Introduction

Part of the conglomeration of towns known as the Medway Towns, Strood alone sits on the northwestern bank of the River Medway. Many of the street names reflect this tie to the past, when much of the land belonged to the Earl of Darnley.

The Trail has been created by community volunteers to encourage families to walk, explore and enjoy the many varied and wonderful aspects of our neighbourhood.

We have chosen the Knights Templar as our theme and logo for the route sign as Strood was an important place when the knights rested here on the way to Canterbury, Dover and far-off lands. Strood is still an important link, with the new high-speed trains taking people far and wide.

Regeneration and new developments are everywhere and the Strood Community Trail is part of this new beginning, making Strood a place we are proud to live in.

“The Thames and Medway Canal

The Thames and Medway Canal opened in 1824, linked the two rivers by tunnelling through the Hoo Peninsula, shortening the passage to London for boats and barges by 40 miles. A straight 2¼ mile tunnel was dug out with pick and shovel through the chalk hills from Strood to Higham. In 1845 it was sold to the railway who drained it and installed tracks through the tunnel. The railway still passes through the tunnel and the brick entrance can be seen just north of Strood station at Frindsbury. In 1969 the Strood Basin was filled in and a housing estate built on the site. The lock gates remain as a reminder of this part of Strood’s heritage.

Rede Common

Rede Common, locally as Sandy Banks due to the underlying geology of sandstone. Twenty-five acres of open space on the doorstep of many Strood residents. It was formerly farmland used for grazing, arable and market gardening. It is now an area of open grasslands surrounded by scrub and trees with many informal pathways and is loved by many locals. The grass is left to grow tall giving a wonderful wild feel as it billows in the breeze and is a riot of colour in the summer with grasshoppers and crickets. Abundant bramble and scrub is home to many ground nesting birds like the willow warbler, chiffchaff, whitethroat and blackcap.

On a single day in May the RSPB recorded 29 different bird species. In autumn the opening fruit of blackberries, haws, damsons, sloes, walnut and apples provided food for a host of birds, insects and mammals. Sparrowhawks are frequent visitors and a good indicator of the health of the common and its food chain.

The Friends of Rede Common, a volunteer group, co-manage the site with Medway Green Spaces team.

Broomhill Park

Until the 1970s a prefab estate was here and there are naturalised trees and shrubs that were originally part of someone’s garden – chestnuts, gooseberries, blackberries, damsons, cob nuts, rose hips and haws. Thanks to a lottery grant awarded to the Friends of Broomhill, some self-seeded trees have been cleared opening the 360° view of the Thames to the north, the Medway from the estuary at Sheerness, past Gillingham, Chatham and Rochester to Blue Bell Hill in the west.

The grant has also paid for the new ‘Playbuilder’ adventure playground for older children, seating points and interpretation boards. The Friends manage the site with Greenspaces as a welcome green lung for the local community.

It is said that Charles Dickens would walk from Higham to listen to an organ powered by the sails of Field’s Mill which stood at Broomhill.

Temple Marsh

Temple Marsh is recognised as one of Kent’s important local wildlife sites. Some birds, whose numbers are in decline, are regular visitors to Temple Marsh. In spring, from late April, listen out for nightingales singing in the scrub around the dentist cement works. Bramble is essential to the whitebeam, a summer visitor, for nesting and food; turtle doves nest in hawthorn and feed on seeds in the short, dry grass. Green woodpeckers can be seen near the river.

Plants such as marjoram, centaury, yellow-wort, milk thistle and kidney vetch are to be found on the waste ground while the small strips of saltmarsh below the river bank support plants including sea aster, sea lavender, glasswort and sea purslane.

The bracken between Temple Farm produced more than 7.5 million bricks in 1845 alone.

Temple Manor

The Tudor manor was a royal manor until Henry II gave it to the Knights Templar around 1159. This was an order of monastic soldiers established during the Crusades to protect Christian pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land. The order became extremely wealthy and powerful until the early 14th century when the order was suppressed throughout Europe.

Temple Manor is part of a range of buildings assembled by the Knights, which included a timber hall, barns, kitchens and stables. The stone building which has survived was added around 1240. The brick extensions date from the 17th century.

The lower lying areas of Strood have always been prone to flooding. During the flood of 1898 boats could be rowed up the high street. The two flood gates on Canal Road are still closed when high tide threatens.

The Thames and Medway Canal

Strood

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**Route directions**

Starting from the Strood side of the motorway underpass continue along the unmade road passing Knight’s Place Recreation Ground car park to the left, shortly reaching junction with Albatross Avenue. Turn left and continue along Albatross Avenue until junction with High Way. Cross Albatross Avenue and proceed down High Way for approximately half-a-mile, passing a strip of shops on the right. Cross Blyth Way at zebra crossing and continue on left hand footpath, crossing Scholars Rise. Take the next left, Darnley Close. Proceed to end and ascend flight of steps leading to Carnation Road. Hyacinth Road is visible almost directly ahead.

