

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY





A HISTORY OF THE BY BROOK

By Ken Tatem

INTRODUCTION

The By Brook is a tributary of the Bristol Avon River, situated roughly in the centre of that river's catchment.

In recent geological history, the By Brook was the headwaters of the Avon; drainage to the south, east and north of its catchment being to the headwaters of the River Thames.



Then, a major shift along a fault line captured these waters for the River Avon, the sudden increase in water-cut gorges through what is now Bristol and Bath exposing deep springs, including Bath's hot springs. This also caused the By Brook to run deeper and steeper, creating the beautiful valley it now runs through, and leaving it as a minor tributary of the larger river.



Left: The By Brook valley below Slaughterford
Below: The By Brook upstream of Widdenham Mill

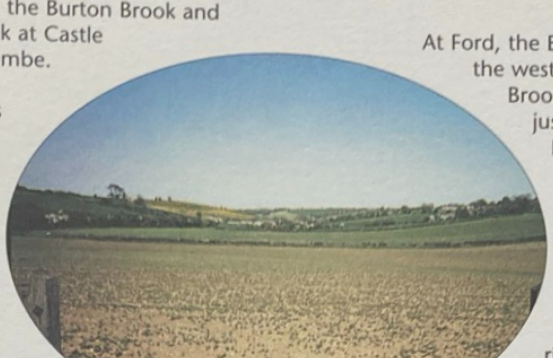


Front Cover Photos:
Top left: The marshy bank of the By Brook at Bathford
Middle: The weir at the site of Wick Mill on the Broadmead Brook
Bottom left: The derelict mill wheel at Slaughterford Rag Mill

TRIBUTARIES AND GEOLOGY

The northern part of the 100 km^2 By Brook catchment is dominated by the gently north east sloping Great Oolite Limestone plateau within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The By Brook itself starts from the confluence of its two tributaries, the Burton Brook and the Broadmead Brook at Castle Hill, above Castle Combe.



These two tributaries cut through Forest Marble Clays overlying the limestone. The source of the southern tributary, the Broadmead Brook, is at Pennsylvania to the east of the A46; with a smaller branch rising at West Littleton and joining at Shire Hill. The source of the northern tributary is just south of the M4 junction at Tormarton, which takes a great deal of run off from the motorway since its construction in the early 70's.

South from Slaughterford, the Brook cuts through the Great Oolite Limestone, and further south, the underlying Fullers Earth and Inferior Oolite Limestone to expose the Midford sands. The steepness of the exposed valley outcrops mean that landslips are common.

At Ford, the Brook is joined from the west by the Doncombe Brook whose source is just south of Marshfield. The By Brook for most of its length is a model for an ideal river, rich in varied habitats, meandering, creating pools and riffles, eroding banks for wildlife, and supporting a great variety of species. Some lengths have remained untouched for 70 years or more. Despite its input of M4 runoff in the Burton Brook, the water quality on the whole length of the By Brook is 1A.

Above: The source of the Broadmead Brook at Pennsylvania
Below: Footbridge crossing the By Brook below Castle Hill at Castle Combe



WATER MILLS OF THE BY BROOK

The steepness of the river, dropping 200m in 25 km from its highest point to its confluence with the River Avon, has encouraged man to use the power of the Brook for milling since at least Roman times.

There is evidence of at least 20 mill sites down the Brook, and the valley's history is very much the history of these mills.

In Roman times the mills were exclusively used for grinding corn, but by the end of the 12th Century, this corner of Wiltshire became an important centre for the growing wool trade. Mills were converted to the cleansing and thickening of wool by a process known as fulling.

With the decline of the woollen industry in the 1600's. accelerated by Civil War and plague, many mills returned to grinding grain, and fulling finally ceased when steam power shifted clothmaking to the north in the Industrial Revolution.

The rise in demand for paper for packaging from nearby Bristol led to many mills in the 18th and 19th centuries converting to paper making. Although some of these reverted back to local corn grinding, paper producing was a feature of the By Brook valley well into the 20th century.

