

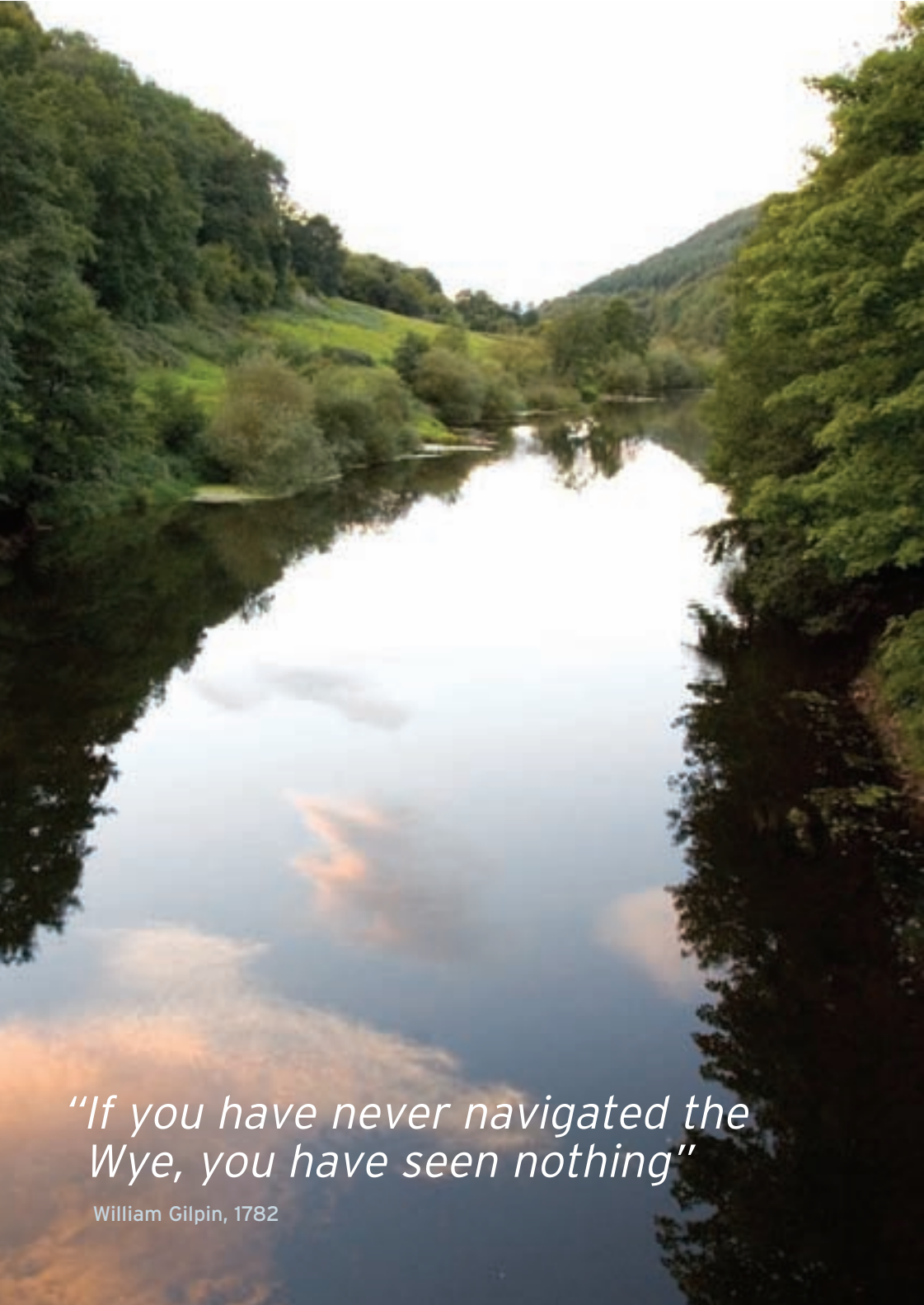
# Perfect Paddling

A Canoeists Guide to the Wye Tour



Environment  
Agency

wye valley dyffryn gwy  
Awdal Chwarenteg Awdal y Ffynhonnau  
Natural Beauty National Estuary



