

Ecological scoping survey of the Crab & Winkle Line in Whitstable, Kent

(from just south of Teynham Road
to The Sidings)

Prepared for the Crab & Winkle Line Trust by
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Ecological scoping survey of the Crab & Winkle Line in Whitstable, Kent

Introduction

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway, known locally as the Crab & Winkle Line, was opened in 1830 and became the first regular steam passenger railway in the world. It was originally built to transport coal and merchandise between Canterbury and Whitstable harbour and ran for 7 miles along a direct route between the city and the port.

Passenger services continued on this line until 1930; the line finally closed as a railway on the 1st December 1952. After closure the tracks were removed and some sections of the railway either returned to farmland or woodland or were built upon.

In 1997 The Crab & Winkle Line Trust was set up and this organisation seeks to promote the line as a public access and sustainable transport link between Canterbury and Whitstable. A cycle path now runs along significant sections of the old line and a further incorporation of an extant section remaining in Whitstable (just south of Teynham Road to The Sidings) is envisaged.

As part of the planning process for the incorporation of this remaining section into the cycle path Bramley Associates was commissioned by The Crab & Winkle Line Trust to undertake an ecological scoping survey of the area.

The scoping survey set out to:

- consider the current biological interest of the section
- recommend any future biological recording requirements
- recommend related survey work and searches.

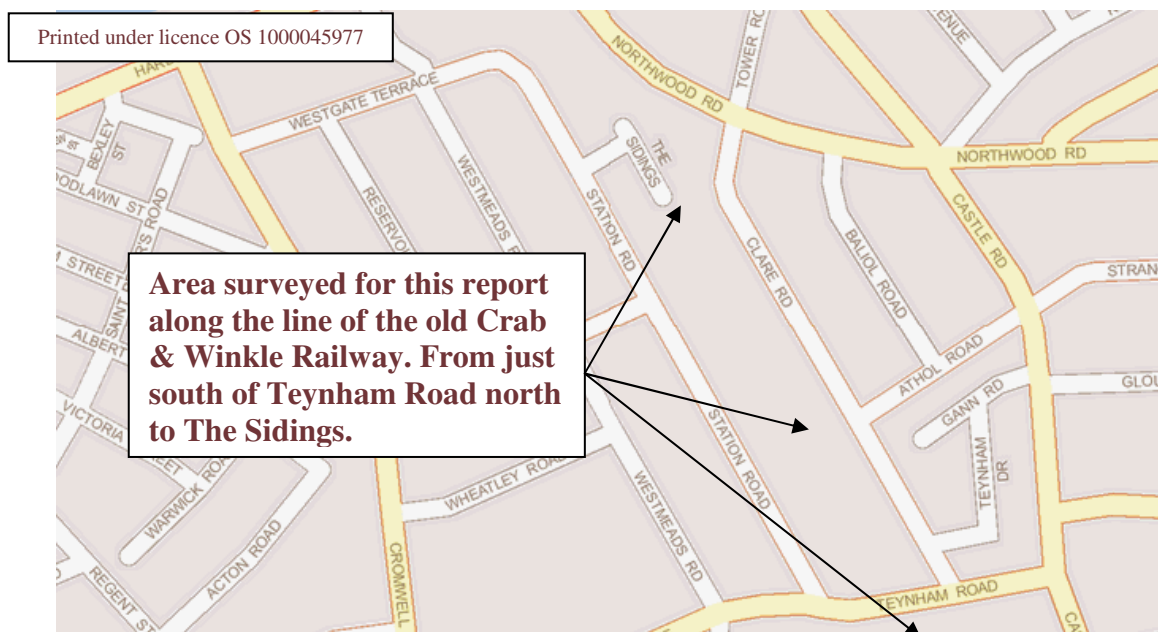


Figure 1. Showing the length of the old Crab & Winkle Line in Whitstable surveyed for this report

Surveyed area: just south of Teynham Road north to The Sidings

This section of the old railway line is some 350 metres long and 10 metres wide and lies approximately south to north. It is actually divided by Teynham Road into two parts, a very small sub-section south of Teynham Road and a much longer sub-section north.

Most of the section is embanked and this embankment increases in size and height southwards towards Teynham Road. Vegetation cover on the embankment and track line is mainly self sown hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) scrub woodland. At the northern most end of the section there is a flat, open wildflower area.

Survey methods

The old railway section between Teynham Road and The Sidings was visited on three occasions during September 2006 by Bramley Associates staff.

Scoping surveys were carried out for birds, invertebrates, herptiles, terrestrial mammals and terrestrial plants.

A search of historical records held by Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre for flora and fauna recorded on the old railway section (Teynham Road to The Sidings) and within the surrounding 1km area was also undertaken (Appendix 1).

Both Kent Wildlife Trust and Natural England were contacted to obtain initial reactions from these organisations to proposals to develop this section of the old railway line.

Survey results

Historical records held by Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) indicate that there are a number of protected and biodiversity action plan (BAP) species occurring in the Whitstable area around the old railway line section, though there appear to be no records from the old railway line section itself (Appendix 1).