The existence of so many mills on such a small brook caused many inter-neighbour disputes about water level management and use of resources; some of these resurface today.





GLOSSARY

Fulling - Beating of wool with Fullers' Earth to interlock the fibres
Gig - Winding skein to wool
Grist - Grinding grain - mills variously referred to as corn, flour or grist
Nap - Producing the soft furry surface of cloth

Main photo: Upper Long Dean Mill
Top: Gatcombe Mill
Middle: The old mill leat at West Kington Mill

THE MILLS

1.GOULTERS MILL aka Littleton Mill (1773)

Mentioned in the Domesday Book. Corn Mill dating from Saxon times. Seasonal only due to insufficient water during drier months.

2.GATCOMBE MILL aka Gadcombe Mill

Of greater significance than Goulters Mill, Gatcombe was known to be a corn mill in 1887, and continued in use until the 1920's. There is no evidence of use other than to grind corn, but the proximity to Castle Combe raises the possibility of earlier cloth industry, unless water was insufficient.



3.TANNERS MILL aka Old Mill (1887)

Existence shown on 1773 map, now incorporated in the buildings of Lower Shirehill Farm. Due to inadequacy of water supply, this must have been a seasonal corn mill.

4.WEST KINGTON MILL

Size and age seem to be similar to Gatcombe Mill. In 1887 it was a corn mill which also housed a shoemaker and a butcher's shop.

5.WICK MILL aka Longs or Langs Mill and Hennars Mill

Derelict by 1887. In 1704, three mills in the parish of North Wraxall paid tythes - Doncombe Mill 4s, Ford Mill 3s 4d and Hennars Mill 4s. A cloth mill in 1802, by 1829 it became a grist mill.

6.NETTLETON MILL

Part of the Castle Combe estate, the buildings date from the 18th century. A grist mill, its undershot wheel was replaced by a turbine during the 19th century. Milling ceased at the outbreak of the First World War. In the 50's and 60's, the turbine power was used for wood cutting. There is evidence that steam power was utilised at some time, probably when stream flow was inadequate.

7. CASTLE COMBE MILL

Stepping stone weir and sluice are all that remain in the gardens of the Manor House Hotel.

8.UPPER COLHAM MILL

A barn on the old mill site is reported to have been a weaving shed. A turbine was in use in the 20th century for a sawmill on the opposite bank from the mill.

Above: Nettleton Mill
Below: The weir at the site of Castle Combe Mill





9.LOWER COLHAM MILL
Declined in importance with the demise of the wool trade. Racks of cloth would have been taken across the bank from both Colham Mills to dry on the significantly named Rack Hill, now a nature reserve.

10.UPPER LONG DEAN MILL
Reported to have been a blanket mill prior to the First World War, this was a flour mill, then changed to a grist until it ceased operation in 1956. Its undershot wheel is still in place and the rooms inside its mansard roof show evidence of the weavers who used to work there.

11.LOWER LONG DEAN MILL
Built as a paper mill by Bristol merchant, Thomas Wilde (or Wyld) in 1635, this produced brown paper for packaging Bristol's produce. Paper was still being manufactured when the mill is mentioned in 1746 and 1860, but by 1887 an OS map lists it as a corn mill. The track along the valley from Long Dean to the A420 has two strong bridges and paved sections, which suggest it was the common route for transporting the paper to the Bristol Road. The mill was destroyed by fire in the 19th century caused, as local legend would have it, by a boiler exploding, hurling its tenderer, a young lad, across the brook into Chapel Wood. The well for the water wheel remains, as does the remainder of a hatchway in what was the passageway underneath the drying house. Through this hatchway, the local doctor from Castle Combe dispenced medicine to his Long Dean patients in the second half of the 19th century.
Straddling the millstream downstream from the mill is a unique stone built privy with seating for two adults and one child at once.



