riverside grassland that has not been treated with weedkillers or fertilisers, which means that a wide variety of species can thrive.

The meadows are characterised by damp-loving grassland plant species, and bats, snails, common reptiles, dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies are just some of the wildlife that has been seen in the meadows.

The wet riverside meadows grow on peat on shingle, and recently have been cut annually as part of a maintenance regime. In the long-term, we hope to graze the meadows to improve the range of the grassland species and provide a more interesting and active landscape. We are working closely with the neighbouring

landowners to graze the area effectively and hope to see the reappearance of species such as marsh orchid and ragged robin.

In Victorian times, Canterbury-born Thomas Sidney Cooper painted traditional southern English landscapes of cattle and sheep grazing on the north bank of the River Stour immediately upstream of Westgate Gardens, Canterbury. The paintings can be seen at the Beaney Museum, which is located above the Library in the Canterbury city centre.

Location: Off Whitehall Road, Canterbury

Directions: Whitehall Meadows can be found west of Toddlers Cove play area, at the end of Westgate Gardens in Canterbury. Bingley Island is south of the Toddlers Cove play area and is accessed through Tannery Field. To reach the car park, turn off St Dunstons Street into Linden Grove. Join Whitehall Road forking right to Whitehall Bridge Road. Parking can be found at the end of Whitehall Close. Alternatively, walk through Tannery Field from the Rheims Way.

Dane John Gardens, Canterbury's lovely city park.

A historic park within Canterbury city's walls which dates back to 1551, and includes a mound which historical records prove was there in the first century AD. In 1790, local dignitary Alderman James Simmons laid out the park into formal gardens. In 1999, Canterbury City Council completed a million pound renovation of the park supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and local sponsorship.

The City Walls and an avenue of lime trees provide a sense of enclosure and escape from the busy road and bustling shopping centre just a few yards away. There are excellent views over the city and towards the countryside from the top of the mound.

There's a safe play area for children, a newly built bandstand as a venue for traditional concerts throughout the summer and a fountain which provides a focus for the shaded walk along the avenue of lime trees.

Westgate gardens

The Westgate Gardens can be found close to the city centre, just next to the West Gate Tower. The eleven acres of public gardens provide an ideal setting for a gentle stroll along the banks of the River Stour, while the less energetic can sit back, unwind and absorb the tranquil beauty of the garden and its wildlife. The meandering river provides the perfect environment for swans, ducks and moorhens to settle and raise their young. In the summer, the garden provides an ideal setting for open air events, exhibitions or as a picnic area.

In 1886, Stephen Williamson, a prominent Canterbury businessman and owner of the tannery, bought Tower House. Two ornate Victorian wings were added 1870 but taken down to provide a suitable setting for the riverside walk and pleasure gardens. He and his family lived there happily from 1886 until 1935 and cultivated the gardens into what you see today.

In 1936, his grandson Stephen Williamson and his wife, Catherine Ellise Williamson, gave the house and gardens to the city corporation. During this time, Catherine was a city councillor and was responsible for the redevelopment of the house and gardens in conjunction with the city architect. Catherine Williamson subsequently became Canterbury's first woman mayor and served for two years from 1938 to 1940. The deed which preserves the site as a public space and garden for the benefit of Canterbury's residents is still upheld by the present day council.

What to see:

- **Tower House** is today used as the administrative office for the Lord Mayor of Canterbury and is not open to the general public. It is built round one of the bastions situated around the city walls and is built out of fourteenth century reconstructed flint on Roman foundations.

- The 200 year old and 25 foot wide, **Oriental Plane** (Platanus Orientals), is rumoured to contain a circular iron seat which used to stand around it. **Other plants** worth looking out for are the Copper Beeches amid the Magnolia Stellata.
- The **Norman archway** and other medieval ruins probably taken by the Victorians from St Augustine's Abbey and used as grand garden ornaments can still be seen today.
- The **war memorials** of the Burma Star Association and the Italy Star Association.
- The site of the foundations of the **London Gate** of the Roman City of Canterbury. (Durovernum Cantiacorum) Beside the River Stour and the Westgate Tower in Canterbury these formal gardens have spectacular displays of flowers throughout the year. This site has been a public space since the Middle Ages, although late Iron Age and early Roman pottery has been found on the site.

Whitstable Castle

Situated on a hill overlooking Whitstable harbour, the castle grounds have attractive displays of flowers and shrubs. Whitstable Bowls Club uses the greens at the Castle. It's also the venue for the Whitstable May Day Celebrations held on the Bank Holiday Monday.

Memorial Park, Herne Bay

This park was laid out in the 1920s as a memorial to the First World War. An obelisk displays a formal memorial at the end of an avenue of horse chestnut trees. There is a small lake, a children's play area, tennis and basketball courts and cricket and football pitches.

Canterbury City Council is currently planning and preparing a major makeover for the Park.

Herne Bay seafront

The present town was founded in the early nineteenth hundreds by London speculators who noting the unspoilt charm of the Bay planned a new resort to be named St Augustine's. However, the name did not catch on and it continued to be known as Herne Bay after the nearby village. It was during this period that a wealthy London lady gave the town its distinctive 80ft Clock Tower.

The first pier was erected in 1832 and by 1834 steamboats were using it to land over 40,000 visitors each year to the resort. What had once been the haunt of smugglers, had grown into a fashionable Victorian resort with all the attendant features of bathing machines and assembly rooms.

Redesigned in 1990 as part of strengthening of sea defences, these gardens feature exciting modern sculptures among floral displays and a children's play area.

Canterbury Riverside walk

A network of paths and small gardens along the River Stour in Canterbury provide an attractive walk into and through the City. Features along the walk include the sculptures by the Causeway made from trees blown down in the great storm of 1998, a wildflower meadow at Greyfriars garden, and a series of historic water mills.

Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Bottom Local Nature Reserve

Wraik Hill is an area of small fields, scrub and woodland to the south west of Whitstable. Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Bottom are deemed locally important as a Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site and in the summer many warblers and nightingales nest in the scrub.

The council manages the land in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust and under the Higher Level Scheme objectives set by Natural England, the government body for nature. The land is grazed using ponies and Highland cattle. This helps to keep the grass short and allows a wide range of grassland species to grow. In addition to the scrub removal done by Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers, large machinery is periodically brought in to help combat increasing levels of scrub in some parts of the nature reserve. In places the site is very steep, but the steepest point holds excellent views out over the Seasalter Levels out towards the Isle of Sheppey: well worth the climb!

In 2008 the Kentish Stour Countryside Project achieved Viridor grant funding towards fencing some parts of the site for grazing by goats. The council also acquired a new area of land on Pilgrims Lane, linking Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Bottom together and providing a connected area for the site grazing regime.

[The oaks: Site management Statement \(56kb\)](#) has details about the small Oak woodland on this site. In 2007 this woodland became accredited with FSC certification status reflecting the council's sustainable management objectives.

Location: Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Hill, near Whitstable

Directions: The council is currently advocating sensitive access only. For more information please contact 01227 862 486. The site is located off the Thanet Way (A299) roundabout to Whitstable and Blean, signposted to Wraik Hill.

Canterbury Environmental Education Centre

Canterbury Environmental Education Centre (CEEC) has been providing fascinating and fun days out for schools for over thirty years and is now open to the public. CEEC's offers 30 acres of woodland, lakes and reedbeds in which you can follow nature trails and discover amazing wildlife.

We are open 10am to 4pm between 1 April and 31 October: every Sunday, and Monday to Friday during School Holidays Last entry 3pm. For more information please call 01227 452 447 or visit www.naturegrid.org.uk

Seasalter Levels

The Seasalter Levels are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, showing how important the area is as part of the North Kent coast freshwater grazing marsh. It is also a valuable wetland site for wintering and migratory wildfowl and wading birds, including wigeon, teal, redshank and lapwing.

The more common breeding dry-land birds include skylark, meadow pipit and yellow wagtail, and among the wetland birds are mallard, shelduck, coot, moorhen and lapwing.

The Local Nature Reserve is owned and managed by Canterbury City Council and we are working closely with Swale Borough Council and Natural England to bring other parts of the site into better ecological condition, to attract important migratory bird species and associated plants and insects.

For more information about wildlife on Seasalter Levels see our warden reports at <http://www.kentos.org.uk/>

Location: South of Faversham Road, Seasalter, on both sides of the Canterbury District and Swale Borough boundary.

Directions: There is no general public access to the Seasalter Levels Local Nature Reserve. However the Levels can be viewed when driving along the Faversham Road, and the Local Nature Reserve can be viewed from the road at Seasalter Lane. Excellent views of the Levels can be seen from Wraik Hill and Foxes Cross Bottom.

Wildwood Trust

Wildwood is a unique woodland discovery park. It occupies 40 acres of ancient woodland, with easy access and lots to do and explore.

From owls to otters, bees to beavers and wild boar to wolves, experience close encounters with native wildlife in an environment that is close to nature. The life of Wildwood constantly changes with the seasons; as our animals give birth a whole host of young animals can be spotted, so every visit is a new experience.

Travel back to Saxon times to meet the local residents and find out how humans and nature got along. Catch a live demonstration of their ancient crafts and skills from the UK's leading re-enactment society, Regia Anglorum <http://www.regia.org/>

Discover animals that you never knew once ran free right here, as well as other rare and threatened native species from the present.

