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A Quarterly Insight into the Victoria Park Project

Issue #3
Spring



Victoria Park Ashford

Volunteering News >>>

Roles Available Now!

The recent lifting in restrictions will see more roles released this summer!

Our partners at KSCP will be resuming in-park work with the conservation volunteers over the coming month. Anyone wishing to join can do so by filling in the 'Conservation Volunteer' form on the ABC website at www.ashford.gov.uk/victoria-park. We are also looking for remote tour guides and YouTube contributors. Finally, there will be more in-park roles launching over the coming months so keep your eyes peeled on the website! **Further volunteering roles to be launched this summer!**



Youth Council Numbers Growing!

Our Youth Council numbers are steadily growing with young people eager to have their say on what is happening in the park.

The Victoria Park Youth Council was launched as a way for young people to engage in what is happening in the park, both for the project and beyond. They meet once a month to hear the most recent updates on project activities and put across their perspective on what is happening. They are also consulted on project ideas moving forward, aspects of design and ways that young people could further engage with the park. This summer will see the VPYC lead on the return of 'Young People Park Takeover' where the parks social media accounts content is planned for the whole week by young people. This is no mean feat with our Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook channels all available to them.

VPYC is a volunteering opportunity that can help young people to build their experience and CV. There are opportunities to develop skills in communication, decision making, working with others, working in the community and planning events and activities. Young people can even use their time with VPYC to register volunteering hours with different award programmes (such as Duke of Edinburgh Award), their school, college or university (dependent of the rules of the programme they wish to register the hours with). can join VPYC at any time during the Victoria Park Project. **For more information about VPYC or how to join, please contact our Youth Involvement Coordinator Nicola at Nicola.priest@ashford.gov.uk**

Quarter in Review >>>

Egg-cellent Easter Event!

This Easter saw Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership host their Easter activity in the park.

As this year's event had to be socially distanced, families were invited to follow a trail around the park learning about birds and their eggs. When they returned to the tent they were rewarded with chocolate eggs and a project activity pack to take home.



They also had the opportunity to judge the Easter egg decorating activity that saw 336 entries from the public, Victoria Road Primary School and Ashford Oaks Primary School. On the day, more than 110 people took part in the event and visited the tent.

Members of the Friends of Victoria Park volunteered their time to help Diane man the tent throughout the day and threw themselves into the activity with enthusiasm and gusto.

Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer Vicky Fannon says, "We are very grateful to Diane and her team at KSCP for a fantastic Easter event. The feedback was overwhelming in its positivity and



everyone really enjoyed being able to engage with conservation and Diane's specialist knowledge."

Keep your eyes on our social media for their next park event in summer time.

Coming soon >>>

Our Summer Edition will be out in July!

Follow Us>

 Victoria Park Ashford

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 Victoria Park Ashford

Email: VictoriaPark@ashford.gov.uk

Friends of Victoria Park

If you're interested in becoming a Friend of the park, please look at the website: victoriaparkashford.uk/

Quarter in Review >>>

May Day Weekend Virtual Activities!

May Day is a celebration of the establishing of Spring and the blossoming of beautiful flowers. We will be celebrating virtually this year with activities you can do at home.

Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer Vicky Fannon explains.

"The celebration of the seasons is really relevant to Victoria Park and Watercress Fields and we would have loved to do a May Day event in the park this year, but in order to maintain social distancing guidelines we are hosting activities online instead.

We are really fortunate to have a strong social media presence across a variety of platforms that allows us to offer some interesting tasks virtually."

This year's programme of activities includes:

- Flower Cones (Saturday)
- Morris Dancing (Saturday)
- Hair Garland (Sunday)
- Springtime Selfie Hoop (Monday)
- Mini Maypoles (Monday)

We hope everyone enjoys taking part and look forward to the potential of hosting similar events in the park as the project progresses when it is safe to do so. Join us over the weekend across the platforms listed over in the left hand column!



Hidden Heritage: Tank Defences

This project has really shone a light on the history of the park, including some of the more forgotten elements of it's past. Here we explore the Tank Defences.

The tank defences run along the river in Watercress Fields and Victoria Park. Here is what we currently know about them. In May 1940 General Ironside became Head of Home Forces and devised the static form of anti-invasion defence. It required the building of a network of antitank obstacles, trench systems, minefields, barbed wire obstacles, concrete pillboxes and gun emplacements. Wherever possible rivers, drainage ditches, canals and railway embankments were used. These features formed defence or stop lines and there was one from Charing, through Ashford to the edge of Romney Marsh at Hamstreet. In March/April 1941 a new stop line was started along the Stour from Canterbury to Ashford, with road blocks and bridges prepared for explosive demolition. It is this second phase of home defence that is particularly relevant to the park. The strategy in 1941 was to have more mobile forces with strongly defended nodal points at important junctions of routes and infrastructure locations. 'Fortress Ashford' was such a nodal point.



Work began on the fortress in May 1941 with deepening the river and placing pipe bombs around one and a quarter miles of the boundary. Concrete and other anti-tank obstacles were constructed for three miles and there was an outer wire defence four and a half miles long. Canadian soldiers had completed the pipe mines by 2 July. The exact location of the fortress has not been worked out, but Dr Peter Frost describes the defences formed around the important junction of the railway and the A28 400m north of the park. There was also a strong point at the turnpike toll house at the junction of Beaver Lane and the A28 and an anti-aircraft battery close to the railway near the gas works. Aerial photographs of September 1941 show the north bank of the river opposite the park having been recently regraded. There were dense rows of antitank pimples along the south edge of the gas works and turning northwards across the railway to the southwest corner of the town. A corresponding row lay to the east of Gasworks Lane to protect the electricity works. There was a bank or bank and ditch parallel to the north side of the railway, together with a substantial bank heading northeast from the start of the canalised section of the river. Upstream of this there do not appear to have been any works to the river channel where the sinuous course and the steep banks form a natural defence.