12.FORD MILL
In 1725, the mill was a fulling mill, gig mill and grist mill; with racks, a furnace, presses and workhouses. In 1778, when it was rebuilt, it was a grist mill. By 17 84, it was large enough for a paper mill to be added.

13.DONCOMBE MILL
Paying a tythe of 4s in 1704, the mill was probably a fulling mill by then, and earlier could have been a corn mill. In 1778, with the local industry in decline, owner Benjamin Edwards, overstretched himself by building six new tenements (still existing as the stable block, Doncombe Mill Cottage) adjoining his fulling and gig mill. He became bankrupt and, in 1793, Charles Ward was the owner and soon the partnership of Cottle & Ward were making paper. In 1847, the mill became a corn mill.



The water in Doncombe Brook is less reliable than the By Brook, and the mill needed a reservoir covering two thirds of an acre to regulate the supply. This survives as a pond behind the mill house.

14.RAG MILL, SLAUGHTERFORD aka Overshot Mill
A mill leat, now filled in, ran over three-quarters of a kilometer from the sluices just downstream of the Doncombe Brook confluence to an overshot wheel in a fulling mill on this site. In the 1890's, rag processing

Top: Looking upstream to Doncombe Mill at Ford
Middle: Derelict Undershot Wheel at Slaughterford Rag Mill
Left: Ford Mill House

machinery was installed at the mill, and the undershot wheel which can still be seen on the derelict site dates from that time, being served by a much shorter leat from the next sluice upstream from the mill.

Also clearly identifiable on the site is the remains of a rag boiler. The mill, demolished in 1964, processed rags into individual fibres or 'stuff' which was transported in vats of elm mounted on bogies across the bridge to Chapps Mill for paper making.

The water wheel power was supplemented by a gas engine, and ran shafts and pullies to a cutting machine and conveyor belt, as well as a grindstone to sharpen the cutting machine blades.



15.CHAPPS MILL

A fulling mill until 1790, when Charles Ward of Doncombe Mill took over from the Drewett family, clothiers of Colerne and Batheaston. Charles Ward and partner William Duckett, converted the mill to paper. Iin 1805, Charles Ward was found guilty of producing unstamped paper and the sheriff confiscated all his goods. By 1818, the mill had been converted to cloth and the paper machinery was put up for sale. By 1827 the mill was back to paper making, until it closed under W J Dowding in 1994.

The By Brook approaching the mill is mad-made at a high level, and wider than the natural brook, to provide a reservoir of water.

16.WEAVERN MILL

No mill buildings remain adjacent to the now derelict Weavern Farm, only the sluice opening can be seen at the original location. The name Weavern is a corruption of Wavering, by which the meandering By Brook was known at this location. The Mill was originally a fulling mill. In 1728 it is described as a Corn Mill and in 1793 as a paper mill. It ceased work in 1834.

17.WIDDENHAM MILL

A fulling mill until 1662 then it lay derelict until the 18th century, when it returned to fulling until 1767, during which it was also a nap mill and had its own shearshop. In 1770 it was also dyeing its own cloth. Between 1817 and 1866, the mill produced paper - brown, blue and sugar.

18.DREWETTS MILL

In working order as recently as 1990, the mill originally operated an overshot wheel driving three grindstones. In recent times, power to two stones and a saw has been through a vertical turbine.



19.BOX MILL aka Pinchin's Mill

Described as corn mill and malthouse in 1887, in 1864 it was part of the Box Brewery owned by Pinchins who, in that year, closed their Northgate Brewery at Pulteney Bridge. Bought from Spafax in 1987 by musician Peter Gabriel, it was converted into his internationally famous Real World recording studios.



20.CUTTINGS MILL

Nothing is known of this mill which was a casualty of the Great Western Railway, ending up under the embankment between Middlehill Tunnel and Box Station.



Top right: Derelict buildings at Weavern Farm
Middle right: Widdenham Mill
Right: Drewett's Mill

21.SHOCKERWICK MILLS

Two mills are included in a 1270 deed, and one in a 1275 deed, but nothing is known of them, although a weir and sluice arrangement does exist today just south of the road bridge to Shockerwick.