Behind the scenes Wildwood takes part in conservation programmes of many native species, such as the water vole, the hazel dormouse, the harvest mouse and the European beaver. So you can help save some of the most threatened native animals by supporting Wildwood with your visit.

We offer regular special events, daily talks and feeding programmes around the park, interactive sessions tailored to your group's needs and extensive supporting education materials for schools.

Druidstone Park, Honey Hill, Blean, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 9JR Tel: 01227 765168

Map reference: TR 115616

Whether you are interested in meeting our many friendly animals, having fun in the adventure play areas, finding peace and tranquility in the enchanted woodland, or just relaxing in the idyllic surroundings of the park garden, you won't be disappointed.

Follow the trail around the Enchanted Woodland, and discover the sleeping dragon, and other magical creatures. The trail provides much fascinating information about the diversity of the trees and animals that dwell within, whilst charming you with its mystical themes. Adventure play areas, under-cover picnic areas and imaginative creations like our labyrinth walk, all set amidst the breathtaking settings of our parkland and gardens, all add to an unforgettable day out for all the family. Druidstone is the ideal place for a break from the madness of town life, where the kids can expend their energy in a safe environment. Stop off for a few hours or stay the whole day, the admission price won't burn a hole in your pocket.

Prices: Adult £5.10, Children: £3.80, Senior Citizen and Student: £4.30
Family Ticket: 2 adults plus 2 children: £15.00, Group rates: £3.00 per person

Druidstone Park is mid-way between Canterbury and Whitstable on the main A290 road.

By public transport - there is a frequent train service to both Canterbury and Whitstable. From there several bus services serve Druidstone calling right outside.

By cycle - we are close to the main 'Crab & Winkle' cycle path. Formally the historic 1830 Canterbury to Whitstable railway closed in 1953. There is free parking for coaches and cars.

Nearest station: 2 miles from Canterbury West station

Suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Unfortunately dogs are not allowed in the park. Adventure play areas. Under-cover picnic areas. Free parking.

Herne Windmill, Mill Lane, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7DR

Description: Kentish smock mill built 1789, worked by wind until 1952 and then by electricity until 1980. The Mill was bought by Kent County Council in 1985, which carried out some restoration. It is now managed by Friends of Herne Mill on behalf of the County Council. Much of the original machinery is in place, some is run for demonstration and the sails used when the wind conditions permit. Phone:

Opening Arrangements: Easter - end September: Sunday and Bank Holidays, plus Thursdays in August, 2 - 5pm.

Also open for National Mills Weekend, Saturday and Sunday, 2 - 5pm and Heritage Open Days

Directions: Follow A291 from A299 (Herne Bay Outlet) near Broomfield. Rail: Herne Bay (2 miles). Bus: routes 4 and 6 from Herne Bay and Canterbury. Six parking spaces in Mill grounds. Free on-street parking (Windmill Road). Access for Disabled: Wheelchair and guide dog access to ground floor of Mill and meeting room. Toilets for the Disabled.

Admission Charge: Adult: £1.00. Child: 25p (of school age, accompanied by an adult). Other: Members and under 5s free

Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, Stodmarsh, Near Canterbury

Opening times: Open all the time Managed by: Natural England

Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve covers 241 hectares of diverse landscape comprising reed beds, grazing marsh and lagoons.

There are several bird hides located on the reserve and these are great places to spot the abundance of bird life that enjoys the habitat.

Numerous footpaths run through Stodmarsh, including two easy access nature trails. The Stour Valley Walk and the Saxon Shore Way long distance walking routes also connect with the reserve.

- Paths are largely suitable for electric scooters.
- The nearest train station is Canterbury East or Bekesbourne (6 miles).

Local Nature reserves

Jumping Downs Local Nature Reserve

The Jumping Downs Trust

Free guided visits for small groups can be arranged to Jumping Downs. Contact Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership for more information.

Bus numbers – 16A, 116, 17 I E

Parking and access: from Barham Village, follow Valley Road out of village towards Elham. When you leave

village take the first road on the right. Follow road through South Barham Farm, Jumping Downs is 1Km on the right. Parking is limited to layby opposite gate. Alternatively park on left hand side of Valley Road before you turn right towards Jumping Downs and walk along the lane. Access is via kissing gate. Jumping Downs is on the Elham Valley Way. GR TR194485.

No Man's Orchard Local Nature Reserve

Owned by Chartham and Harbledown Parish Councils

There are now far fewer orchards in Kent than there used to be, when the county really was 'the garden of England'. What is more, the orchards remaining have changed a great deal, the large, old trees being replaced with modern dwarf varieties that make harvesting easier. No Man's is one of only a handful of traditional orchards remaining in the Stour Valley. It retains the large trees so valuable to birds, insects and lichen.

Blossom, windfall fruit and wild flowers among the grassland also attract wildlife, which visitors can look out for from the comfort of the sculptural seating. With their traditional fruit tree varieties and special place in local culture and landscapes, old orchards like this should be conserved as living examples of farming history, but are often difficult to protect. Fortunately, this orchard has been purchased by two parish councils and is being carefully managed as a place for the community to enjoy.

Bus number – 667 Nearest rail station - Chartham (1.5 miles)

Access: in Chartham Hatch village, turn down Bigbury Road, then follow the sign for the North Downs Way through the playing field, through the woods and into the orchard. GR 108573.

Tyler Hill Meadow Local Nature Reserve Declared 2002 - Grid ref: TR 137610

Tyler Hill Meadow is an area of grassland and scrub to the west of Tyler Hill. It is owned and managed by Hackington Parish Council.

Kiers Meadow Official opened on Tuesday 11 July, 2009.

The Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Harry Cragg, accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, opened Blean Fete on 11th July and then officially opened Keir's Meadow Nature Reserve in the presence of Jackie Keir, after whose family the Reserve is named.

The Lord Mayor expressed his delight at being asked to open the Reserve, which had been funded through the BBC Breathing Spaces Project and praised the Parish Council for its initiative in creating this asset for the community.

Denge & Pennypot Woods – owned by Woodland Trust

Size: 49.7 ha (122.81 acres). Near: Garlinge Green, Chartham, Kent. Grid ref: TR104523

OS map sheets: OS Landranger 179, Explorer 150

Dating back to at least 1600, Denge Wood is part of a semi-natural ancient wood complex on the North Downs, a few miles southwest of Canterbury. Dominated by sweet chestnut coppice, it stands alongside an area of former chalk grassland, known as The Warren and this combination provides an interesting wildlife habitat, one of just two colonies in the area housing among other species, the rare Duke of Burgundy fritillary butterfly.

The Woodland Trust, are keen to build on the wood's biodiversity and the creation of a wide ride has expanded the invertebrate habitat. A small deer population can also be seen occasionally in the wood.

Because the land is clay over a chalk bedrock, the wood can get wet and muddy in winter, but venturing within unveils two gently sloping dry valleys running northeast to southwest through the wood.

Denge is crossed by two footpaths and accessed via a small, informal car park from Pennypot Lane.

Earley Wood, Near Petham, Canterbury, Kent – owned by Woodland Trust

Size: 21.76 ha (53.77 acres). Grid ref: TR121503. OS map sheets: OS Landranger 179, Explorer 138

Mystery surrounds the origins of Earley Wood, but the heart of the site is thought to be ancient woodland. Five miles south-west of Canterbury, the wood forms part of the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and offers views over countryside to the south. It is a rich mix of coppiced broadleaved woodland with oak, ash, beech, chestnut and occasional sycamore. A splendid beech and hornbeam avenue that used to stand in the heart of the wood was damaged in the 1987 storm.

Around 110 different woodland plant species, including many small colonies of herb paris, grow in Earley, including a wonderful collection of orchids and swathes of bluebells that clothe the woodland floor in spring.

Badgers and birds thrive on the site with dark bush crickets and speckled bush crickets being two of the many rare invertebrates recorded here. Watch out, too, for adders in the area formerly called Deadley's Wood.

Kent Downs

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) forms the eastern end of a great arc of nationally important landscape stretching from the East Hampshire and Surrey Hills AONBs.

The Kent Downs AONB continues from the Surrey border in a widening ribbon of rolling countryside to meet the sea at the cliffs of Dover. Inland, the Downs rise to over 240m, cresting in a prominent escarpment above the Weald to the south. It is traversed by the three prominent river valleys of the Darent, Medway and Stour.

The AONB roughly follows the southeast's outcrop of chalk and greensand, the two ridges running parallel with each other to the coast. The chalk ridge, with its characteristic dip slope and dry valleys, has great wildlife importance in its unimproved chalk grassland, scrub communities and broadleaved woodlands. The well-wooded greensand ridge is particularly prominent in the Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling districts and supports heathlands and acidic woodlands.

Other distinctive landscape elements include orchards, hop gardens, horticulture & arable farmland, river valleys, ancient lanes and the rich wooded foreground of the upland ridges, together with many fine historic parklands including Knole and Winston Churchill's Chartwell. The AONB's ancient settlements include picturesque half-timbered Charing and Chilham on the old Pilgrims Way to Canterbury. Since prehistoric times this has been used as the invasion gateway to England and the North Downs are noted for their archaeological remains and military legacy.