However, on the lip of the north bank, between the west edge of the former gasworks site and the junction of the footpath/cycleway with the path from Ford Way there are 20-30 anti-tank pimples with angle irons embedded in them. The angle irons are perforated for wires which would have been part of the defences. In summary, the river adjacent to the park may have been the south boundary of Fortress Ashford. But the park was certainly used by the army during the war because £87 was paid to the council by the War Damages Commission.

We'll soon be looking for heritage volunteers to help us research and document the parks history and digitalise records. If you would be interested, please visit the volunteering pages at www.ashford.gov.uk/victoria-park or email victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk

Quarter in Review >>>

KSCP Nature Trail visits in half term

Over the February half term Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership set up a 'Natures Treasures' trail in the park. The trail was run in line with lockdown rules and could be completed as part of daily exercise.

Participants picked up their maps from the Coffee Box and started following the trail of nature boards. When they had finished the trail they returned to the Coffee Box to pick up their craft pack to take home. Over the two days of the trail a whopping 87 families took part! Keep your eyes on social media for more KSCP events this summer.



**Victoria Park and
Watercress Fields
Survey**



We need your thoughts!

Integral to our project are the thoughts of the park community.

Users of the park are best placed to reflect the most up to date opinions on what the strengths and areas for improvement are in the park as a public space. With that in mind we would love to invite you to fill in a survey reflecting your current views on the park. As an incentive you can also opt in to a draw for a £20 shopping voucher. To record your views please scan the QR code using the camera on your mobile phone or visit www.ashford.gov.uk/Victoria-Park where the link will be posted.



NATURE'S NOTEBOOK

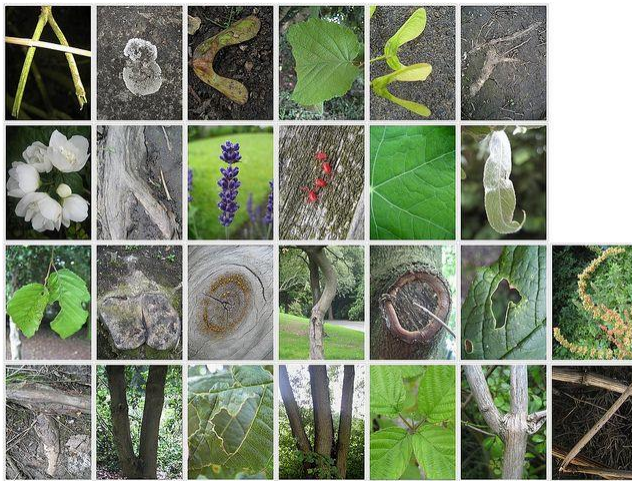
THE A-Z OF NATURE IN VICTORIA AND WATERCRESS PARKS

What you need: A camera (the one on your phone will be fine)
Access to a computer (to download and edit images)

What to do: Explore Victoria Park and Watercress Fields and, in no particular order, capture images of nature that can illustrate the alphabet. Some letters will be easy like A for acorns or autumn, Z will be more challenging but could be a photograph of something shaped like Z or...?

When: As soon as you are ready to start. You might even want to make this a seasonal challenge and do it in spring, summer, autumn and winter!

What then: Once you've taken as many photos as you want then it's time to get creative with editing and presentation. Create your own unique A-Z and send it in to us, so we can share it on Victoria Park's Facebook and Instagram sites*.

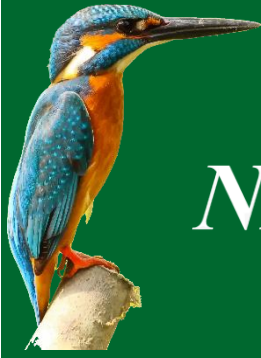


***How to share:** Email to Victoria.Fannon@ashford.gov.uk

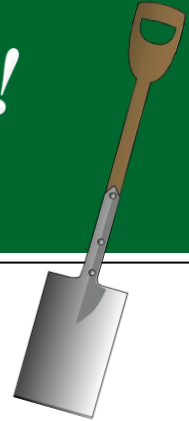
Your file will be quite large, so send using a free file sharing site like Objective Connect or We Transfer. If you have a photographic question Email: diane.comley@kent.gov.uk

There are several free application software packages available to help you compile images, (Fotojet/Canva/Fotor/PhotPpad/Pizap). Have a look and see what you prefer.





WE NEED NATURE NATURE NEEDS YOU!



Join the VICTORIA PARK CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

all welcome over 16 years old

Meet people, get active, enjoy the outdoors and make a difference.

There will be an introduction to the different kinds of habitat and wildlife that can be found in the parks.

Talks and workshops will be given by professionals on some of the many different species of flora and fauna that can be found here.

Help manage and create space for nature to thrive and for people to enjoy.

THE CONSERVATION TASKS

- 5 tasks spread out over the year - dates to be confirmed
- Tools will be provided with a tool talk on safe use of different equipment
- Each task will start with a short talk on the work and how it benefits specific species or biodiversity in general
- Tasks days will start at 9:30 and finish around 3:30 (with breaks of course!)
- All you need is your own packed lunch, refreshments, sturdy footwear, waterproofs and a love of the outdoors.



To find out more and sign up to be a volunteer contact:

Diane Comley from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

Email: diane.comley@kent.gov.uk or victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 410900 (leave a message if no answer)