22.BATHFORD MILL aka Forde Mills, Gamage Mills, Trevarno Mill

Mentioned in the Domesday Book, in the 16th century this was a grist and fulling mill. In 1740, the then miller sent some water from a newly discovered spring to Oxford where it was judged to contain minerals. The spring was dubbed 'Bathford Spaw', and the miller sold his estate to Dr William Oliver, founder of the Bath Oliver biscuit and the Rheumatic hospital. Dr Oliver named the mill Trevarno. In 1768, James Yeeles, a skinner, converted the mill to a leather mill. On his death, his sons converted it to paper making. In 1882 it suffered in that year's major flooding, whilst in 1884 a great deal of it was destroyed by a boiler explosion. Finally, it was completely rebuilt after another fire in 1910. In 1913, it changed from water power to steam power for 50 years. Since 1971, behind high security fencing, Portals have produced high quality paper used by financial institutions in some European countries.





COMMUNITIES

CASTLE COMBE

Originated on Castle Hill as a Roman fortification. The Saxons took over the site, and the Normans founded the village below the castle in 1135. By the middle of the 14th century, the original castle site was derelict, and stone had been removed from it to build the Manor House. At this time, Castle Combe was entering its golden era of cloth production from local wool. More important than nearby Chippenham at this tim e, it produced red and white cloth for London and Bristol. With the introduction of Flemist weavers came the Blanquet brothers who ran a nap mill. Local lore has it that this was where the word blanket originated.

The cloth industry died early in Castle Combe due to the unreliability of the By Brook. The village therefore stayed fossilised in time until declared the prettiest village in England in 1962, since when it has become a regular tourist attraction.

A major part of this attraction is the vertically banked By Brook running through the village. This was constructed as part of a flood alleviation scheme following major damage in a 1954 flood.

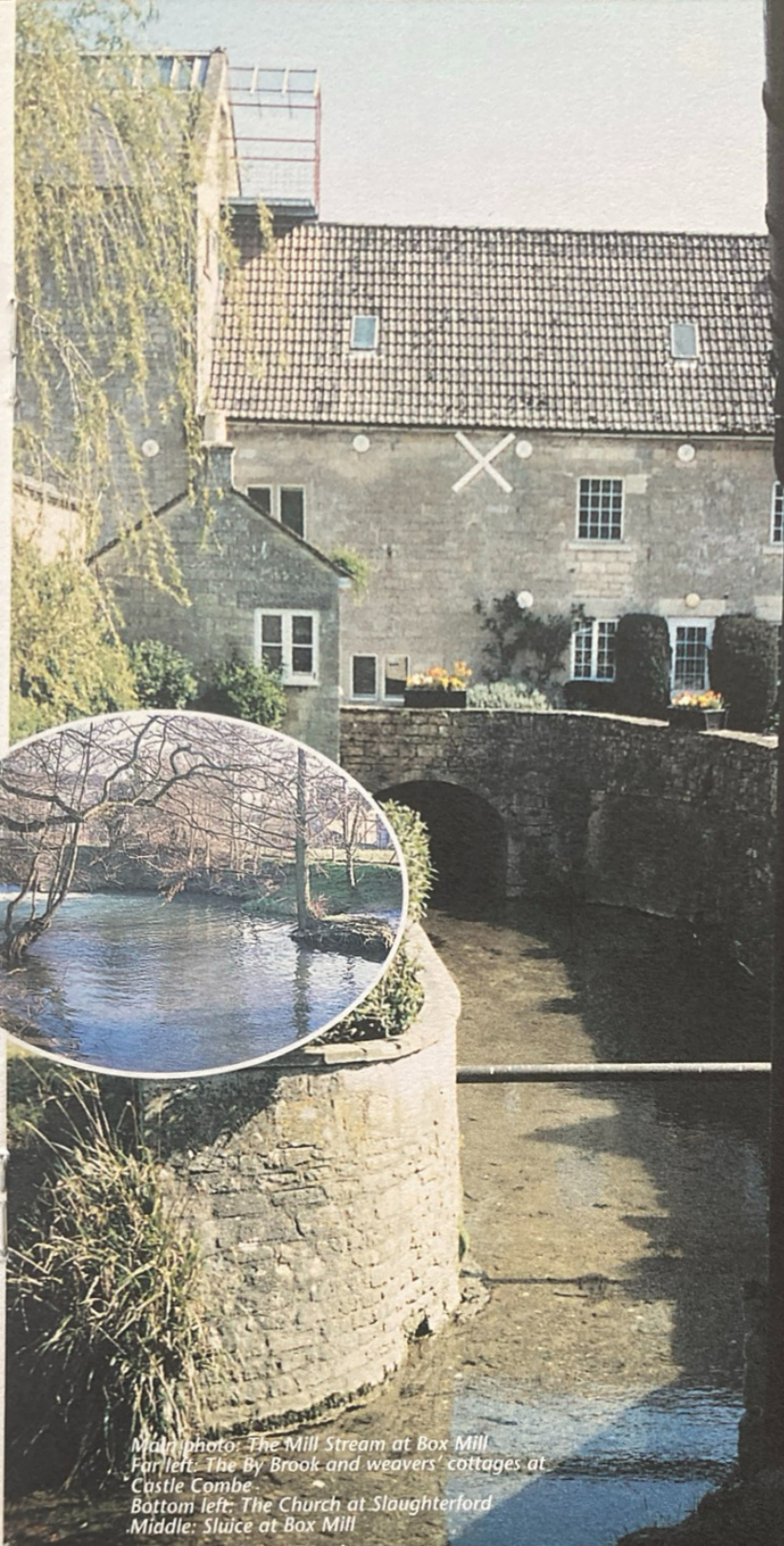
The Brook, in the vicinity of Castle Combe has attracted film makers including 1967's Dr Dolittle, and HTV's successful 1980's Robin Hood series.