The AONB is bordered by large and expanding urban areas including Ashford, Maidstone and the Medway towns, as well as the ports of Dover and Folkestone. It has a large commuter population and the North Downs are a heavily used local recreational resource. The area also receives visitor traffic from London and the Kent resorts, and the AONB forms an integral part of tourist promotion of the 'Garden of England'. The North Downs Way National Trail runs along the length of the escarpment and loops up to Canterbury.

Contact Information: Nick Johannsen,
AONB Director, Kent Downs AONB Unit, West Barn, Penstock Hall Farm, Canterbury Road, East Brabourne,
Ashford, Kent TN25 5LL Tel: (01303) 815170 Email:mail@kentdowns.org.uk

National Nature Trails

Stour Valley Walks

Follow the route of the River Stour from its source at Lenham, in the heart of the Garden of England, to the historic city of Canterbury and down to the Straits of Dover near Pegwell Bay.

The Stour Valley Walk is a 58 mile (93km) route through the Low Weald and North Downs, giving you access to some of the most attractive parts of East Kent. Rolling grassland, woods, marshes, peat bog, orchards and picturesque villages make this a memorable journey which can be completed over a long weekend or in shorter sections. Circular routes can also be created taking advantage of the many public rights of way.

The symbol of the Stour Valley Walk is the heron - just one of the many birds to be seen along the banks of the river which teem with wildlife.

Historic mills and buildings - the route falls into three clear sections as the river matures. Its source lies in springs in Lenham and the waters meander through fertile farms and parks towards Ashford. Look out for evidence of the numerous mills which have taken advantage of the river's water power to support local industries.

Take time to explore historic buildings in the centre of Ashford - one of the fastest growing towns in Kent with rail links to Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

Quaint villages - Wild flowers grow in profusion alongside the river as the waters, now boosted by the East Stour, head towards Canterbury through the delightful villages of Wye, Godmersham, Chilham and Chartham. These are ideal spots for a short break and an opportunity to sample local produce and ales in one of the many historic inns.

The city heights of Canterbury - Mills, manor houses and farms gradually fade away as the first views of Canterbury Cathedral ([link opens in a new window](#)) appear on the horizon. The river divides to surround the City. The northerly arm passes through Kingsmead Meadows while the southern arm runs past the Norman castle, through ancient friaries and monasteries and the former homes of Flemish weavers.

The two arms of the river converge leaving the city behind and continue on the final stage of their journey to the sea, passing through the village of Sturry and Fordwich - the medieval port of Canterbury.

Towards the coast - The river mingles with the waters of former gravel pits to run through the reedbeds of Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve ([link opens in a new window](#)) and the open farmland on the reclaimed marshes surrounding Grove Ferry. Grove Ferry Picnic Site is the perfect place to stop for a rest.

Here the Stour is tidal and has collected the waters of the River Wantsum and the Little Stour as it heads near the great Roman ruins of Richborough Castle ([link opens in a new window](#)), conserved by English Heritage, and on to the delightful centre of Sandwich.

Enjoy a trip along the river or just spend a few minutes admiring the many boats that moor here along the popular quay before striding out across along the coastal fringe to where the river joins the Straits of Dover at Shellness Point at the southern end of Pegwell Bay.

Saxon Shore Way

Imagine stepping back in time and discovering the coastline of the Garden of England as it stood more than 1,600 years ago. The Saxon Shore Way long distance walking route is named after the line of historic fortifications that defended the Kent coast at the end of the Roman era.

This 160 miles (257km) route from the bustling port of Gravesend, in North Kent, to the popular seaside town of Hastings, in East Sussex, offers some of the finest coastal walking in England.

The route features a range of landscapes and scenery, as well as a wealth of cultural and historic interest.

There is something for everyone along the Saxon Shore Way.

The route offers walkers an excellent opportunity to explore Kent's history.

Follow the Saxon Shore Way along Kent's ancient coastline, which in many places is now miles inland.

Walkers along the route will find Iron Age hill forts; magnificent churches and an impressive cathedral; Martello towers; historic ports and castles dating from periods throughout history.

Enjoy the inspiring landscape and natural beauty of the coastal areas of Kent along this fabulous route. The Saxon Shore Way passes through two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest and several Nature Reserves.

The North Kent Marshes - recognised as one of the most important estuarine habitats for birds in the UK - are also found on the route. These are outstanding places to visit to admire flocks of migrating birds, wildfowl and wading birds; plants; butterflies and moths; invertebrates; and small mammals.

A new guidebook for the Saxon Shore Way is now available to buy. The book provides an overview of this popular route as well as maps and guides to eight short circular walks along the Saxon Shore Way. The book features circular walks at Rochester, Oare, Grove Ferry, Sandwich, St Margaret's Bay, Lympne, Hamstreet and Stone-in-Oxney.

Canterbury Guided Walking Tours

Tours leave from the Information Centre, opposite the Cathedral, where tickets are sold. No advance booking required.

Winter Period: 6th February - 29th March - Fri., Sat., Sun. at 11:00 a.m. No tours on other days (Except pre-booked group tours).

Spring, Summer, Autumn: 1st April - 31st October Daily at 11:00 (Bank Holidays and during school half terms 11:00 + 14:00).

July, August & September: Daily, including Bank Holidays - 11:00 + 14:00

PRICES 2009: Adults £5, Students £4.50, Children under 12 £3.50, Family ticket (2 adults + 2 children under 12) £16.

Westbere Lakes, Fordwich, near Canterbury

Canterbury Angling Club controls these lakes and access is restricted although some of the lakes can be seen from public footpaths. Understandably the lakes are under watched and no doubt good birds occur there from time to time. The site is one of the most reliable areas for Kingfisher in the valley.

This area has a diverse range of habitats and has possibly been under watched in recent years. The gravel pits are now well vegetated but in earlier years were a hot spot for rare grebes and divers. The pits are used for sailing, which probably reduces their attractiveness for waterfowl. East of the gravel pits there is an extensive area of reed beds although the quality of this habitat is deteriorating with the encroachment of scrub. Water meadows next to the river are attractive for dabbling duck and occasional flocks of geese. The area is good for dragonflies. Access is either along the river from Fordwich or from the far end of Westbere village. The water meadows can be viewed from the Stodmarsh Road at the junction with the Littleborne Road. This viewing spot is referred to as Cow Corner.

Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve

A nationally famous nature reserve that was created by mining subsidence. The reserve includes five main habitats. The main lake which provides a large area of open water attractive to waterfowl; an extensive area of reedbeds interspersed with salallows and scrub; the Alder wood with has a range of breeding woodland birds and regular wintering finch flocks; water meadows along the River Stour and grazing land around the edges of the reserve. Access is from the car park at Stodmarsh (from the track immediately east of the Red Lion pub) or from Grove Ferry. Stodmarsh has been well watched for many years and there can't be many inland sites that can lay claim to two firsts for Britain.

A large stretch of open water just to the west of Stodmarsh holds significant number of wildfowl in the winter. Dabbling ducks including Wigeon, Shoveler and Pintail can be numerous. The lake is also a regular site for Goldeneye and occasional Smew and other duck. It is one of the best sites for Hobby and held six Red-footed Falcons in May 1992. The lake can only be viewed distantly from the road that runs immediately west of Stodmarsh village.

Boat-trips

Canterbury Historic River Tours, Kings Bridge. March to October

2008 South East England Tourism Awards 'Best Tourism Experience' runner up!

The tour lasts between 30 and 40 minutes. Firstly, we take you up to a small Franciscan island at one end of the city, which is also known as The Greyfriars. The island is home to a wonderful little chapel from the 13th century which spans the river, and is the oldest example of Franciscan architecture in the country.

We then pass under the 12th century Eastbridge Hospital and the King's Bridge (1134), continuing down river past some industrial buildings from the medieval period, including The Old Weavers House, The Kings Mill, and the Cromwellian iron forge.

After some wonderful views of the cathedral, the tour then passes through the Dominican priories which were built by the Blackfriars in the 14th century, and ends up in a peaceful garden area, that was the site of the old Abbots Mill in the city.

We then return to our starting point which is home to the infamous ducking stool.

Each boat is chauffeured by one of our team, who acts your guide to the sights upon the river by giving you the enjoyable history of all the different buildings that you pass along the way.

Throughout the season, from April to September, our tours leave every 15 to 20 minutes. Unless you are a group of more than 12 people (see group bookings), there is no need to book in advance. Simply visit us at the King's Bridge, outside The Old Weavers House to find out the next available tour time.

A single ticket tour which has a drop off point at the Millers Garden is also available but must be requested prior to departure.

Tour includes: Kings Bridge - Eastbridge Hospital - Franciscan Island - Greyfriars Chapel - Old Weavers House - Kings Mill - Alchemist Tower - Cromwellian Forge - Friars Bridge - Blackfriars - Dominican Priors - The Abbots Mill - The Marlowe Theatre - The Ducking Stool

Westgate Gardens

The **West Gate**, built in about 1375, was one of eight gates through which people could enter the town. There is a small museum inside. The public gardens nearby are decorated with colourful flowerbeds. Chauffeured **punt trips** are available, starting from next to the tower. A punt is a flat wooden boat which is steered using a long wooden pole. The West Gate is close to Canterbury West train station.

Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Upstreet, CT3 4BP

Opening times: 9 am to dusk Telephone: 01303 266327 Managed by: Kent County Council

Directions: Turn off the A28 (Canterbury to Margate Road) just east of Upstreet onto Grove Road. The entrance to the site is on the left, just after the road crosses the railway line and river by the Grove Ferry Inn.

Parking: A pay and display car park operates in Grove Ferry Picnic Site throughout the year, seven days a week. Charges are Monday - Friday £1.00, weekends and Bank holidays £1.50

Enjoy unlimited parking with our Country Parks Season Ticket and for the first year you can also take advantage of our discount vouchers only available for Season Ticket holders. The Season Ticket costs £30 is available by calling 08458 247 600. Read more about the Country Parks Season Ticket.

All the income generated from the Season Tickets/car parking charges is used in the management of the Country Parks to improve the environment for the wildlife and improve facilities for visitors.

Grove Ferry is an ideal spot for picnicking in the meadows, or fishing in the River Stour. Fishing rights were granted during the reign of Henry II and are still available today. Some of the fishing swims (sections of the river where fish are found) have been adapted for those with disabilities.

It is a good base for following the Stour Valley Walk, the Saxon Shore Way or the Wantsum Walks, and is adjacent to Stodmarsh National Reserve.

This area has been an excellent birding spot for many years. Until the 1960's Grove Ferry was an area of marshes and reeds with an impressive range of breeding birds including Savi's Warbler. Subsequently the area was drained and was cultivated for turf until the mid 1990's. In 1998, English Nature acquired the site and restored it to the wetland habitat that is present today. Grove Ferry came to national prominence in 1999 when a series of major rarities were discovered at the site. Grove Ferry has continued to provide excellent bird watching since that time and is now one of the most important ornithological sites in the county.

During the summer months you can also take a pleasant boat trip on the River Stour from the Grove Ferry Inn.

- The nearest train station is Sturry (4 miles).

Bay Blast, operating out of Herne Bay and Whitstable – off shore & coastal tours March to October - 40 minutes to 3 hours.

The Discovery tour is Bayblasts most comprehensive tour taking in nearly all the sites bayblast offers: This amazing boat trip tour will show you some of Kent's most stunning coastal heritage and wildlife scenes aboard a boat that offers a unique vantage point and thrilling ride. Quite simply its one of the best boat tours you will ever experience in the UK.

Seal spotting on Kent's coastline: We offer the opportunity to get very close to these beautiful grey seals in their natural habitat. An experience you will never forget. Seal spotting in Kent does not get better than this.

Kentish Flats Wind Farm: Bayblast takes you up close to these awesome megastructures. Kentish flats wind farm is built on a scale that defies belief. Getting close to these immense structures is a truly breathtaking experience. There is no better way to see the Kentish flats wind farm.

Fishing

Lavender Farm Fishery, Hernhill, Faversham, Kent, ME13 9JH

For information or bookings Tel/Fax: (01227) 751149 Mobile: 07890 872996

Lavender Farm is a superb coarse fishing complex in the heart of "the garden of England".

The lakes are situated amongst orchards and farm land with plenty of peaceful places to fish. The picturesque natural surroundings are an ideal background to this delightful venue.

There are two lakes - with a total of 120 pegs - well stocked with a wide variety of fish to provide excellent all year round catching. There is plenty of car parking a short distance from the water and easy access for the disabled. The fishery is situated just off the A299 within easy reach of London and the Medway towns.

Longshaw Fishery, Calcott Hill, Sturry, Canterbury CT3 4ND 07783 392322† (Angling & Sports Fishing)

Britton Court Farm, Hackington Road, Tyler Hill, Canterbury, Kent CT2 01227 760574†

River Stour Fishing

Marshside Fishing Lake

Further afield

Farming World - Nash Court, Boughton, Faversham, Kent, ME13 9HY

Filled with animals and activities and set in the beautiful Kent countryside, Farming World's farm park is a great choice for a family day out, whilst our educational resources and packs add up to a fun-packed and informative school trip for all age groups and if that isn't enough to tempt you, we have a packed diary of events and activities to keep you coming back all year round.

Summer Season: 1st March - 31st October - Daily from 9.30am - 5.30pm. During the summer season all of Farming World's attractions are open to the public.

Winter Season : 1st November - 22nd December: Wed - Sat Only 10.00am - 4.00pm - Please note that during the winter season only the indoor play area and the main animal barn are open. Farming World is CLOSED in January and February.

Access: By car - End M2 Junction 7, follow A299 heading towards Margate and take the first turning left after layby (signposted Farming World) and then follow the signs to Farming World.

By bus from Faversham: Take the Stagecoach Nos 3 or 3a on Monday - Saturday and on Sundays a KCC bus will be number 335. Get off at the Brenley Corner East stop and then follow the signs to Farming World.

By bus from Canterbury: Take the stagecoach number 3, get off at "The George" bus stop in Boughton and walk in the direction of the bus. Then bear right heading towards "Nash Court" (follow signs), a large house on a hill. Go past the gates to Nash Court and take the second turning right after Nash Court - signposted Farming World, we are just up this lane on the right.

Do not at anytime listen to the bus driver who tells you to walk along the A299 a busy main road with fast moving traffic.

By train: Faversham is the nearest train station to Farming World - You would then need to proceed by Bus or Taxi.

Fowlmead Country Park, off the A258, Sholden, Nr Deal, Kent CT14 0BF. Tel. (01304) 615390

The Park is 200-acres (80 hectares) regenerated from the shale spoil tip of the former Betteshanger Colliery. The colliery was the last of the four Kent coal mines to close in 1989 and the land languished unused until 2000 when the regional development agency, SEEDA (South East England Development Agency), acquired the freehold and set to redeveloping the brown-field site into a country park.

Since its opening in May 2007, Fowlmead has continued to develop as a safe off-road site for activities and leisure pursuits such as cycling (leisure, road, and mountainbiking), running, orienteering, geocaching*, archery, walking, bushcraft and fossil-collecting. **Geocaching is an outdoor activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers (called "geocaches" or "caches") anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook. Larger containers can also contain items for trading, usually toys or trinkets of little value.*

Fowlmead has a two-mile Tarmac road cycling track which can be used by the general public and which is available for hire to clubs, organisations and individuals for cycling rides and events. There are miles of leisure paths for walking and cycling around the site and in through the established woodland, and mountain biking trails are being developed.

Fowlmead also has a back gate, Colliers' Gate, which is accessible by cyclists and walkers from Southwall Road in Deal. Colliers' Gate opens 15 minutes after the published park opening time and 15 minutes before the published park closing time. Bike hire is available at Fowlmead.

Open every day except Christmas day, Snacks & drinks machines in the visitor centre. Dogs are very welcome at Fowlmead, but we ask that all dogs be kept on their leads at all times

Monkton Nature Reserve, Monkton nr Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 4LH. Telephone: 01843 822666

This East Kent reserve is set in 16 beautiful acres of abandoned chalk quarry, which has been dramatically reclaimed by nature. It features many important habitats, fascinating geology and rare orchids. We also house the Thanet Observatory and the first artificial bat cave built in the UK. Facilities include a well equipped field centre with a large reference library, bookshop and picnic site.

Opening: The reserve is open from May to September on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday from 11.00 am to 4.00pm (last admission 3.30pm). During the winter months the opening times may vary and it is advisable to telephone before starting out on your journey.

Facilities: Seats are placed at strategic intervals throughout the reserve and a picnic area is provided. Toilets are available in the Field Centre, and there is also a large secondhand bookshop.

Nature Trails: A number of nature trail paths have been laid out around the reserve. An interpretative guide is included as part of the admission price.

Field Centre: There is much of interest to see in the exhibition areas of the Field Study Centre. Displays usually include pond-life aquaria, local archaeology, and the only comprehensive geological collection in this part of Kent.

A large amount of reference material is available for those visitors who wish to delve that little bit further, including an extremely well-stocked natural history reference library.

The centre staff are happy to spend time with visitors answering any questions they may have.

Location: Monkton Nature Reserve is situated on the Isle of Thanet just to the North of the village of Monkton. It is located in a large chalk quarry at the junction of the A299 and the A253. The entrance is 400 metres from

the roundabout junction along the A253 in the direction of Canterbury. There is a small Car Park just inside the entrance to the reserve.

Neck Wood – owned by Woodland Trust. Size: 3.56 ha (8.80 acres) Near: Alkham, Kent. Grid ref: TR262430

OS map sheets: OS Landranger 179 Explorer 138

Neck Wood, situated near Alkham, and the 2 villages of Ewell Minis and Wolverton was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1989. The site was purchased from Mr. & Mrs Smith who own Sladden Farm that adjoins the wood on its south side. The site is accessible off Wolverton Hill at 2 points at the northwest and southeast corners of the wood, although there is no public parking facility available at these points.