*“If you have never navigated the  
Wye, you have seen nothing”*

William Gilpin, 1782

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## New Threats to the River Wye

# Introduction

Welcome to the River Wye in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This booklet will help you discover more about the important wildlife, history and landscape that you will be passing through on your boat trip. This booklet also contains important safety and navigation information as well as the Canoeist's Code of Conduct. Please take the time to read this information and enjoy your visit to the Wye Valley AONB.

## The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Wye Valley is an internationally important protected landscape containing some of the most beautiful lowland scenery in Britain. Designated in 1971, this unique landscape straddles the border between England and Wales. It includes areas within Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire. Covering 326Km<sup>2</sup> there is plenty to see and do and there are many ways to explore the area should you wish to return in the future.



Otter pair eating fish

## Wildlife

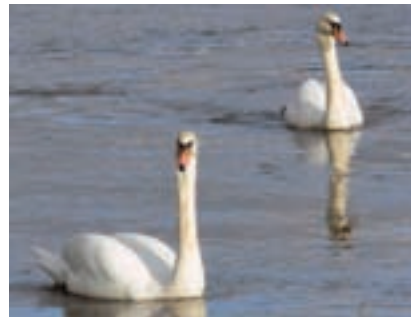
Depending on the stretch of water you travel along you may be lucky to see some of the special wildlife that inhabits the area. The river supports good populations of otter, an elusive and largely nocturnal animal which feeds on fish particularly eels. In other areas you may see peregrine falcons catching pigeons above their cliff ledge haunts. However, for the observant, there is an abundance of wildlife all along the river and you can commonly see kingfishers, herons and dragonflies as part of a rich diversity of animals and plants. In all there are three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), four National Nature Reserves (NNR's) and over forty Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Wye Valley AONB.

The River Wye is a particularly unique habitat and is highly protected because it contains internationally important populations of salmon, twait and allis shad, white clawed crayfish, bullhead and otter.

Please take care not to disturb wildlife as you travel downstream.



Male Banded Damoiselle



Mute Swans



Moorhen Chick



Wye Valley bluebell woodlands



Dormouse in torpor

## Protected Woodlands

As you travel down the valley, particularly between Kerne Bridge and Chepstow, you pass through a predominantly wooded landscape. Much of these woodlands are either internationally protected as SSSI's or SAC. Together they form one of the most important lowland woodland complexes in Britain and support rare species such as Goshawks and Lesser Horseshoe Bats.



Wild Garlic or Ramsoms



Himalayan Balsam

## Himalayan Balsam

Between July and October you will notice an abundance of pink flowering plants growing tall on the riverbanks. This sweet smelling plant is Himalayan Balsam, an attractive but invasive non-native species that grows dominant stands on streamsides and in woodlands. Concerns are increasing over the plants' expansion both locally and nationally as it threatens to out-compete native species. It is a fast growing annual that propagates itself every year from the abundant seed it produces.

# Riverside Trees

Most of the trees you will see growing along the riverbank are either species of willow or alder. Both are important habitats for birds and bats. Many of the alder trees are suffering from a disease called Phytothorum, a fungi that inhibits tree growth often leading to obvious dead branches.



Chepstow Castle



Bow Hauliers on the Wye, Nelson Museum



Diseased Alders near Fownhope

## Early History



After the last Ice Age nomadic hunters moved through the area. By the Iron Age, the dominant Silure tribe had built hillforts at Symonds Yat, Gaer Hill, Chase Wood and Little Doward. The Romans exploited iron in the valley and built the town of Ariconium near Ross-on-Wye. Then the Saxons, under King Offa of Mercia, built Offa's Dyke, the longest archaeological 'Keep Out' sign in Britain. The Normans stamped their mark with stone fortresses at Chepstow, Goodrich and St Briavels. Later Cistercians founded the first Welsh Abbey at Tintern in 1131.