SLAUGHTERFORD

An old Roman settlement where King Alfred scored his final decisive victory over the Danes in 880. Despite this, the village's gory name actually comes from the sleight or watermeadow at the ford.

King Stephen granted the Manor and Tythe of Slaughterford to the monastery at Martingy, and it was later transferred to the Priory at Monkton Farleigh. At the dissolution of the monasteries, the parish was given to Sir Thomas Seymour.

Cromwell's soldiers en route from Chippenham to board ships at Bristol, bound for their infamous exploits in Ireland,



Main photo: The Mill Stream at Box Mill
Far left: The By Brook and weavers' cottages at Castle Combe
Bottom left: The Church at Slaughterford
Middle: Sluice at Box Mill

obviously considered that the church in Slaughterford did not conform to their puritanical ideals. They rased it to the ground and it remained a ruin until the present, much smaller, church was built in 1823. For 150 years, the residents of Slaughterford had to make the trek to Biddestone to worship. Here, they were not welcome and tolerated only if they entered the church through a separate back door, and occupied the worst seats after the good citizens of Biddestone were all in place.

Slaughterford was obviously an important place, despite its small size. As well as its mills, it had a significant brewery, a courthouse and a Friends Meeting House that was the centre for Quakers from a large area.

BOX

In 1907, the site of an extensive roman villa was excavated just north of the existing churchyard. The villa was built of Box stone, although the oldest mentioned settlements associated with stone quarries are Hazelbury and Ditteridge. The Domesday Book does not mention Box. In 1227, Box Mill and Church belonged to Monkton Farleigh Priory.

Stone outcrops at Hazelbury, Henley, Rudloe and Quarry Hill were worked before extensive underground mines were developed. Quarry men and stone masons have

always been found in references to Box village life. The reputation of the stone was such that it was used up to 60 miles away for monastic buildings in 1252, whilst the opening of navigation on the River Avon from 1727 took the stone to London and other towns. Development of the industry really took off with the opening of the Great Western Railway, when the underground mines included some 60 miles of narrow gauge tracks between Box and Corsham. The industry peaked in 1909 and closed in 1970.



