

THE TEME CATCHMENT



NRA

National Rivers Authority

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The River Teme rises in the Kerry Hills in Mid-Wales from a small spring in Bryn Coch quarry at Cilfaesty Hill, 460 metres (1,510 feet) above sea level and remains a top quality river throughout its 122 kilometres (76 miles), journey to the River Severn.

A very rural river, it passes through only three market towns - Knighton, Ludlow and Tenbury Wells.

Many tributaries join the Teme, including the rivers Clun, Onny, Corve and Rea and larger brooks such as the Ledwyche,

Kyre, Sapey, Leigh and Langherne. The catchment area of 1,640 square kilometres (633 square miles) is surrounded by hills and the Teme flows out of the Kerry Hills past the Stiperstones, the Long Mynd, the Clee Hills, the Woodbury-Ankerdine Ridge, The Suckley Hills and finally under the Malvern.

THE TEME'S COURSE

The Teme rises as just a tiny trickle but quickly it picks up more moorland



Near the source of the Teme

streams and has grown considerably by the time it reaches the village of Beguildy 12 kilometres downstream. From here it flows six kilometres to Knighton, a busy market town of about 3,000 inhabitants, the Welsh name Tref-y-Clawdd meaning the 'Town on the Dyke'. This is a reference to Offa's Dyke, the historic border between

England and Wales.

Ten kilometres below Knighton, is Brampton Bryan, the first village in

England on the Teme. The castle here has a chequered history and was besieged on a number of occasions during the Civil War.

The River Clun joins the Teme at Leintwardine. Its river bridge has been repaired and rebuilt many times after suffering damage from floods, it stands just upstream from the old Roman ford.

Below Leintwardine, at Knacklestone, is an excellent example of a

newly formed Ox-bow lake.

From Leintwardine to Ludlow the Teme passes through a wooded limestone gorge between Tatteridge Hill and the Bringewood Chase. The Downton Gorge is now a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

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On leaving the gorge, the river passes below Downton Castle, below which the ornate Bringewood Forge bridge crosses the Teme. It was designed and built by Thomas Pritchard as a stone replica of the Iron Bridge that spans the River Severn.

At Bromfield, north of Ludlow, the

trade with the Teme driving many mills in the town.

Downstream of Ludlow, the villages of Ashford Bowdler and Ashford Carbonell face each other across the Teme. At Ashford Bowdler, part of the church of St Andrews fell into the Teme in 1906, taking with it the altar,

Eight kilometres upstream of Tenbury Wells, above Little Hereford, are the remains of a three arched aqueduct which originally carried a canal that was built to move coal, from the coalfields at Mable to Leominster. Completed in 1795, it was never used and the centre arch was blown up during the second world war.

Just west of Tenbury Wells, the Ledwyche Brook meets the Teme after a journey around the west of the Clee Hills.

On Clee Hill are several radar aerials, one of which provides rainfall information for use by weather forecasters and the NRA in the issue of flood warnings.

Tenbury is an ancient town which was granted a charter in 1249. In 1839 mineral water springs were accidentally discovered at Tenbury and were recommended for their healing properties. The benefit of the waters were made available to the public but it was not until 1911 that any attempt was made to popularise the spa. By then, spas had ceased to be fashionable and the building finally closed for the purpose in 1939.



Bridge of Tenbury Wells

River Onny joins the Teme and in the town the River Corve joins from the west after draining the local beauty spots of Corvedale and Wenlock Edge.

Ludlow is a showpiece among Shropshire towns and in the Middle Ages was the centre of the British wool

choir stalls and pulpit. There is a working mill on the river here which dates back to Domesday.

Because Ashford weir is an obstacle to migrating salmon on their way upstream to spawn, a fish pass has been built here.