The wood slopes steeply along its northern and eastern edges towards Wolverton Hill and also the terrain in the wood slopes steeply to the southeast at the eastern end of the wood. The wood is highly visible in the landscape from Alkham Valley to the south of the wood. The woodland edge along Wolverton Hill is in places very steep, compounded by small shallow chalk quarries dug into the edge of the wood. This has created a potentially unstable situation with large multi-stemmed coppice trees growing up to and over hanging the edge of this steep slope. Native woody shrubs and ferns have colonised the steeper slopes leading down to the road edge and through the older quarry areas.

The site lies within the North Downs AONB and is prominent in the landscape. The wood forms part of the Alkham, Lydden and Swingfield Woods SSSI and is also listed on the English Nature's Ancient Woodland register and is covered by a Tree preservation order, No. 12 - Dover District Council.

Neck Wood has been traditionally managed as coppice woodland and contains principally ash and is classified as National Vegetation Class W8 *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Acer campestre* - *Mercurialis perennis* woodland. (See sub-compartment description for more details). Neck Wood was notified as a SSSI Woodland due to its ancient woodland status and the important assemblage of flora and fauna which exists here.

The soils are clay with flints over the chalk bedrock and range from acid - neutral towards the west of the wood to more calcareous soils on the steeper slopes in the east of the wood. A number of ancient woodland indicator plant species are present throughout the site and in particular the road side strip is valuable for bryophyte species. Species to be found on the exposed chalk on the roadside include *Phyllitis scolopendrum*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Circaea lutetiana* etc. Some uncommon plants occur throughout the SSSI complex, of which Neck wood is part, particularly on the chalk soils. These include green hellebore (*Helleborus viridis*), herb paris (*Paris quadrifolia*), fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), greater butterfly orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha* and lady orchid (the latter is restricted in Britain to Kent only).

A central management ride was created in 1997, allowing access for maintenance and silvicultural works, and also access for visitors through this woodland. The steep slopes and the lack of any timber stacking/loading area on Wolverton Hill make timber production an unrealistic proposition.

The Woodland Trust has identified 2 Key Features which guides the management of this wood: Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and Informal Public Access.

Park Wood, Nr Chilham, Kent – owned by Woodland Trust. Size: 22.71 ha (56.12 acres). Grid ref: TR042526
OS map sheets: OS Landranger 189, Explorer 137, Explorer 149

Park Wood is ancient woodland and forms the northern part of the formerly very extensive King's Wood situated to the south of the A252 and is integral in the local landscape, 1.5 miles west of Chilham village. The Woodland Trust bought 22.71ha of Park Wood in 1978; the remaining 6.24ha of Park Wood along the eastern side is in private ownership. (All references to Park Wood within this plan are to The Woodland Trust area). The wood slopes gently to the southeast with a central dry valley running NW to SE. The soils are clay with flints over chalk bedrock.

Park Wood was designated in 1981 as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as a good representative of long established woodland on chalk soils in Kent. Much of the woodland is hazel and hornbeam coppice under standards of Pedunculate oak, but sweet chestnut coppice, established in the 18th and 19th century is dominant tree type on the western side. Several dense stands of yew exist within Park Wood too.

Public access is low key at Park Wood however it has a good network of permissive paths which circulate through the Wood part of which is along a wide ride managed for conservation benefits.

The site contains some archaeological features, mainly old woodbanks and boundaries which feature ancient hornbeam and field maple pollards growing on them.

Historically this wood has been managed by coppicing. The management aim for the future is to allow natural process to take place within this semi-natural woodland.

Perry Woods, Challock, Kent. OS Grid Reference:

As an ancient woodland site, King's Wood is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. The main species of tree include Sweet Chestnut, Corsican Pine and Douglas Fir. To enjoy the best of the forest you may wish to take our Beech walk and see the unusual sculptures dotted around. The Forest car park is well positioned for picnic areas and the children's play area. Designed for younger children, a number of unusual play structures have been created to represent creatures of the forest.

Groups wishing to view the Stour Valley Arts commissioned sculptures should contact Stour Valley Arts on 01233 740040.

Directions by car: from the M2 take the A251 towards Ashford. From the M20 take the A28 towards Canterbury and the A251 towards Faversham. The car park and entrance to King's Wood is situated off the A251 1km along the road to Wye. By train: there are train stations at Wye, Chilham, Ashford, Charing, Faversham and Canterbury. There is a bus service from Ashford and Faversham.

Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park

Gunpowder was manufactured at Oare for several centuries on a site that has become valuable for wildlife. Visitors are invited to follow the marked trails that lead through the woodlands and grassy glades, past the millpond and discover the remains of industry.

There is a large car park beside the visitor centre. The Visitor Centre is open to the public on weekends from April to November from 10.30am to 4.30pm. There are displays explaining how gunpowder was made at Oare and reflecting the part the Works played in the development of Faversham. Postcards and publications about gunpowder are available in the visitors centre shop.

The visitor centre includes a small meeting room, which can be used by visiting groups or schools. The centre is resourced with basic equipment for environmental education studies. If you are the leader of a group contact Swale Borough Council for information about a guided visit.

There are toilets both within the visitor centre and in the car park. A toilet suitable for wheelchair users and those with other disabilities is at the visitor centre.

Adjacent to the visitor centre is a small picnic area with tables. Please take your rubbish home with you.

The surfaced trails around the site are colour coded. They will lead you around through the woodland past the remains of the buildings. Different trails pass close to the massive walls of the Corning House, alongside the canals (or leats), across the Marshland Boardwalk and onto the viewing deck of the millpond. Other trails lead to the firing range and through the open grassland meadow. At Oare Gunpowder Works each trail is well

signed and explores important areas of the site. Choose one that suits the time you have available and explore. Please observe the safety barriers close to the water and high walls.

At key points throughout the site there are interpretation panels helping to interpret the site. Reflecting the unique blend of wildlife and history, the boards include old photographs of buildings and comments about the wildlife present in the area.

The site is open to the public seven days a week. Please note that vehicle access to the car park will be restricted to the following times : 9 am to 5pm weekdays all year round. 10.30am to 4.30pm weekends and Public Holidays from April to November inclusive.

It is vitally important that vehicles vacate the site before 5pm as the gate will be closed and locked at this time.

Visitor Centre Opening Times: Weekends and Public Holidays from April to November 10.30am to 4.30pm.

Contact Swale Borough Council through the Customer Services Centre, telephone number 01795 417850.

Harty Ferry

Harty Ferry is a delightful spot on The Swale about 1 mile north east of Faversham, which will suit walkers, boaters and bird watchers alike.

Oare Marshes Nature Reserve

Harty Ferry is so named after the the ferry service which used to cross the Swale from the mainland to the Isle of Harty, the south east part of the Isle of Sheppey, until 1946.

Even if you're not a boat-owner or bird-watcher Harty Ferry is one of the most magical places in Kent. Unforgettable is the sight of sailing barges, with their ochre-washed sails, massed for the annual Swale Barge Race.

Equally so also are the views of The Swale, and the Isle of Harty opposite, when the only vessels to be seen are perhaps a fishing-boat and motor cruiser.

The light seems ever-changing; and in this remote spot you may have the company only of the birds for which it is such an important site.

Not that it hasn't seen its fair share of history. Harty is in the hundred of Faversham, not Milton, like the rest of Sheppey and this is a clue to its past. Originally all that separated it from mainland Kent was a narrow channel. The Swale then flowed north of it, following the course of New, Cable and Muscle Creeks, now mere drainage ditches.

Still, a ferry was still needed. On the mainland side till the 1870s this was reached by a long tidal causeway from near Harty Ferry Cottages, because the intervening saltings had yet to be reclaimed. Once they had been reclaimed, they became ripe for development, and early in the 20th century the big factory of the Cotton Powder Company at Uplees was extended eastwards across them as far as the present hard. And for the Eley fuse company just east of the hard a new factory was built. Of this survives only its artesian well, welcome source of fresh water for so many boat-owners.

Now that much of the Cotton Powder Company site is a peaceful nature reserve it is hard to visualise it as the setting for a hi-tech chemical factory, complete with its own offices, power station, railway network and process plants. The fact that it had once been industrialised prompted a marina scheme in the 1960s, but this was turned down after the Faversham Society and Kent Wildlife Trust pointed out that the factories had closed in 1918 and that the site was now of international importance for its bird life.

In the local transport network the Ferry itself was once a key link. Thomas Arden, a big Faversham businessman in the 1540s, used it often to visit Sir Thomas Cheyne at his palatial home at Shurland, Eastchurch. His wife, Alice, passionately in love with another man, hired assassins to kill him. An incompetent pair of ruffians, they failed several times in their mission - once at Harty Ferry - before finally killing Arden in his own home in Abbey Street.

Till it ceased day-to-day operation at the onset of World War II the Ferry operated on demand, rather than a scheduled service. An oyster-smack seems to have been used in the 19th century. If there was no wind, it had to be rowed - quite a demanding job, bearing in mind the strong Swale currents. Also a risky job at times: in May 1854 the ferryman, named Coleman, drowned when his boat capsized in a squall.