Box's most famous feature is the nearly two mile long railway tunnel built for the Great Western Railway under the direction of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. During construction, amongst frequent accidents that claimed 100 lives, several workers were drowned when the underground source of Corsham's Byde Mill Brook was broken into. Brunel diverted the water to the By Brook, boosting the base flow in that brook, but severely reducing that in the Corsham stream. The 28 feet span by 20 feet high tunnel was opened on 30 June 1841.

Middle Hill, just downstream from Box, boasted a medicinal well in 1686, which became a spa in 1786. Largely thanks to competition from its large neighbour, Bath, the spa failed in 1814. On the brook at Middle Hill, a crump weir gauging station is situated to gauge flows in the By Brook. The weir is designed to give a known unique relationship between water level and flow, and levels can be checked remotely through a radio link to give low flow and flood flow information.

BATHFORD

Situated at the junction of the roman roads Fosse Way and Via Julia, Bathford had two fords, one on the River Avon and one on the By Brook immediately downstream from the current roadbridge originally built in 1665. Two roman villas were discovered in the 17th century, one south of the By Brook below the Bradford-on-Avon road, and the other also adjacent to the River Avon half a mile towards Warleigh, from which Bath's roman museum displays two stones.

The Domesday Book mentions Forde as belonging to the priory at Bath. After the Romans, the road from Bath to London went through Bathford along what is now Ashley Lane. From here, the steepness of the road to Kingsdown was reported by Daniel Defoe in 1724 as alarming Queen Anne when the coach in which she was a passenger started to run backwards. The climb from the Crown Inn to what was New Inn, also required a fresh set of horses and with a new road to Kingsdown in 1759 (present day High Street), the steepness of this first 250m was reduced.

Being built on the landslipped side of the Box valley, Bathford's wells and springs have always been unreliable due to the smallness of the faulted limestone groundwater sources.

As with Box, Bathford's village life was influenced by the quarries in the hillside where the Brown's Folly nature reserve is situated. The term ashlar used for carefully squared and smoothed stone is said to derive from nearby Ashley. The stone was brought to the extensive stone wharf on the south side of High Street, east of Prospect Place. By 1887, a tramway had been constructed from the quarries to the wharf, and down the parish boundary to the Great Western Railway. This was replaced by an underground conveyor system when in 1936 the quarries were converted to a vast, underground ammunition dump, with railway sidings reopened until 1955.



The building of the Great Western Railway through Bathford brought about 100 navvies to the village which must have overwhelmed the population. The floods of January 1841 swept away the temporary bridge being used for the railway construction which, in turn, destroyed St James' Bridge in Bath. Miraculously, frost had suspended work prior to this and no-one was injured. Bathford's biggest flood occurred in 1894, when the road bridge over the By Brook was erroneously reported washed away because the flood depth was such as to show no surface disturbance over the bridge.



Natural History

The By Brook and its tributaries support a wealth of insects which provide food for fish and birds such as heron, dipper and kingfisher.

Many of the wildlife habitats present are of national importance and have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or are managed as nature reserves.

GEOMORPHOLOGY

The By Brook is one of the best rivers in the Bristol Avon Catchment for wildlife, and the valley is acknowledged as an important area of high biodiversity. The adjacent habitats of woodland, scrub and meadow add greatly to the landscape and wildlife, but the key lies in the immense variability of the river and its tributaries. Within short distances the banks change from soft earth cliffs to gently sloping shelves, or are formed by rocks and tree roots. The course of the river changes with every flood event, with active erosion and deposition processes evident on the many meanders. There are many ox bow lakes and islands, features which have been lost on many lowland rivers. The flow varies from slow backwaters and deep pools to fast flowing shallow sections over gravel substrates. The plants, fish and invertebrates of the river vary according to depth, flow and bank profile.