During visits carried out for this report a variety of animal and plant species were recorded within the surveyed section (Tables 1 and 2). In general these species are found commonly in Kent; for example all fifty three plant species recorded from the railway section (proposed development site) are shown in the Atlas of the Kent Flora (Philp, 1982) as common or widespread species, typical of ruderal habitats.

<i>Species name</i>	Common name	Site abundance
Planta		
<i>Acer pseudoplanatus</i>	Sycamore	common
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	present
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> ,	Creeping bent	common
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow foxtail	present
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley	present
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Burdock	present
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oatgrass	present
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black horehound	common
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	common
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Soft brome	present
<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	Barren brome	common
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's purse	common
<i>Cardaria draba</i>	Thanet weed	common
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	present
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field bindweed	present
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	very common
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's foot	common
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Carrot	present
<i>Elytrigia (Agropyron) repens</i>	Couch	common
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	common
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	present
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	very common
<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	Wall barley	present
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Rye-grass	present
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Bird's-foot trefoil	present
<i>Malus domestica</i>	Apple	present
<i>Malva sylvestica</i>	Common mallow	present
<i>Malva lupulina</i>	Black medick	present
<i>Phleum bertolonii</i>	Smaller cat's-tail	present
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	common
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow-grass	very common
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow-grass	present
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	present
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	present
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Wild rose	present
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled dock	present
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	very common
<i>Salix cinerea</i> ssp. <i>oleifolia</i>	Grey willow	present
<i>Salix</i> spp.	Long-leaved willow	present
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	present
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort	present
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	present
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Charlock	present
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet	common
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly sow-thistle	present
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Chickweed	common
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Trefoil	present
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover	present
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	common
<i>Ulmus procera</i>	English elm	common
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	very common
<i>Vicia sativa</i> <i>segetalis</i>	Common vetch	present
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel	present

Table 1. Plant species recorded during visits to the old Crab & Winkle Line railway section in Whitstable.

<i>Species name</i>	Common name	Site abundance (number seen)
Insecta (general)		
<i>Forficula auricularia</i>	Earwig	very common
<i>Anthocoris nemorum</i>	Mirid	present
<i>Dolichonabis limbatus</i>	Nabid	present
<i>Edwardsiana rosae</i>	Leafhopper	common
<i>Empoasca decipiens</i>	Leafhopper	present
<i>Eupteryx urticae</i>	Leafhopper	common
<i>E. florida</i>	Leafhopper	common
<i>Fagocyba cruenta</i>	Leafhopper	very common
<i>Heterogaster urticae</i>	Lygaeid	present
<i>Heterotoma planicornis</i>	Mirid	present
<i>Javasella pellucida</i>	Planthopper	present
<i>Liocoris tripustulatus</i>	Mirid	present
<i>Lindbergina aurovittata</i>	Leafhopper	present
<i>Leptoterna dolabrata</i>	Leafhopper	present
<i>Nabis rugosus</i>	Nabid	present
<i>Philaenus spumarius</i>	Froghopper	common
<i>Philaenus arbustorum</i>	Mirid	present
<i>Psylla melanoneura</i>	Psyllid	present
<i>Psylla peregrina</i>	Leafhopper	common
<i>Ribautiana tenerrima</i>	Leafhopper	present
<i>Ribautiana ulmi</i>	Leafhopper	present
<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Ladybird	present
<i>Adalia bipunctata</i>	Ladybird	present
<i>Thea 22-punctata</i>	22-spot ladybird	common
<i>Chorthippus brunneus</i>	Common grasshopper	present
<i>Leptophyes punctatissima</i>	Speckled bush-cricket	1
<i>Pentatomidae sp</i>	Shield bug	present
<i>Tipulidae sp.</i>	Crane-fly	present
<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Drone-fly	present
<i>Vespidae sp</i>	Social wasp	present
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honey bee	present
<i>Bombus lucorum</i>	White-tailed bumble	present
<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	Red-tailed	present
<i>Bombus hortorum,</i>	Garden bumblebee	present
<i>Dolichovespula media</i>	Wasp	present
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Honey bee	present
<i>Lasius niger</i>	Ant	present
<i>Ectopsocus briggsi</i>	Bark louse	common
<i>Microtomus variegatus</i>	Brown lacewing	present
<i>Conwentzia psociformis</i>	White lacewing	present
<i>Chrysopa carnea</i>	Lacewing	present
<i>Chrysopa perla</i>	Lacewing	present
<i>Acanthosoma haemorroidale</i>	Hawthorn shield bug	present
<i>Palomena prasina</i>	Green shield bug	present
<i>Pogonocherus hispidus</i>	Longhorn beetle	present
<i>Dasyneura urticae</i>	Midge	larvae
<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>	Hoverfly	present
<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Hoverfly	several patrolling