Operating a cosy monopoly, the ferrymen tended to be surly. Marshall, who was operating the service in 1884, took pride in taking his time and trying his passengers' patience. They were also expected to help out, when necessary. "A've got to unload that thar caart, so jest yer hang on to the boat. Keep her nose well in shore, or she'll be carried down to Whitstable on the tide." They didn't have to hang on for just a moment, either. Marshall had to holler at a mate a long way off to help him unload the cart. By the time he returned, their arms were aching with the strain of hanging on to the boat. He finally got them to their destination (the Oare side of the Swale on this occasion) and then cast off again without a word.

Every few years there is talk about reviving the Ferry, since Harty is about 45 minutes from Faversham by car, a service would be genuinely useful. Within sight are a welcoming pub and fascinating medieval church.

Walking: Harty Ferry is on the Saxon Shore Way, the long distance footpath that follows the Kent coastline for 140 miles from Gravesend to Rye. From Harty Ferry you can walk westwards, with the Swale on one side and the Oare Marshes Nature Reserve on the other, to the entrance of Conyer Creek. The footpath can be followed alongside the creek into the village of Conyer.

Eastwards along the footpath will take you to the entrance to Faversham Creek, then onto the confluence of Faversham and Oare Creeks and then onto the village of Oare. The footpath then continues into Faversham.

Oare Marshes Nature Reserve

Located on the south bank of The Swale at Harty Ferry.

The well-sheltered marshes and mudflats of Oare marshes provide a superb habitat and attract many migrating birds.

The reserve, managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust, consists of some 170 acres of grazing marsh, dissected by fresh and brackish water dykes and bounded by an earth seawall and some salt marsh.

The reserve is of international importance for migratory, overwintering and breeding wetland birds. Suitable habitat is achieved through manipulation of water levels and livestock grazing.

The reserve supports an exciting and diverse range of birds. Among breeding species found here are avocet, redshank, snipe, lapwing, water rail, bearded reedling, common tern and garganey.

Migrating species - black-tailed godwit, ruff, little stint, curlew sandpiper and whimbrel.

Overwintering - Brent goose, dunlin, curlew, wigeon, merlin, hen harrier, short-eared owl, bittern and twite

The Oare Marshes Visitor Centre was formerly a watch house and customs outpost. Displays in the centre focus on the wide variety of wildlife to be found on the marshes and the local history of the site.

There are bird hides on the reserve that are free to use, but be warned there are no toilets!

There is a nature trail for which leaflets are available.

The Visitor Centre is open at weekends and Bank Holidays from 11am-5pm or dusk.

Ellenden Wood, is about eight miles northeast of Faversham close to the A290

A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This ancient woodland site contains several uncommon woodland types.

Sessile oak-beech predominates on the acidic sandy soils in the central and eastern parts of the wood. Hornbeam with pedunculate and sessile oak occurs on the clay soils of the western valley. Other types are also present including small plantations of sweet chestnut coppice.

The wood has a diverse flora with over 250 higher plants and 300 fungi present. Large numbers of insects including three nationally rare species have been recorded.

The area also supports a diverse breeding bird community.

How to find Ellenden Wood: Take the A229 from Faversham. At the major roundabout just north of Whitstable, turn right on to the A290 towards Canterbury. The wood is about two miles farther, on the right-hand side.

Perry Wood is located about 3 miles south east of Faversham near the village of Selling.

Perry Wood is 150 acres of woodland with abundant wildlife and magnificent rhododendrons.

Many rare birds nest in the woodlands including treecreepers, nuthatches and woodpeckers.

How to find Perry Wood: Take the A251 from Faversham towards Ashford and just before Sheldwich, turn left sign posted Selling and continue through the village.

Access: There is a car park on the north east edge of the wood.

Park Gate Down Nature Reserve, Near Elham, Kent

A stretch of chalk downland, the site is owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Kent Wildlife Trust and is also listed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

On 21 May 2007 the reserve was renamed The Hector Wilks Reserve in memory of this local botanist who had been involved with the reserve from its inception.

Elham Valley Way, Kent. OS Maps: Explorer 138; 150

The Elham Valley Way is a long distance footpath from Hythe on the Kent coast to Canterbury. This 22.5 mile route will give you the opportunity of enjoying a valley walk through the Kent Downs as well as striking panoramic views from the chalk hills. The Elham Valley is the setting for the major part of this walk which will take you through some of the most enchanting countryside the garden county has to offer. From the seaside bustle of the south coast to the glories of the gracious city of Canterbury, the Elham Valley Way meanders through ancient woodlands, secret byways and charming, unspoilt villages. Much of the walk runs through the Kent Downs AONB and the Elham Valley is acknowledged to be one of Kent's most precious natural assets. The Elham Valley has thankfully escaped the pressures of modern development and a sense of ordinary

village life remains. This area of Kent contains something of interest for everyone and for an enjoyable walk this appealing area can scarcely be bettered, no matter what season of the year you step out.

From Hythe the route passes through Newington, Peene, Etchinghill, Lyminge, Elham, Barham, Kingston, Bishopsbourne, Bridge, Patriboune and finishes at Canterbury Cathedral. On its journey the walk passes through a diverse landscape of downland, woodlands, orchards, parkland and farmland and is suitable for family groups and casual walkers as well as the seasoned Rambler. The route is well signposted and the whole walk or sections of it can be undertaken using public transport.

Pilgrims Way

A short history of the ancient trackway that runs across southern England from Winchester in the west to Canterbury in the east and which has become popularly known as the 'Pilgrims' Way'. The trackway is 120 miles (192 km) in length and two thirds of the old trackway is still identifiable today.

A national trail running along the old trackway was first proposed by the Ramblers Association in their evidence to the Scott Committee. In 1978 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Donald Coggan officially opened the North Downs Way National Trail. It is one of the few trails that coincides or runs close to the ancient trackway between Winchester and Canterbury. The National Trail is 153 miles in length and traces the North Downs ridge between Farnham and Dover via Canterbury. At Boughton Lees the North Downs Way splits into the 57-mile Canterbury loop. Here one can either follow the loop clockwise along stretches of the ancient trackway to Dover via Canterbury and the Stour valley or one can take the loop anti-clockwise to Wye and onto via Dover via Folkestone.

The old trackway was both a ridge walk and a terrace-way as it followed the North Downs escarpment. For the most part the ancient trackway keeps to the lower southern slopes, away from the exposed ridge of the Downs and just above the woods of the Weald and the claggy clay found at on the lower ground. However much of the North Downs Way National Trail follows the more picturesque route along the ridge of the Downs. Nevertheless there are many stretches where the old trackway and the North Downs Way converge, especially along sections where the 'Pilgrims Way' has not been incorporated into a metalled lane.

The trackway before Pilgrims: In Valerie Belsey's book, entitled *The Green Lanes of England*, she suggests that the earliest trackway along the North Downs escarpment dates back to when man hunted along the tracks used by wild animals. Curtis and Walker suggest that 'perhaps, as JRL Anderson claims for the Ridgeway, paths along the North Downs first came into use at least 250,000 years ago when Palaeolithic, pre-ice age hunter, climbed onto the hills to find their quarry' .

The economic reasons why an east-west route developed have been summarised by Christopher John Wright . Following the separation of England with mainland Europe about 5000 years ago, the Straits of Dover became the main entry point into England. The principal supplies of minerals such as tin, lead and iron were to be found in the west of the country and southern England had the best cultivated land. As such natural trade routes developed between the west and east of southern England and the chalk slopes of the North Downs presented the best passable route.

Certainly by the pre-Roman Iron Age, between 500 and 450 BC, there is evidence to suggest that the trackway along the North Downs was a main trade route. Frank Jessop states 'an indication of the main trade routes is given by the finds of coins belonging to this period. Most of the single coins that have been found were either on the line of the North Downs trackway, near the Thanet coast, or along the banks of the Thames' . As Jessop states, the North Downs escarpment was an obvious line for a trackway and took advantage of the contours and avoided the sticky Gault clay. He goes on to say that 'nowadays it is usually, but misleadingly referred to as the Pilgrims Way' (Frank W Jessop, *Kent History Illustrated*, p.15, 1966).

From Trade Route to Pilgrimage to Becket's shrine: John Christopher Wright suggests that the great pilgrimage, which arose immediately after the murder of Archbishop Becket in 1170, saved the road. He argues that Winchester had already started to decline as the capital of England as London grew in importance. Moreover fewer metals were coming up from the West Country and iron from Sussex had taken its place.

By the eighteenth century the usage of the term 'Pilgrims' Way' was being applied to a number of ancient or prehistoric trackways in the south of England used by pilgrims journeying to Becket's shrine . Although these routes radiated from Canterbury they did not include the route taken by Chaucer's pilgrims but were instead prehistoric trackways, used by pilgrims travelling from the continent via Dover or Southampton in addition to the main route of medieval pilgrimage between Winchester and Canterbury.

By the time Hilaire Belloc wrote what has been described as the first authoritative account of the Pilgrims Way, in his book entitled *The Old Road*, in 1904, the name Pilgrims Way was being applied in particular to the ancient trackway running along the edge of the North Downs between Winchester and Canterbury. Nevertheless, Neil Curtis and Jim Walker make the point that prior to the 1860s, there is no evidence to suggest that this east-west route was ever designated the name Pilgrims Way. They argue that it was an Ordnance Survey Officer who first designated parts of the trackway as the Pilgrims Way.