The river is spring-fed and many of the clear springs gushing forth from secretive locations deposit tufa, concretions of calcium carbonate which form on sticks, stones, shells and mosses in the bed of the spring.

HISTORY

The grasslands and woodlands have developed over the centuries under the influence of local people, who managed the woodlands by coppicing and thinning to produce timber for building and hazel hurdles for fencing. The grasslands became vitally important throughout the middle ages for sheep grazing, which led to the development of the woollen trade and cloth industries, providing employment for much of the rural population of Wiltshire.

The historic occupation of the valley by man is still reflected in the plants which occur here, from the monkshood introduced by the Romans as a powerful poison (aconite) and found in the vicinity of the first mills; to the soapwort used by medieval millers for soaping cloth before it went under the stamps of the mill. Danewort still grows near Slaughterford, the dwarf elder of English legend which grew spontaneously out of the blood of slaughtered Danes; whilst dyers' greenwood is abundant near the mills of Long Dean. Used to give a yellow or green dye, collecting it from the steep downlands was hard labour for the poor countrywomen who had to pull it by the roots. More recently introduced, the bright monkey flower has rampaged along streamsides throughout Britain.

WILDLIFE

Where the banks are shaded by mature trees (including alder, oak, willow and field maple) and lime-loving shrubs (such as spindle and guelder rose), ferns, mosses and liverworts

Top left: Kingfisher
Top right: Yellow Iris
Middle: Purple Loosestrife
Far right: Young Alder Trees
Left: Dipper
Right: Dragonfly



thrive. In more open areas, the tall herbs are diverse and include such attractive plants as meadow rue, purple loosestrife, kingcups and yellow iris. These attract butterflies and other insects whilst the branched bur-reed of the margins provides valuable shelter for moorhens and delicate damselflies. The characteristic plants of the channel, water starwort and water crowfoot, support an abundance of invertebrates such as the mayfly which provide food for the wild brown trout, so beloved of fishermen (and heron!), and for bullheads which are the favourite food of Kingfishers. In the shallow aerated gravelly sections, caddis fly are abundant providing food for the dipper, the only British bird which can walk beneath the water. The By Brook is a stronghold for this attractive river bird, and the grey wagtail.

Badgers and deer rely on the river for clean drinking water, whilst bats fly over the valley meadows at dusk, feeding on the copious supply of insects.

Despite this wealth of natural riches, the area is suffering from the pressures placed on it by modern farming practices, increasing recreational use and neglect. Stone walls are decaying and woodlands are no longer managed, whilst the fragile grasslands and their butterflies are being lost.



The last otters were seen in the late 1970s; water voles, once so abundant, are now extremely scarce, perhaps as a result of predation by mink; and the freshwater crayfish which were abundant when the river was surveyed in 1987 have been infected by a fungal plague which has almost eliminated them from the lower reaches. As a result, the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has set up a Countryside Management Project for the area and aims to encourage farmers and local people to conserve, restore and enhance wildlife habitats and historic features. The Environment Agency hopes that, by habitat restoration, sensitive river management and maintaining high quality water, some of these species will be encouraged to return.



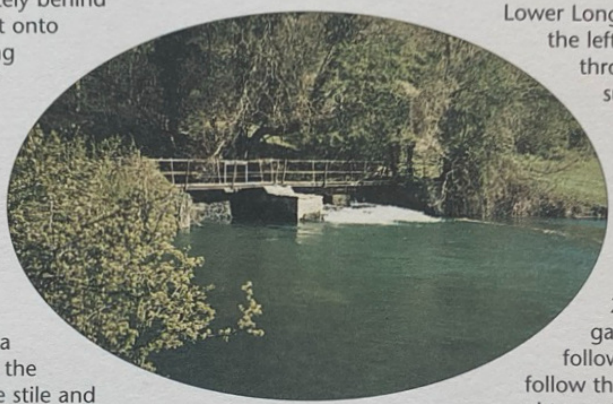
A SUGGESTED WALK TAKING IN SOME OF THE HISTORIC MILL SITES



Distance 6km : 2-3 hours
Ford - Long Dean - Slaughterford

This walk is a figure of eight taking in 6 mill sites and three villages on the By Brook.

