

**Exploring the Story Trail** Please go to the start of the trail 1 on the map. Now read part 1 - 10 of the story 'Ollie Finds a New Home' (overleaf).

Follow his journey until you have visited the final marker 10 leading back to the River Tone Bridge.

**Note:** At French Weir you may wish to take a detour to explore Longrun Meadow and view the willow cathedral.



# River Tone Story Trail

Circular, family-fun story trail  
1.5km riverside walk



## Story Trail - directions

- 1 From **Bridge Street**, turn into the passage way between Debenhams and Retail Therapy Boutique. Walk through the large open area (*The Shed cafe can be seen to your left*)
- 2 Follow path alongside the River Tone.
- 3 4 Cross over footbridge to arrive at **Mill Leat**.
- 5 From **Mill Leat** there are two pathways which circle **Goodland Gardens** leading onto a single pathway.
- 6 Follow this path where you will see the unusual brick tree on the right. Continue all the way until you reach a busy road (Castle Street). Carefully cross over the road to rejoin the **Mill Stream** path on the other side.
- 7 Follow the pathway with the **Mill Stream** on your left. The pathway will eventually veer off to the right and lead uphill to a busy road. Please use the pedestrian crossing to cross to the other side where you can rejoin the Mill Stream walk. Follow the path (with the Mill Stream on your left) until you reach **French Weir**.
- 8 Cross **French Weir bridge** where you will get the full view of the River Tone. At the end of the bridge you may wish to explore **Longrun Meadow** and visit the **Willow Cathedral**.
- 9 Otherwise continue past the children's park. The **River Tone** is now on your right. Follow the path until you reach Clarence Street. Walk for a short distance before the path breaks off to the right to rejoin the **River Tone** pathway. (*A small green area can be found on your left*)
- 10 Continue along the path under **Tangier Bridge** where you can find a mural depicting life on the River Tone.

## Wildlife you may spot along the riverbank



Long-tailed tit



Bat



Kingfisher



Egret



spot the Otters  
How many can you see?

**Disclaimer:** This Story Trail is a guide only. Please be aware we accept no liability for damage, loss or injury of any nature arising from using this trail.

## KEY

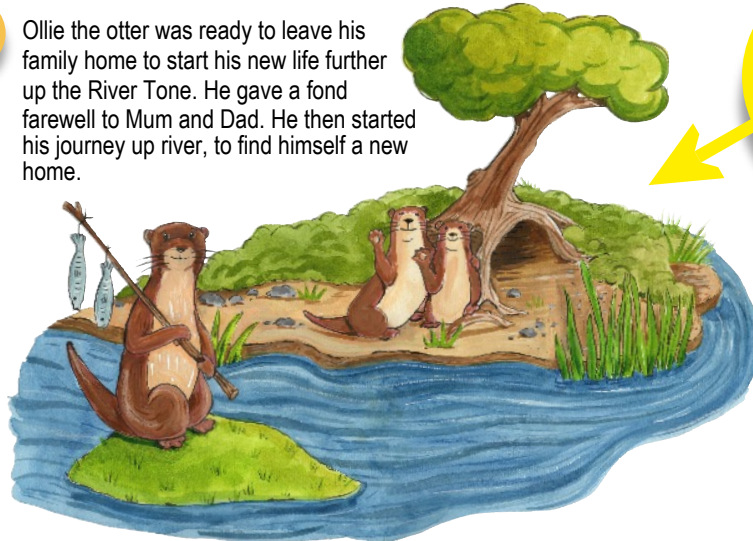
	RiverTone		Path		Car park
	River Tone Story Trail		Bridge		Cafe
	Road		Road crossing		Trail Markers
			Pedestrian Crossing		



# Ollie Finds a New Home

1

Ollie the otter was ready to leave his family home to start his new life further up the River Tone. He gave a fond farewell to Mum and Dad. He then started his journey up river, to find himself a new home.



**It's TRUE!**

Male otters leave their family home to start a new life and make a new home called a **holt**.