The Pilgrims Way and Geoffrey Chaucer: In 1898 Henry Littlehales published a book entitled 'Some Notes on the Road from London to Canterbury in the Middle Ages', in which he plotted the route he believed Chaucer's Pilgrims to have taken. This followed the line of the old Roman Road, Watling Street (A2) between London and Canterbury. In fact the only section of the Southwark to Canterbury route that ever attracted the word Pilgrim in its name was a short section of road called Pilgrims Road, found on the final approach to Canterbury .

Nevertheless, the North Downs Way does coincide with some of the places that Chaucer's pilgrims visited. Undoubtedly Chaucer's pilgrims would have come through Rochester, through which the North Downs Way passes today. It has been suggested that pilgrims in Chaucer's time would have stayed at the Crown Inn but there is no evidence to support this. The ancient trackway along the Downs did not deviate into Rochester and it is most likely thought that travellers crossed the River Medway a few miles further up river, either at Cuxton, Aylesford, Halling or Snodland. However Chaucer's pilgrims would have arrived at Rochester following a route close to Watling Street.

Just before the North Downs Way reaches Canterbury it passes through Upper Harbledown. A detour can be made to the church of St Nicholas from which Henry II walked barefoot into Canterbury whereupon he was flogged by all the bishops as part of his penance. It is believed that Chaucer is referring to Harbledown as Bob-up-and-down in the *Manciple's Tale* where it states:

"Wite ye nat wher ther stant a litel toun

Which that y-cleped is Bob-up-and down,

Under the Blee, in Caunterbury waye"

Originally Becket's death was commemorated on its anniversary, which was the 29th December. However, following his translation to sainthood in 1220 the main feast was moved to 7th July, which made for much better conditions. In fact Ravensdale points out that the old Roman road may have been very difficult to pass along, especially in the valley bottoms, in the middle of winter.

When Chaucer died on 25th October 1400, the *Canterbury Tales* remained unfinished. It is believed he started work on the *Canterbury Tales* in 1387 and worked on them until his death. He planned to write 120 tales but on his death had completed little more than 20 tales . *Canterbury Tales* was one of the first literary works to be printed in everyday English and Terry Jones argues in his book *Chaucer's Knight* that Chaucer was an important ironic satirist of the period. Jones also argues that Chaucer was far more political than has been previously thought and has put forward the conspiratorial theory that Chaucer disappears just one year after Henry IV seizes the English throne.

Chaucer started to write the *Canterbury Tales* 212 years after the murder of Thomas a' Becket in 1170 and was writing at a time when the pilgrimage had reached its height. . Not only had pilgrimages reached a high point but also by the time that Chaucer was writing pilgrimages for some, had become associated with leisure rather than a form of penance. As such puritan groups such as the Lollards has were critical of the medieval pilgrimage because they viewed it as a waste of money and an excuse for sinful living along the way . In the sixteenth century the shrine of Thomas a' Becket was destroyed by Henry VIII and pilgrimages to Canterbury effectively came to an end.

The post pilgrimage trackway: Nevertheless, even if pilgrimages ceased in the sixteenth century, during the following two centuries the terrace way along the side of the North Downs escarpment continued to be used by travellers avoiding the new toll roads .

The second influence that Christopher John Wright cites for the continuance of the old trackway is the fact that it followed the chalk slopes of the Downs and as such was never cultivated. This allowed the traveller who would not have been permitted to trespass on tilled land to use the track as a legal thoroughfare. Moreover many chalk pits were dug along the way due to the abundance of chalk. The chalk was burnt and made into lime, which was then transported along sections of the old trackway.

Today the trackway, where it coincides with the North Downs Way continues, under the protection of the local authorities with the support of the Countryside Agency, as a National Trail. The route of the National Trail passes close to some of the most densely populated areas in England. Nevertheless it is still possible to walk for hours along sections of the Pilgrims Way without seeing another soul, allowing time just to simply reflect on the history of this ancient trackway.

Wantsum Marshes

Since the Roman invasion, some two thousand years ago, the coastline of Britain has changed dramatically. This could not be truer than on the north-east coast of Kent. I make reference to the Isle of Thanet, and the once significant Wantsum Channel. During the Roman period the Wantsum Channel was a 'strait' which averaged two miles across! At sometime in prehistory, a shingle spit, Stonar Neach, developed across the eastern extent of the channel giving protection to an island just to the west. Rutupiae, now Richborough, was linked to the mainland via a causeway and developed as an important Roman port from around 40 AD. The Roman Emperor Julius Caesar was said to have landed on Richborough.

Today the Roman forts at Reculver (Regulbium) and Richborough seem rather misplaced, but in the Roman age they were strategically placed at either end of the Wantsum Channel giving protection against Saxon raids.

Long after the Romans had left Britain the Vikings also made great use of the Wantsum and in 839 sailed into the channel and up the River Stour to raid Canterbury, stealing gold and precious ornaments. The people of Durovernum, as Canterbury was then known, were to fear for more than just their valuables as the Vikings also took prisoners later to be sold as slaves.

Over time, the continued deposition of shingle at Stonar Neach caused the start of the gradual silting up of the channel. By the Ninth Century it was no longer possible to reach Canterbury and at this time Fordwich developed as the outport of the City.

Much later, and following the brutal murder of Thomas Becket the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1170, droves of pilgrims from all over Europe passed through Fordwich on their journey to see the holy relics at Canterbury Cathedral and to seek miraculous cures (and there apparently were some).

However, in terms of the modern day appearance of the now dry Wantsum Channel, probably the most significant historic event was that of the landing of St. Augustine at Ebbsfleet in 597. Important, not for the fact that Pope Gregory sent St. Augustine to re-evangelise England, but for the fact that in the twelfth and thirteenth century Augustinian monks tirelessly constructed intricate systems of drainage, walls and counter-walls to claim land from the sea.

Many of these structures are still visible features of the landscape today. You need only take a look at a map of the Ash Levels, Chislet and Minster Marshes to recall those who helped create this landscape – Abbot's Wall, Monkton and Monk's Wall are but a few.

In the 1950's and 60's the area that was formerly the Wantsum Channel was further improved for agriculture with government grants to drain areas of marsh and wet grassland. Today, the wildlife value of the area is largely restricted to the very important coastal areas; the fantastic Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve; the ditches and dykes of inland areas; and the few areas of wet grassland that have remained or have been

returned through new environmental incentives to farmers, with the help of KSCP and other organisations. Species such as lapwing, that can be seen in thousands over the winter, do not breed in the numbers that they did in the 1950's because of the decline in habitat.

So, what of the future? Will the flora and fauna that rely on the Wantsum Channel shrink further as the mighty river did? Or, will its' champions leave room for the vole, bird and other beasts? Will the new agri-environment schemes support those who wish to manage their land sensitively? Let us hope that this treasured stretch of land so rich in history can look forward to balancing the needs of agriculture and wildlife.

Sarre Mill, Ramsgate Road, Sarre, Kent, CT7 0JU. Telephone: 01843 847573

Sarre Mill was built in 1820 and is one of England's few remaining commercially worked mills.

It is a typical Kentish Smock Windmill, built by the Canterbury Millwright, John Holman. In its time, its height has been increased, a steam engine was installed to provide auxiliary power in 1861, then replaced in 1907 by a gas engine with its own gas producer plant. In the early 1920s, the mill ceased working by wind power and the sails were removed and sold.

Trading stopped for a period between the wars until 1940, when after 120 years, the millstones ground to a halt and the mill went into decline. However, in 1985 the Hobbs family purchased the mill and reconstruction work started in 1986. After much effort, restoration was completed in 1991, the new sails turning for the first time on June 12th.

The mill is now once again an environmentally friendly, wind powered mill, a real taste of history in the 21st Century. The mill is equipped with one set of Derbyshire Peak stones and one set of French Burrs, with most of the original machinery surviving and in use today.

Sarre Mill is now one of the few remaining commercially worked windmills of England and produces high quality stoneground flour in the traditional way, rather than the "hot milled" flour to be found in the vast majority of breads and cakes. This ensures nutrients and vitamins are preserved and the flavour is just incredible.

Sarre Mill is well worth a visit, not only to see how an old fashioned Kentish Smock Windmill operates, but to purchase a selection from their high quality flours, breads and bread making kits, plus a wealth of other locally produced goods including sauces, ciders, chutneys and pickles.

Stelling Minnis Windmill & Museum

The Windmill is off the B 2068, the main Canterbury to Hythe Road, about 7 miles south of Canterbury. The Mill is in Mill Lane, a turning off Curtis Lane at its junction with Bossingham Road.

Opens: Easter Sunday & Monday 2-5pm, Then every Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday until the end of September. Special Group Bookings by arrangement. Cream teas available.

The Grade One listed picturesque wooden smock mill at Stelling Minnis, between Canterbury, Folkestone and Ashford, has been completely renovated to repair weather damage.

The mill is owned by Kent County Council and managed by Stelling Minnis Parish Council.

It was built by the Holman brothers of Canterbury in 1866 and is known as Davison's Mill after the family who worked it for a century until the last miller Alec Davison died in 1970.

The renovation was carried out by I.J.P. Conservation incorporating The Chiltern Partnership of Oxfordshire at a cost of £120,000. The money being provided jointly by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Kent County Council and the work took three months. The mill itself and its associated museum was closed to visitors during renovation work.