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The ancient stone bridge spanning the river was improved by Thomas Telford in 1814 and widened again in 1908. The bridge forms the boundary between Shropshire and Worcestershire. Tenbury Wells, 'The Town in the Orchards', was built across the floodplain of the Teme and as a result has suffered from severe flooding for many centuries. A cableway used in measuring the flow of the river can be seen a short distance downstream of the bridge.

Six kilometres below Tenbury, at Newnham Bridge, the River Rea enters the Teme draining the waters off the east side of the Cleve Hills and the town of Cleobury Mortimer.

Just beyond here at Eastham is a three arched brick bridge, build in 1793, it has roundels in the spandrels (the triangular surface between the arches).

Two bridges span the river at Stanford Bridge. The modern concrete one replaced an old single span pre-cast concrete arched bridge build in 1906 and at the time at 28 metres, was the longest single span in the world at that date. The old bridge is a scheduled monument.

The Teme meanders on through the Shelsleys, home to the world famous motor car hill climb, Shelsley Walsh, which was established in 1904 and is the oldest motor car race circuit in Britain.

The fertile valley of the Teme and the flat wide flood plain from Tenbury to Powick made this major hop growing area of Worcestershire. The riverside meadows were hop yards until the late 1970's.

At Knightwick, the Teme valley narrows as the river squeezes through

the Osebury Gap, close the A44 road bridge. River flow is measured from a cableway just downstream of the bridge.

A perfect example of an old established and mature ox-bow lake can be found at Catheridge, five kilometres from the confluence of the River Severn. The river cut through the neck of the loop in the mid-1950 s, making it a valuable and excellent wild life refuge. Interesting comparisons can be made between the newly formed ox-bow at Knucklestone and the 40 year old ox-bow here.



Stanford Old Bridge at Ashford Carbonell

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A further kilometre downstream the Leigh Brook, one of the loveliest small tributaries enters the river after draining the Malvern Hills.

Further on, the Teme passes under the main Hereford to Worcester trunk road at Bransford. Here, the road floods most winters and the nearby Fox Inn, regularly gets cut off by flood waters making it probably the most flooded pub in Worcestershire.

At Powick, near the confluence with the Severn, the river once had its power harnessed to general hydro electricity. On the banks of the Teme near the old Powick bridge stands the world's first hydro electric power station. Built in 1894 and closed in 1925, the power generated once lit the street lights of Worcester City.

The new Powick bridge carries the A449 road on to the Malverns and beyond. This ornate cast iron bridge built in 1837 has two gaily painted coats-of-arms on either side of the parapets.

A kilometre further on the Teme enters the River Severn, downstream of Worcester.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

Throughout its length the Teme is a top quality river suitable for drinking water supply and capable of supporting game or other high class fisheries. The Teme's tributaries are mainly top

Knighton has been burning since the end of October 1989, and gives cause for concern but has not affected the River Teme. However, the Ffrwdwen Brook which flows under the site is contaminated for several hundred



Powick Bridge

quality rivers with only the Leigh Brook and Laugherne Brook falling to Class 2 (water suitable for drinking water after advanced treatment and capable of supporting reasonably good coarse fisheries) for part of their length. Near the headwaters, a tyre dump at

metres downstream. The NRA monitors the situation closely. The Teme is little affected by abstraction and sewage works effluent. It is now unusual for the reaches above Knighton to dry up naturally in a prolonged drought.

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Most abstraction licences are from surface water sources as much of the catchment falls within a groundwater licence exemption area. The small number of groundwater licences in existence draw on sand and gravel sources located in the valley bottoms.

Welsh Water take a limited amount of water from the Teme at Whitbourne for use in Bromyard, the only place on the river where water is taken for public use. Throughout its length however, the river is used by farmers for spray irrigation.

If the river flow drops below a set level at Tenbury, then to prevent it falling further, upstream abstractions are restricted in order to protect the fishery.