Ollie began his journey

2

It wasn't long before Ollie reached the River Tone Bridge. He looked up to the huge houses and shops. He heard deafening rumbles beneath the bridge as the cars and buses zoomed past. The smells were very different to back home. Ollie wasn't sure if the bridge was going to make a good home, until he heard a little shout from the side of the riverbank.



**It's TRUE!**

Since rivers have become cleaner, otters like Ollie look to set up homes in towns and cities.

3

"Bonjour!" cried a tiny voice. Ollie swam to the side of the riverbank to get a better look. A little water vole sat inside a drain pipe. "I'm Vernay, 'Vern' for short," he said. "I live further up river by French Weir, that is why they call me 'Vernay' - a British water vole with a French twist!" Ollie smiled and explained to Vern how he had travelled all the way up river to Taunton Town to find a new home. "I know plenty of places on the river to make a home," said Vern excitedly. "Follow me and I'll show you the sights and sounds of the River Tone," and off they swam towards Mill Leat.

4

Ollie and Vern reached the old stone walls of Mill Leat. Two mallard ducks sat squabbling on a stone ridge along the side of the wall. Ollie swam up to the ducks. "This looks a nice place to live. Can I make my home here with you?" Ollie said with a smile. "This is no home for an otter!" quacked the ducks. "This place was once used as an old Mill and the walls are stone - too hard to dig a holt. If it's a home you're looking for you need to travel further up river, through Goodland Gardens." Ollie and Vern thanked the ducks and off they went.



7

Vern and Ollie swam through a quiet part of the river. Vern was now feeling hungry and looked for leaf shoots, roots and berries to eat. He scooped up a small apple that had fallen from a tree and Ollie went fishing. Just as Vern was about to take a nibble from the apple, Winnie the grey wagtail flew down all in fluster to say that Geraldine the gull was in trouble.



8

There stood Geraldine the gull on the bank with a plastic ring firmly stuck around her neck. Both Ollie and Vern nibbled at the plastic ring with all their might when suddenly it gave way and slipped away from the neck of the gull. "Thank you!" said the relieved gull, as she shook her head and took off to the sky. Vern explained to Ollie that sometimes litter can drop into the river and cause lots of problems for wildlife. "We have to be very careful," Vern said with a sigh. "Come on Ollie, I'll take you to where I live and it's a very exciting part of the river."



6



**It's TRUE!**

On the trail you will find a tree that actually has house bricks.

Ollie and Vern scrambled out of the river and scurried over to the most peculiar tree - it had house bricks growing out of its branch. Ollie was more interested in the rather large hole at the side of the tree. "I can see straight through this hole," said Ollie. Vern quickly pointed out to Ollie that he wouldn't be hidden living in the brick tree and it was too far away from the water's edge. "Come on Ollie, we'd better get back into the river before we're seen."

10

Ollie could hear children playing in the park. It reminded him of all the fun he had with his brothers and sisters, taking turns to slide down the bank into the water. He followed Vern further down river and gave out a sigh thinking he would never find a home, when suddenly Vern shouted "Ollie, look!". Ollie gasped, as there alongside the river bank stood the most beautiful willow tree he'd ever seen. At the base of the tree was a natural hollow made by the roots of the tree, perfect for keeping Ollie protected and sheltered. At last Ollie had found a home.

**It's TRUE!**

30 years ago very few water voles survived on the rivers because of pollution, but since our rivers are much cleaner, water voles now thrive along the riverbanks.

5



**It's TRUE!**

Egrets are frequently spotted on the River Tone.

It wasn't long before Vern spotted Eddie egret fishing by a large stone tunnel. It had a lovely dark hole. Ollie swam closer to see. "This could be my home!" shouted Ollie excitedly. "My family home was a dark hole under the roots of a tree. I could live here!" Eddie egret gave out a croak, "This wouldn't make a good home for you!" he laughed. "This is a drainage pipe." The egret pointed further up river. "If it's a tree you're looking for, there is a very large tree on the side of the bank." Ollie and Vern thanked Eddie and they gave a wave goodbye. "Good luck!" Eddie shouted as he continued hunting for fish.



**Did you spot an Otter?**



As for Vern, he was just truly delighted that Ollie was going to be his new riverbank neighbour on the River Tone.