Brockweir Quay, Nelson Museum

# Industry



For centuries the Wye Valley was exploited for its timber, iron ore, stone and coal. Wireworks were established at Tintern in 1556, boat-building in Llandogo and Brockweir, paperworks in Whitebrook and nationally important tinplate and copper works in Redbrook. Echoing to the sound of hammers and forges, smoke would have wreathed the valley and the views would have been very different from today - fewer trees and far more people.

## The Picturesque 'Wye Tour'



The Wye Valley is arguably the birth place of British tourism. In the 1700's the first tourists to the area were artists and writers floating down the Wye, armed with sketch pads and poetic leanings, on what was to become known as the Wye Tour. Among the nation's first tourists were Turner, Coleridge and Wordsworth. Reverend Gilpin defined the Picturesque movement from his Wye Tour in 1770, the principles of which were taken up by artists in the theatre and cinema and are used to this day.



Tintern Abbey



Symonds Yat, Nelson Museum







Redbrook Tinworks, Nelson Museum



Between 2009 and 2011 the Heritage Lottery Funded 'Overlooking the Wye' Landscape Partnership Scheme carried out work to conserve the historic environment and increase understanding of the picturesque landscape of the Wye Valley AONB.

The scheme had four key themes 'Hidden Industry', 'River Connections', 'Viewpoints' and 'Hillforts' and managed works on 40 sites through the Wye Valley AONB Partnership. You may pass close to many of these sites whilst on your trip, some of which are described in more detail in this booklet.

## Navigation rights & access



The River Wye has been used for navigation for many centuries. In the past the Wye was an important commercial waterway. Today boating on the river is mostly canoeing and rowing, but with some passenger sightseeing boats operating around Symonds Yat.

A public right of navigation extends from The Severn upstream to Hay Town Bridge on the main River Wye and on the River Lugg between its confluence with the Wye and Presteigne Town Bridge. Public navigation of this stretch upstream of Bigsweir Bridge is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. Below Bigsweir Bridge public right of navigation is under the auspices of the Gloucester Harbour Trustees. The river is also tidal for this lower stretch and often dangerous for canoeists.

The right of navigation does not give a right of access to the riverbank other than at accepted public sites; you must get the permission of the landowner before launching and landing canoes. Permission is also needed to camp or picnic on the banks or neighbouring fields.



Water wheel at Tintern, Nelson Museum



Tintern Abbey, Nelson Museum



The Quay at Monmouth, Nelson Museum

# Canoeists Conduct

The code of conduct is intended to help people enjoy the river without reducing the enjoyment of others or damaging the environment. It is expected that canoeists follow the code on all river trips.



## Care for Wildlife

One of the joys of a trip on the River Wye is watching its abundant wildlife. We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants and trees.

Some fish species are particularly sensitive to disturbance, especially during the spawning seasons. During winter salmon spawn in the upper reaches of the Wye. Between 1st of April and 31st July many coarse fish are breeding and Twait and Allis Shad use shallow gravel beds for egg laying. Please do not land on gravel beds during this period and at all other times try to:



- Avoid disturbing nesting birds along the river banks, particularly in spring time
- Avoid damaging beds of waterweed
- Stop your activity if you are clearly disturbing wildlife

The river habitat and many of the species it supports are protected by law. Ignoring this advice could result in a criminal offence being committed, and you may be subject to enforcement action



## Stay Safe

You are responsible for your own safety and for others in your care, so be prepared for changes in the weather and other events. The river conditions can change rapidly. We advise you to check the river level just prior to your trip via the Environment Agency's automated telephone service on 0906 6197755 (BT premium rate). Alternatively the Wye and Usk Foundation provide free river level information on their website [www.wyeuskfoundation.org/conditions/index.php](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/conditions/index.php) When planning or partaking in your river trip always consider:

- That you use the river in a safe fashion and that you have the appropriate safety equipment
- That any groups of young novice boaters are led by suitably experienced responsible persons - preferably a qualified instructor
- That you don't drink alcohol during and just prior to your trip on the river
- That you follow instructions given to you by your canoe hire operator and/or group leader

And finally. ...if in doubt, don't!