FLOOD DEFENCE

Flooding in the Teme Valley is natural and frequent, with the width of the flood plain varying considerably between 2 kilometres and nothing when it runs through the Dowton Gorge. Tenbury Wells is badly affected being built in the floodplain. Water from the Kyre Brook entering the Teme makes water back up into the town and so flooding problems can arise at times

of high flow.

Floods are recorded back to the 14th century. The 1795 flood is the highest ever recorded and at its peak over 2 metres of water swept through the town.

In 1886 Tenbury was again inundated and a brass plaque near the altar in the parish church records the event and height. Since the

turn of this century, houses in Tenbury have been flooded at least eight times. The flood of 1924 is the highest this century, more recently there were serious floods in 1960 and 1990.

However a protection scheme for the town proposed in 1979 was rejected by local residents.

Flood alleviation work in and around Tenbury Wells consists of a three yearly removal of gravels that accumulate in the channel below the Teme bridge. There is also periodic tree maintenance work along the Teme and Kyre Brook and the removal of blockages from the channels as needed.



The weir and bridge at Ashford Carbonell

FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

The NRA operates a flood forecasting and warning system for the River Teme downstream of Ashford Carbonell. This enables stock to be removed from land liable to be cut off by flood waters and the residents or property at risk, particularly in Tenbury, to take precautionary measures.

An NRA emergency workforce ensures that all flood control structures and defences are operating correctly during a flood and that bridges are kept clear of floating debris.



Fishing at Tenbury Wells

FISHERIES

The River Teme is one of the prime river fisheries in the Severn Basin, providing a wide variety of excellent coarse, salmon and trout fishing. It is an EC designated salmon fishery throughout its length and carries good runs of salmon, particularly in the lower

reaches near Powick, below Ashford Weir and downstream of Ludlow. The upper reaches of the river above Ludlow are primarily preserved as high quality trout fisheries. The construction of fish passes at Ashford and Powick Weirs in 1991 greatly improved access to the salmon spawning grounds upstream. Twaite shad also come into the lower part of the river to breed, and the fish pass at Powick Weir has been designed to allow upstream passage for these fish as well as for salmon. The lower half of the Teme, especially

downstream of Ashford Carbonell is one the best coarse fisheries in the area, holding large stocks of chub, roach, dace and some perch. Barbel are numerous and have been reported as

high up the river as Ludlow. Historically, the Teme has also been one of the best grayling rivers in the region, but stocks declined dramatically from the mid 1970's onwards. There have been some encouraging improvements in numbers however, in more recent years.

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The weir at Brompton Bryon



Teme at Bromfield

FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

CONSERVATION

The Teme valley is rich in flora and fauna, having many sites of special scientific interest along its length.

The NRA carries out conservation and enhancement work along the Teme including the planting of trees, creation of wetland or marshland habitats, instream fishery habitat improvements, creation of artificial otter holts and rest up sites and a nest box scheme under bridges to encourage dipper, grey wagtail and spotted flycatcher.

Animal life is plentiful, small numbers of otters, polecat and mink are common and in the Mortimer forest small herds of fallow deer can often be seen. Water shrew may be found, but the once common water vole is now rare and possibly even extinct in the valley.

There is an abundance of birdlife, amongst the many residents are

kingfisher, dipper, grey wagtail, curlew, snipe and goosander, while on the surrounding hills merlin, buzzard and red grouse often appear. During the breeding season the common sandpiper

Riverside plants include monkshood, lesser teasel, tutsan, dark mullien and figwort. Off-river, unusual species like wood saxifrage and wild lily of the valley can be found.



Teme Valley from Nether Skyborry

and yellow wagtail nest among the shingle. Pied flycatcher, redstart and ring ouzel nest in the valley or hollows. Various species of butterflies and moths can be found depending on the time of the year. Dragonflies and damselflies are common and the nationally rare club-tailed dragonfly has been recorded.



NRA

Severn-Trent Region

Headquarters:

Sapphire East, 550 Streetsbrook Road,

Solihull, West Midlands B91 1QT

Telephone: 021-711 2324

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