The Voice of The River Darent

Darent River Preservation Society
www.darent-drips.org.uk
Facebook: "Darent River Preservation Society"

Darent River Preservation Society (DRiPS) Westerham Newsletter September 2021



Environment Agency campaign."*The less you use the more there will be in the river*"

If the target is 120 why do most of us score 150..?

We are talking about your water consumption in litres per day. The previous national average of 142 litres/day has risen to153 in last three years, especially since working from home. Typically 30% goes down the toilet. Homes with a water meter seem to use 10% less water - and the meters help the water companies trace the leaks underground in old pipes!

If you have ever been camping or caravanning, you probably know you can manage on much less water -stay in the holiday mood all year!

Water analysts suggest we should each aim to reduce our consumption to 120 litres/day.

VIRTUAL WATER

Well, our consumption of other countries water could be 3000 - 4000 litres per day.
Google for it. It's scary.

Friends of Westerham Ponds

If you live near Westerham, come and join us at a Long Pond or Round Pond workparty. Text Stuart Merrylees on 07709 620281

You won't even need to get your feet wet

Mark Gallant (North West Kent Countryside Partnership) and volunteers plant Ranunculus (water crowfoot)in the river in Westerham. It was collected in Shoreham, where it is abundant. Contact Mark at www.nwkcp.org if you would like to join a workparty - waders provided!





Groundwater in the chalk - our hidden asset

Did you know there are only 200 chalk streams in the entire world – one of which is the River Darent?

It rises at Westerham and meanders across flinty gravel beds to Dartford, creating a unique water ecosystem supporting a particular diversity of plants and wildlife that is characteristic of chalk streams.

We need to protect this precious natural resource. Threats facing the river include over-extraction, climate change, pollution and invasive species like signal crayfish and Himalyan balsam. That's why the Darent River Preservation Society (DRiPS) exists – founded in 1985 when stretches of the Darent ran dry.

We act as a lobbying organisation and a focal point for all the organisations and individuals interested in preserving and enhancing the river. We have achieved great success in raising awareness of issues affecting the Darent – in particular, negotiating reductions in water extraction by national water companies.

While stretches of the river are hidden from view, its vast underground chalk aquifers supply drinking water to much of South London and Kent.

SE England has the highest density of housing but the lowest rainfall in the whole country. With so many houises continuing to be built in this overcrowded corner of England, there is an ever-present threat that over-abstraction will endanger nature's arteries once again.

How can you help? Join us and keep in touch with the issues and the successes. Get involved with volunteering activities. Appreciate and value our unique natural resource.



Franks Lane, Horton Kirby Sept 1991

Rediscovering Sundridge's historic mill pond

Sundridge Milll and its ponds once provided a serene sight for travellers on their approach to Sundridge and visit to The Lamb. Today the area is overgrown, a useful flood plain but an unloved, waterlogged wasteland of scrub and bramble.

The mill area had a very long history until it was demolished in 1966. The first mill dated from before the arrival of the Normans. Many centuries later in the 1700s, it



was re-built as a paper mill. The paper produced there was of the finest quality and used by the Royal Mint for the large bank notes of the period. In 1901 the historic mill was converted to a steam laundry.

None of the old structures are visible today, apart from a sluice gate, but local farmer John Evans has begun the project of discovering this section of the river so that it might one day return as an attractive feature of the village of Sundridge.

DEEP - Darent Environmental Enhancement Programme

Get involved in activities to support the river

An exciting new programme has been launched which aims to equip local communities throughout the Darent Valley with the skills, knowledge and tools to get involved in planning and delivering initiatives to improve the health and ecology of the river.

Called the Darent Environmental Enhancement Programme (DEEP), it is the brainchild of Mark Gallant from North West Kent Countryside Partnership. It includes:

- Workshops covering all the main aspects of chalk river ecology, history, fisheries management & enhancement.
- Hands-on practical sessions allowing workshop participants to gain experience of river enhancement techniques.
- Practical volunteer tasks to address issues such as excessive shading, bank erosion/siltation, invasive species, and plastics & litter.
- Walks & talks to promote the ecology and natural heritage of the Darent.
- River related educational activities for young people.
- Community engagement events to raise awareness of chalk rivers and recruit volunteers for the initiative in the long term.

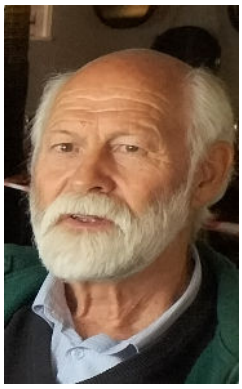
Follow the DRiPS Facebook page (@DarentRiverPreservation) to keep in touch with news of DEEP and other activities, or email Mark Gallant (Mark.Gallant@kent.gov.uk) to register your interest.

Fishy questions - and answers

What might you find lurking in the Darent's depths? DRiPS vice-chairman and keen angler, Trevor Carman provides some insight.

While the best stretches of the river run through private land and are controlled by fly fishing syndicates, the limited public access points can still produce the odd gem.

Apart from the obvious chalk stream species such as trout, chub, dace and roach, I have seen a shoal of large carp cruising the stretch behind Shoreham Place, a number of



enormous tench in the pool below the outlet weir at Lullingstone Castle, and some very big bream in the concrete channel in the centre of Dartford.

In the mid 1960s, while fishing a Holmesdale club match below Otford, I witnessed a grayling being caught. There was even a catfish reported at Eynsford and recently there have been two reports of salmon in the river at Dartford.

Read more from Trevor about fishing and the history of the river in the forthcoming DRiPS newsletter. Signup at www.darent-drips.org.uk

DRiPS Membership

DRiPS personal membership costs just £10 a year. Go to www.darent-drips.org.uk to learn about the recent history of the Darent and what we are trying to acheive.

Newsletter coming shortly. Follow us on Facebook "@Darent River Preservation"

Water is a precious resource and must no longer be taken for granted.