Park in Ford (if you use the White Hart's car park, ask the landlord as sometimes he chains off the car park outside licensing hours). From the pub walk north east towards the A420, past Ford Mill on the right immediately behind the pub. Turn right onto the pavement along the A420. Past the turning to Castle Combe, carefully cross the A420 and keep on the verge on the left of the road, walking east. After 400m you cross the By Brook and then come to a stile into a field on the left. Climb over the stile and follow the path, via a bridge over a ditch, to a stile next to a gate to Fountain Wood. This path was the valley route for people from Long Dean to the A420 en route to Bristol and the hard surface of this path is still visible in places.



Follow the track parallel to the meandering Brook for a further 300 metres and after crossing the By Brook on a substantial bridge, the Mill house of Lower Long Dean appears beyond a hedge on the left. The privy straddling the millstream is all but hidden by the hedge at the bottom of the garden.



Continue on the track, crossing the Brook again before the weavers' cottages at Long Dean appear ahead. The footpath joins the access track to the Lower Mill at its bridge over the Brook.



Before turning left on this track to return to Ford, turn right and follow it below the cottages, bearing left to come to the entrance gate to Upper Long Dean Mill. Continuation along this track would take you to Rack Hill and a view up the valley to Lower and Upper Colham Mills. The track eventually reaches Castle Combe 2.5km from Long Dean.

Retracing your steps to the By Brook at Long Dean continue south east, past Lower Long Dean Mill on the left, rising up through a path sunken between walls. This eventually passes through a gate to a high field with a view back down the valley. 200km from the gate leave the track following the wall and follow the contour path around to a stile into the Ford to Castle Combe road. Follow this road back down to the A420 and back into Ford, passing Ford Mill and the White Hart on the left (unless you wish to pause there for refreshment).

For the second leg of the figure eight, follow the road for 300m towards Colerne and you come to the gate of Doncombe Mill on the right. Climb over the stile next to the gate on the opposite side of the road and follow this path parallel to the Doncombe Brook and then the By Brook to a footbridge at a weir. Cross the bridge and on the far side you can see the remains of the sluice that fed the now filled-in mill leat to the long gone Overshot Wheel at what became the Slaughterford Rag Mill.

Top left: Weavers' cottages at Long Dean
Top: Lower sluice above Slaughterford Rag Mill
Middle: Upper sluice above Slaughterford Rag Mill
Left: Automatic sluice gate at Slaughterford
Right: Lower Mill House at Long Dean

Keeping to the flat floodplain fields following the course of the Brook, pass through stiles in two field boundaries, until you come to the unmistakeable shape of the automatic sluice gate at the third boundary. Cross over the Brook on the bridge that forms part of this structure.

The gate was automated for safe operation in times of flood when the fields around can be under water. The grey cabinet houses electronics which allows Environment Agency engineers at Bridgwater, and at their homes, to see the state of the gate through a radio link.

Once on the other side of the Brook, follow its course downstream to a footbridge crossing the sluice that controlled the leat to the Undershot Wheel at Slaughterford Rag Mill.

Just after entering the woods on this path, watch out on the left for the overgrown remains of Slaughterford Rag Mill including the rag boiler and the virtually intact water wheel. Continuing on this path brings you through a gate to the road at Slaughterford.

Before bearing left up into the village, follow the road to the bridge and downstream can be seen the manmade channel feeding Chapps Mill, with the old course of the Brook clearly the lower part of the field. Returning to the village, take the high path above and to the right of the road up to the gate to the Church. Go through the gate and follow the righthand wall of the churchyard, where you can visit the church if you wish. The path continues to the left of the farm buildings to a stile. Over this stile, follow the road to the north opposite. In ¾km this road takes you through Common Hill Plantation, then bears to the left to return to Ford.