Cross Carnation Road to walk up Hyacinth Road. This road splits to right and left, take the left hand turn. Continue past two houses on the left shortly reaching some satic steps to the right leading into Rade Common.

Go up the steps and proceed along the main path through a wooded area. Carry on up several small flights of steps. This path ends at a T-junction. Take right hand path which almost immediately reaches open grassland. At this point turn left and follow the path along the hedgerow. Continue at a right hand T-junction, taking time to admire the splendid views on offer. At junction take left hand tree-lined path. Continue along this path, keeping to the right to descend a flight of steps onto Wading Street.

Cross Wading Street at the lights. Turn right to walk down tree-lined Wading Street. A public footpath (looking more like an unmade road) is quickly reached on the left, opposite Elaine Avenue. Turn left and walk up this path which soon becomes a tarmac road. Continue past the bungalows on the right and follow this made road round to the right, between houses and onto Dean Road. Dean Road extends directly in front.

At this junction take the path to the left. The road quickly changes into a tree-lined road and leads to the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) of Temple Manor and leads to the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) of Temple Manor and leads to the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) of Temple Manor and leads to the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) of Temple Manor.

Cross Abbey Road and walk up the narrow pathway just to the right of the post box. This path passes between houses and then open grass space with many trees to join the main path along the Gravesend Road. Turn left and walk up the Gravesend Road.

Cross Abbey Road again. Almost directly opposite Abbey Road on the other side of the Gravesend Road is Broomhill Road. This is where the trail is heading.

Cross the Broomhill Road. Proceed up Broomhill Road on the right hand path and take the first road to the left, Gorse Road. This road has no footpath so proceed with care. Walk up to the very end and take the second footpath to the left. (BRS). Continue past the microwave mast and reservoir on the right to reach an open, hard-surfaced area with a number of adjoining paths. This is Brownhill Park. The park offers some great views over the rivers Thames and Medway. Take time to explore.

Take the path on the right. Proceed down many steps, straight through the park. Exit by a flight of steps to a pathway. Turn right and walk a short distance before meeting a pathway to the left leading into a green, open space housing estate. The path runs parallel to Clarendon Drive.

Continue along this almost straight path, catching the great views to the right when there is a gap between houses.

**Strood Community Trail**

**Strood**

The name Strood is probably derived from Sford or Sford – a small land surrounded by marsh.

**RANCISMORE HABITAT**

Local people are designing mosaic artwork which will be sited about the route of the Strood Community Trail.

**A five mile (8km) trail around Strood, taking in its streets, green spaces and Riverside Heritage**

Places marked on the map are described overleaf.

**Strood**

In the spring Wading Street is a riot of pink and white blossom with crocuses and daffodils in the broad grass verge. Autumn brings a russet, gold and bronze beauty to it.

**350,000BC**

Nomadic people passed through this area when mammals and weasels roamed the land. Stone Age tools and hunting weapons have been found, as have the remains of these creatures.

**4,000BC**

During the Neolithic period people began to settle here. They cleared forests, cultivated land for crops and kept animals.

**2,000 BC**

The Bronze Age. People began working in metal, making tools and ornaments. Trade links were created with other parts of the country and the continent. One of the trade routes was probably the track later known as the Pilgrims Way.

**500BC**

The Iron Age. It is thought that the first Medway town was established at Rochester. Strood’s neighbour over the river, around this time.

**AD43-410**

The second Roman invasion took place in AD 43; the Romans headed to London from Dover crossing the Medway downstream of Strood. They built the first known bridge over the river between Rochester and Strood, and built Wading Street, establishing the road to London. An agricultural settlement existed at Frindsbury where there was also a villa.

**410-1066**

The Roman army left Britain at the start of the 5th century. Saxon from Northern Europe arrived and settled. St Augustine brought Christianity to Britain, establishing a foundation at Rochester in 604. In the 9th and 10th centuries Strood was pillaged by the Danes. A wooden bridge was built across the Medway around 960.

**1066-1040**

After the Norman Conquest people’s lives dominated by the church and a feudal system. Henry II gave Strood, previously a Royal Manor, to the Knights Templar. By 1391 a new stone bridge was built, paid for with money made as a result of the Hundred Years War with France. The Knights Templar gave Newark Hospital to Strood.

**1536-1541**

The Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII took place. Strood had belonged to the Rochester monastery from 1345 until the dissolution, when it passed to Lord Cobham. Poorest people had previously been cared for by the monasteries and this act resulted in much destitution.

**18th century**

Travel made easier with the advent of stagecoaches, the London to Dover running through Strood became busier and busier. Hasted, in his study of Kent (1778-99), said Strood’s inhabitants were chiefly seafaring or fishermen, and engaged in dredging systems.

**19th century**

Cement and brick-making industry established. Strood expanded to provide housing for the workers, who laboured on the railway added to the town’s importance.

**20th century to now**

Cement industry gone and replaced by more housing, business parks and major retail outlets. Regeneration schemes in progress for the redevelopment of land along the riverside.