

Nailbourne Legend

Increased demand for water has probably assisted in depleting the natural underground reservoirs which feed the Nailbourne. At one time local children in Elham used to ride rafts on its waters, whilst one villager reputedly landed a 3lb trout! The 'Woe Waters' as they were known in the past were superstitiously interpreted as a portender of doom. The most famous legend is associated with the arrival of St Augustine and the Anglo-Saxons' conversion to Christianity. Apparently that period was noted for its dry summers and winters, the land became parched, trees withered, plants wilted and animals died of thirst. Locals who had forsaken their old Gods Woden and Thor began questioning the new religion, so the Christian priests offered up prayers for rain. Legend has it that a miracle was performed for, on the spot where St Augustine knelt, a spring gushed forth and a flood of water transformed the Elham valley from a barren wasteland into a verdant landscape once again. However, the old gods fought back and dried the stream, whereupon the Angel of the Bourne descended and renewed its flow. Thus, it is said, the battle rages to this day and explains why some years are dry and others see floods.

Rises near Lyminge. Ehelburga's Well (opp the Church of St Mary and Ehelburga) and the clear water that spouts forth is a clear contender for the main source of the Nailbourne. East Brook that rises from Etchinghill to the south is a tributary.

The bourne reputedly flowed more consistently in the past

Derivation of Elham - some say from the large number of eels found in the river centuries ago. Elham means eel meadow - water meadow where eels are trapped. OE c.1100.

Bekesbourne. In medieval times the village came under the jurisdiction of the Cinque Ports Confederation. Today's Nailbourne stream was then a navigable waterway, providing access to the sea.

1987 Great storm had an impact on parklands - Charlton (Farmstead of the churls, or peasants OE 1086) Park re-planted avenues of Lime. Original park featured ornamental lakes for swan, waterfalls and winding brooks, but today these are dry nearly all the time.

Water crowfoot, amphibious bistort in pond at Bourne Park.
Watercress and foals watercress in stream.

Bridge grew up where the Old Dover Road crossed over river.

Aquatic plants provide food source and habitat for mammals such as water voles, for invertebrates such as dragonflies and shelter for fish.
Run-off exacerbated by run off from arable field hence buffer strips important.

The Little Stour is one of three ALF rivers in Kent. Over 200 years ago, a section of the river between Littlebourne and Seaton was diverted to provide a head of water for several water mills. This stretch is particularly vulnerable to drying because the riverine gravels are above the water table.

Not necc to weed cut whole channel as same improvement in flow can be attained from an 80% cut. By not cutting all the channel ie. leaving a marginal fringe of vegetation and most submerged plants biodiversity can be restored. For eg above Littlebourne in 2000. Several spp of mayflies and caddis flies appeared, increased water velocity in the narrowed channel scoured out clean gravel with water crowfoot appearing for the first time. In river veg also helped to maintain summer flows. In 2002 the channel was severely weed cut, the crowfoot disappeared and a thick deposit of silt returned to the channel.

Floods 2000/2001. Started rising again in 2002/03

In the 1800s horse drawn barges from Sandwich brought coal from London to the quay at Seaton. Returned with flour milled in the four local mills. The wheat for the flour was not always grown locally, and following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1849, when Free Trade was re-instated, Russian wheat was shipped from ports in the Black Sea to be milled here and sold in the neighbourhood.

Flow of at least 31.4 million gallons per day was required to turn the millwheel at Wickhambreaux. The present flow (1972) is less than one tenth of this, 3.105 million per day Robert Spain for the Stour Valley Society 1972).

Wheat, barley, oats and hops. Good for hops because sheltered.

Bifrons Park with its mansion in ruins has only avenues of limes and wellingtonias and ornate bridges to mark its previous position as one of the finer estates in the valley.

100m PIT -
Tom - 90
L. 900 100+ Lower Stone used to support sand through
Tuplet
Shovel
Snew

Cruc - 104.64 in front av. 18.74 in Cabby