<i>Species name</i>	Common name	Site abundance (number seen)
Insecta (general)		
<i>Musca domestica</i>	Housefly	present
<i>Platycheirus albimanus</i>	Housefly	present
<i>P. scutatus</i>	Housefly	present
<i>Sarcophaga carnaria</i>	Flesh-fly	present
<i>Conops ceriaeformis</i>	Conopid-fly	1
<i>Myathropa florea</i>	Hoverfly	1
<i>Sargus bipunctatus</i>	Soldierfly	1
Arachnids		
<i>Araneus diadematus</i>	Garden spider	very common
<i>Panonychus ulmi</i>	Spider mite	common
<i>Phyllocoptes goniothorax</i>	Mite	present
Lepidoptera: butterflies/moths		
<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Large white	1
<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	Small white	4
<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Red admiral	3
<i>Polygonum c-album</i>	Comma	1
<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	Speckled wood	4
<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	Holly Blue	1 caterpillar
<i>Aglais urticae</i>	Small tortoiseshell	Breeding?
<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Meadow brown	present
<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Common blue	1
<i>Orgyia antiqua</i>	Vapourer	4 males
<i>Biston betularia</i>	Peppered moth	present
<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	Hummingbird moth	1
<i>Eurrhpara hortulata</i>	Small magpie	larva
<i>Agrhila tristella</i>	Grass moth	common
<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	present
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden carpet	present
<i>Tortix sp.</i>	Torticids	3 species seen flying
<i>Pterophorid sp.</i>	Brown plume	common
Mollusca		
<i>Deroceras reticulatum</i>	Field slug	present
<i>Cepaea nemoralis</i>	Snail	present
<i>Helix aspersa</i>	Snail	present
Isopoda		
<i>Oniscus asellus</i>	Woodlouse	present
Vertebrata: birds & mammals		
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon	8
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Collared Dove	3
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock	4
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin	2
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird	10
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiffchaff	1, singing
<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Blue tit	4
<i>Parus major</i>	Great tit	1
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie	1
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Starling	5

<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House sparrow	17 (including flock of 10, with juvs)
Species name	Common name	Site abundance (number seen)
Vertebrata: birds & mammals		
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch	1
<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Goldfinch	1 adult, feeding 3-4 fledglings
<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	Brown rat	1 dead

Table 2. Animal species recorded during visits to the old Crab & Winkle Line railway section in Whitstable.

Responses by Kent Wildlife Trust and Natural England

Telephone conversations regarding the proposed cycleway development of the old railway section were carried out between Jon Bramley (of Bramley Associates) and Richard Moyse (Kent Wildlife Trust) and Sean Hanna (Natural England) during the week ending 25th November 2006.

Kent Wildlife Trust required that all protected and BAP species and habitats were duly considered within the survey and proposed development and that the status of the area as an existing Site of Nature Conservation Interest/Local Wildlife Site (SNCI/LWS) should be examined.

Natural England required that where identified as potential habitat for protected species additional survey work for these species should be carried out.

The section of the Crab & Winkle line considered for this report does not fall within any existing SNCI/LWS and future measures required for the survey of potential resident protected species are outlined in the Discussion and recommendations section below.

Discussion and recommendations

Most of the records of protected and BAP species held by KMBRC relate either to observations made south of the proposed development site (and south of the existing London to Margate railway line) or north of the development site and along the slopes of the nearby coastline. No records of protected or BAP species appear to have been collected from the development site itself, though records of some species, e.g. bats and slow-worm, relate to nearby garden areas.

Scoping surveys carried out by Bramley Associates on the development site indicate that the site contains mainly ruderal and widespread plant and animal species. However, while it is likely that the site holds limited numbers of protected and BAP species it should be recognised that this area does form a significant local wildlife corridor within the otherwise urban environment of Whitstable. Development within this corridor, even for a relatively low impact construction such as a cycleway, should be undertaken sensitively and in due regard for the existing wildlife habitats of this area. To help achieve this sensitive development and to fulfil the requirements of both KWT and NE a number of more specific surveys for protected/BAP species are required, and these are outlined below.

The secondary scrub woodland and rank grassland areas of the surveyed railway section provide good nesting and foraging opportunities for a variety of resident and migratory bird species. As the development of a cycleway will require a degree of scrub removal it is recommended that a full nesting bird survey be undertaken prior to the site being developed.

The habitats along the old railway section also have good potential for herptiles, especially slow-worm and viviparous lizard, and a survey for these protected species, which are known to occur in Whitstable, is required in advance of development works.

No signs of badger or water vole were recorded in the scoping visits and although the habitat is possibly suitable for dormice it is probably too small in size and too isolated to contain them. It is our opinion that further surveys for these three protected species are not required.

Bats are recorded from nearby areas and trees on the proposed development site could provide potential roosting places. The Crab & Winkle Line Trust have a good working relationship with Kent Bat Group and it is recommended that the Group be approached to undertake a bat survey of the section prior to development works commencing.

Within the proposed cycleway development there is the opportunity to achieve actual habitat enhancements. For example any proposed bridge over Teynham Road could incorporate bat friendly structures; also for example any scrub cleared during the cycleway construction could be used to build herptile hibernacula or buried to encourage stag beetles and other invertebrates. The most northerly end of the section could also be developed as a wildflower meadow, sown with local provenance seed.

References

Philp, E. 1982. Atlas of the Kent Flora. Kent Field Club, Maidstone, Kent.

Appendix 1

Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre
report regarding
Crab & Winkle Line Railway, Whitstable