The mill's sweeps and sails were dismantled on Friday, 19 July, and the mill's cap taken off on Saturday, 20 July (2003). Both have now been replaced.

The museum tells the story of mills and millers, the local agricultural scene, and includes a diorama of the ancient manorial common of Stelling Minnis, one of the few remaining unenclosed commons in the South East.

White Mill Rural Heritage Centre, The Causeway : Ash Road : Sandwich : Kent : CT13 9JB

White Mill was built in 1760 and still has most of its original wooden machinery. **The Engine House**, restored in 1995, contains a Lister petrol engine which can be used to drive a Plate Mill to grind corn into flour.

The Miller's Cottage, built in the 1830's, and outbuildings are a rare survival of a complete milling site. Run for almost 100 years by the Stanley family, the windmill was supplying flour and animal food throughout the Victorian era, and worked on until 1957. **The Museum** is housed in the Miller's Cottage and other buildings surrounding the mill.

There are exhibits of Farming and Craft tools, Kitchen & Laundry equipment, plus a complete Wheelwright's workshop and a Blacksmith's workshop complete with forge. Photographs show Victorian Farm workers and local people 100 years ago and there are many displays of agricultural and other craft equipment.

Admission, Opening Times & Group Bookings: To get a Group Booking Form / School Booking Form plus other information and leaflets Contact Tel: 01304 612076. Free car parking, disabled toilets & shop

Admission: Adult: £2.00 Seniors: £1.00 Child: 50p

Opening Times: All year round Sunday, Tuesday & Friday mornings from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm

Easter until mid September: Sundays & Bank Holiday Mondays from 2.30 pm to 5.00 pm (last admission 4.30)

All other times by appointment: Contact Tel: 01304 612076

Agricultural Museum, The Street, Brook, Ashford, Kent, TN25 5PF.

Owned and run by the charity Wye Rural Museum Trust.

The origins of the Agricultural Museum at Brook lie in a collection of old Kentish agricultural implements begun in 1931 by N. P. Bagenal of the then East Malling Research Station and G. H. Garrad, Agricultural Organiser for the Kent Education Committee. Both of these had been on the staff of the then South Eastern Agricultural College at Wye, which later became Wye College, University of London.

The collection was initially housed in the Old Tithe Barn, Maidstone and was later transferred to East Malling for safe keeping during World War II. In 1948 the County Council accepted an offer from Wye College to take over the collection and house a museum. Student members of the College Archaeological Society under the direction of a member of staff took responsibility for the transfer, setting out and labelling of the collection. A driving force at the time was Michael Nightingale, a student with a deep interest in the subject and who became in later years well known in Kent for his passionate defence of the rural environment and everything associated with it.

Initially housed at Coldharbour Farm on the College estate the collection increased rapidly and when the College purchased Court Lodge Farm, Brook in 1957 the magnificent 14th century Manorial Barn there became available for housing the museum.

Under the dedicated curatorship of Frank Thompson and later Bob Farrar, both members of the College staff, the collection grew and became well known to students of agricultural history in the south east.

In 1996 the College realised that it could no longer support the Museum in the way necessary for it to survive and develop and after discussions with interested individuals a charitable Trust, The Wye Rural Museum Trust, was formed under the direction of the same Michael Nightingale who had been so active in the origins of the project in the 1940s. Funds were raised from the Heritage Lottery Fund and from many corporate and individual donors and in the spring of 1997 the Trust bought the Barn and associated buildings from the College and the College gave the collections to the Trust. The Trust thus became responsible for the future funding and running of the museum.

Michael Nightingale died in 1998, knowing that by then the Trust was well on the way with its program of restoration and development of the Museum, the long-term future of which was secure.

Opening Hours: The museum is run by volunteers and therefore cannot be open at all times.

The museum is open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons between the beginning of June and the end of September from 2.00pm and 5.00pm.

Facilities: On the Museum site, in addition to the main buildings of the Barn and the Oast where the exhibits are displayed, there is a large grassed area suitable for picnic meals or for just sitting in the sun. We do not have refreshments available on site. A grassed ramp leads up to the veranda of a converted stable block which contains toilets, including one with facilities for the disabled, the Curator's Office and a small shop selling books and various gifts mainly related to the interests of the Museum.

From early 2010 the converted workshop will be ready and this can be used to show films or give talks to groups of visitors.

The Museum has an audio tour, which enables visitors to be guided around the exhibits with the aid of a recorded commentary. This has facilities for moving both forwards and backwards amongst the exhibits as it follows the route which the Curator or other helpers take on a guided tour.

Cost of entry is £2.50 with a concession charge of £1.50 for over 60's. Entry is free for children under 16 and people who live in Brook.

We welcome groups to come to the museum at any convenient time by contacting the curator either by ringing him on 01304 824969 or emailing brianwimsett@hotmail.com. The charge is £1.50 per person.

It may be possible to open at other times for people wishing to visit the museum for a special reason by contacting the curator as above.

Easily accessible from junction 10 of the M20 from London and from the Dover ports and the Channel Tunnel.

At Junction 10 on the M20 take the exit signposted A28 to Canterbury (and William Harvey Hospital A & E). Turn right a couple of 100 metres on and go past the pub (Blacksmiths) and then take the first left signposted Brook. About 2.5km along this road there is a right turn to Brook just before a sharp left hand bend. After going down the hill and through the start of the village you will see the large barn, which is the museum, just before the church.

Romney Marsh Visitor Centre and nature reserve - Gold Award for Green Tourism

The eco-friendly Romney Marsh Visitor Centre and nature reserve has achieved a Gold Award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme – a first for a Kent-based visitor attraction.

Managed by Kent Wildlife Trust on behalf of Shepway District Council, the Centre is built entirely out of recycled and low-impact materials such as straw-bale walls and a 'living' sedum covered roof.

Following an accreditation grading site visit – the assessor's audit report concluded: "Very environmentally focussed organisation. An excellent example of high level sustainable practices in action."

Among the features that were praised in the report were:

- Excellent levels of insulation
- Heating by wood burning stove with locally sourced fuel
- Waterless urinals and small type cisterns
- All waste separated and recycled
- Good composting systems
- Strong ethical purchasing policy in place
- Centre highly accessible by public transport
- Excellent habitat and wildlife management on site

Manager, Steve Humphreys, said: "This prestigious award heralds the start of an exciting new era for the Centre and the recent opening of the Romney Warren Halt served by the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway has greatly added to our green tourism credentials."

Kent Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive, John Bennett, added: "The Romney Warren nature reserve is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and ecologically important for its unspoilt dune grassland and wildlife-rich ponds noted for their many rare invertebrates such as the great crested newt and medical leech."

The Visitor Centre is on the A259 between New Romney and Dymchurch and is open from 10am - 4.30pm daily. Admission is free. Events are held throughout the summer. For details call 01797 369487 or go to www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Cycle Routes

Crab & Winkle Way – Whitstable to Canterbury

With seven miles of almost traffic-free cycling, the Crab and Winkle Way between Canterbury and Whitstable explores a delightful slice of east Kent packed with history and nostalgia.

The path, which caters for riders of all abilities, takes its name from the pioneering railway line which ran between Canterbury and Whitstable from the early part of the 19th century. It was one of the first to be built in Great Britain.

With an area designated as a World Heritage Site, there is a lot to see and do in Canterbury. From visiting the Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and Canterbury museum, to exploring the city's lanes and countless historic buildings.

On the way to Whitstable, the path passes through the Blean with its 13th century Church of St Cosmus and St Damian, and Blean Woods, a delightful RSPB nature reserve.

The journey also takes you through the conifer-dominated woodland of Clowes Wood, one of the best places in the country to hear the remarkable song of the nightjar.

Once in Whitstable, seafood is high on the agenda and places to consider include the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Company, East Quay Shellfish Bar, Wheelers' Oyster Bar, Birdies Eating House and the Crab and

Winkle Restaurant. Whitstable's vibrant contemporary arts scene has led to the growth of colourful craft shops in the town. The Whitstable Museum & Gallery has permanent and touring exhibitions, many reflecting the town's seafaring traditions.

A stroll along the Saxon Shore Way and the cliff-top lawns of Tankerton Slopes, with their colourful wooden beach huts, offers perfect views of 'The Street' - a narrow shingle ridge stretching half-a-mile out to sea at low tide.

Postcode starting point: CT1 2BZ (Canterbury) or CT5 1NA (Whitstable).

Oyster Bay Trail

New coastal cycle route - Reculver to Swalecliffe

October 2009 update: Since Canterbury City Council Members' approval of the route in 2007, the sections of Oyster Bay Trail that have been constructed are through Reculver Country Park (2008) and around Bishopstone Glen (2009) which involved the widening of an existing path around Bishopstone Glen avoiding the narrow bridge. It links Reculver Country Park with the sea wall at the end of Reculver Lane (by the car park) and has resulted in the creation of approximately two miles of new cycle route. New signs and timber bicycle parking stands were also provided in July 2009.

In January 2010 we intend to advertise the new promenade byelaw in relation to cycling. This is intended to allow a further four miles of new cycle route to be provided up to Swalecliffe.