

Our river

River Teise

River Teise catchment area

The River Teise is a tributary of the River Medway, flowing from its spring sources near Tunbridge Wells in the High Weald, to join the Medway at Yalding in the Low Weald.

It flows eastwards through Lamberhurst where it is joined by the River Bewl before heading north below Goudhurst before splitting south west of Marden, creating the Lesser and Greater Teise. The Lesser Teise, the larger of the two watercourses, heads north via Collier Street, and joins the River Beult at Benover, before joining the River Medway. The Greater Teise heads north, passing to the east of Paddock Wood before joining the Medway near Yalding, upstream of the Lesser Teise.

The underlying impervious Wadhurst clay adds to a high flood risk around the confluence of the Teise, Beult and Medway at Yalding and a significant number of properties are also at risk at Paddock Wood and Lamberhurst.

Successive land drainage improvement schemes have widened, straightened and deepened the Teise, creating a modified and meandering channel with a wide flood plain of pasture, orchards and wooded land.

The Teise total catchment area is over 136km², of which Bewl Water Reservoir occupies 3%, villages and urban areas constitute 4% and woodland and arable land making up most of the remaining area.

The catchment area includes 11 parishes with an estimated population of 25,000 living within it.

Water

Bewl Water is part of a complex water resource system built in the early 1970's to supply drinking water to some of the driest parts of the UK. During the winter, water is pumped out of the Medway at Smallbridge and Yalding into Bewl Water. It is then released from the reservoir during the summer when additional water is needed to supply abstraction at Springfield, Maidstone.

At times this generates artificial and unnatural flows, acutely experienced on the River Bewl. Current studies by Southern Water and the Environment Agency are looking at options for making the flow regime on the River Bewl more natural.



Farming

Bill Thompson manages over 520 ha of arable farmland on 9 farms in the Teise catchment area based from Broadoak Farm near Goudhurst.

His crops of wheat, beans and oilseed rape require sprays to reduce pests and increase yields. To reduce the impact of these on the environment, Bill has invested in a couple of Bio-beds.

A concrete base has been constructed and used to mix chemicals and wash sprayers and tanks. The base drains the wash into a storage tank from where it is pumped out through a porous hose over a bed composed of layers of soil, compost and straw. This bed acts as a filter and helps reduce the amount of chemicals leaching from the fields and into the water system.

This cheap and effective solution to reduce diffuse pollution in the Teise catchment area is a good example of catchment sensitive farming practices. Grants are available to help farmers and landowners to reduce pollutants entering water courses, whether organic or inorganic.



History

The River Teise passes a number of historic landmarks on its way through a landscape shaped by history since Roman times including ancient iron workings, furnaces and mills.

It flows through the grounds of Bayham Abbey, designed by Humphrey Repton in the 18th Century and including the ruins of the old Abbey, built in the early 13th century by Premonstratensian monks.

From there it winds its way through Lamberhurst, a village developed on the back of the cloth industry in the late 13th century, and the Scotney Estate where it is joined by the River Bewl which flows from Bewl Water reservoir.

Scotney Castle dates from 1378 and was partially dismantled to create a garden feature when the new residence was completed in 1843.

Beyond Scotney, the river passes close to Finchcocks, the early Georgian manor house dating from 1725, which contains a fine collection of historical musical instruments.



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Recreation

The Teise Anglers' and Owners' Association has fishing rights on six miles of the River Teise between Horsmonden and Marden.

The society has existed since 1949 and its members enjoy fly fishing for wild and stocked trout in idyllic Kentish countryside. The Society also introduced grayling to the river more than 20 years ago and there is now a flourishing population. In the winter months, members enjoy coarse fishing for chub, roach and other species on selected stretches. Some members have also reported catching the occasional sea trout. There is no reason why sea trout shouldn't run up the river given the correct habitat and few barriers along the route from the sea.

The members have a keen interest in the river environment and have begun a series of small scale improvements including removal of Himalayan Balsam and bankside management. They also monitor invertebrate populations and the variation in flow levels, maintaining discussions with Southern water with the aim of improving the condition of the Teise.



Wildlife

The river holds a surprisingly wide variety of fish species including bream which are more commonly associated with still waters, perhaps indicative of sluggish water caused by weirs and the lack of natural river features. There are also many pike in the river and a 16lb fish was caught some years ago - a very big fish for such a small river! The river supports a small population of wild brown trout which breed independently of the fish stocked for angling in the river. They have existed in the river in some form for thousands of years and require clean water and good habitat to survive.



Tourism

The National Trust has a new directive of getting outdoors and closer to nature to encourage people and families into the countryside. The Scotney Estate has done many things over the last few years to achieve this.

These include self guided walks designed to take in the different aspects of the property, including the stunning Grade 1 listed Parkland, beautiful woodlands and coppice and the only Trust owned working hop farm.

Head Ranger Ross Wingfield says "we cater for all ages now, as this year we have put in a den building area and a short route with natural play, which include balance posts and rope walks. We have also installed a number of Geochaches on the Estate in the last couple of years and these are always a fun way of getting out and about."

A lot of our walks take you along or near both the River Bewl and the River Teise, where you will get the chance to see some great wildlife. If you are very lucky, you may even spot a kingfisher, water vole or even an otter!"



Local Authority

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's overriding objective for the Teise Valley is "to protect and enhance the landscape character and restore it where it has been eroded".

Long-term enhancements aim to:

- Restore a natural river profile and improve the aquatic and marginal habitats, including removal of invasive non-native species.
- Encourage regeneration of bankside vegetation and restoration of former valley habitats such as wet meadows and permanent pasture.
- Consider opportunities for re-creation of species-rich valley grasslands using seed of local provenance.

More recently TWBC has identified the Teise corridor as an opportunity to increase access and enhance water quality within its draft Green Infrastructure Plan. The project will help deliver objectives in the Plan and so is particularly welcome at this time.