## Help Keep a Healthy River

The River Wye boasts excellent water quality in a largely unmodified water course. You can help maintain a healthy river by:

- Taking your rubbish away with you
- Avoiding damage to banks, the riverbed and bankside vegetation - this can lead to erosion. You can help by only launching and landing at purpose made launch points
- Avoid dragging boats and equipment over rock slabs and stones.



## Be Fishing Friendly

Canoeing and kayaking can have a bigger impact on anglers than any other river users, particularly if you are in a large group. By following a few simple guidelines you can limit the effect your boating will have on anglers and their enjoyment. If you are travelling in a group please keep together and pass anglers in one go to prevent prolonged disturbance, and in all instances try to:

- Pass anglers with as little noise and disturbance as possible
- Keep away from banks being fished and fishing tackle
- Avoid loitering in pools if anyone is fishing
- Comply with reasonable directional requests

Please also note that fishing from a boat is not allowed unless you have a valid rod licence and permission from the owner/tenant of the fishery rights.



## Consider Other People

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone. Pay particular respect to local residents and avoid situations that may result in argument and remember to always:

- **Park sensibly without causing obstruction, do not block gateways or load and unload vehicles in awkward places**
- **Keep noise to a minimum**
- **Get changed out of public view**
- **Whenever possible come ashore at recognised landing places; do not trespass on private property or moorings**



- When canoeing have special regard for beginners, as you would for learner drivers on the road
- Remember that larger boats are less manoeuvrable and cannot use such shallow waters as canoes, rafts and rowing boats
- Give way to those engaged in organised competition and have regard to any instructions given by officials
- Hail to draw a person's attention to a situation which might otherwise result in inconvenience, damage or collision. Please treat a hail as a friendly warning and not as an insult

There is an agreement for canoeing on the upper river. Details can be found at [www.wyeuskfoundation.org/navigation/index.php](http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/navigation/index.php)



# Safety on the River

Tintern Abbey in the mist, Linda Wight

The Wye can be dangerous and has been the cause of many accidents. It is at its most dangerous when there are strong currents, high water levels or cold weather conditions. Don't take risks and never underestimate the power of the river. The Wye is a fast flooding river, which can rise after heavy rain at a rate of over 30cm an hour.

## Tides

Below Bigsweir Bridge the Wye is tidal and can be very dangerous, especially below Tintern.

If you intend to canoe this stretch, leave Tintern no later than one hour after high water and travel down without stopping.

Inexperienced canoeists are advised to avoid this stretch and should on no account travel below Chepstow, as currents in the Severn Estuary are extremely dangerous.

## Health and Hygiene

The water quality of the Wye is generally good, but contains natural bacteria and other micro-organisms. Although the risk of contracting an illness is small, there are sensible precautions which can help you stay healthy:

- **Do not swallow river water;**
- **Cover cuts or sores with gloves or waterproof plasters;**
- **Where possible, wash or shower after taking part in water sports, especially if you have capsized;**
- **Wash your hands before eating;**
- **See your doctor if you feel ill after exposure to the water. If you develop flu like symptoms it is possible you may have contracted Leptospirosis (a rare disease, but one which can have serious complications).**

## Have a good trip!



# River Wye Hereford to Chepstow

MAP SECTION 1  
Hereford  
to Fownhope

MAP SECTION 2  
Fownhope  
to Backney

MAP SECTION 3  
Backney  
to Kerne Bridge

MAP SECTION 4  
Kerne Bridge  
to Symonds Yat

MAP SECTION 5  
Symonds Yat  
to Monmouth

MAP SECTION 6  
Monmouth  
to Bigsweir

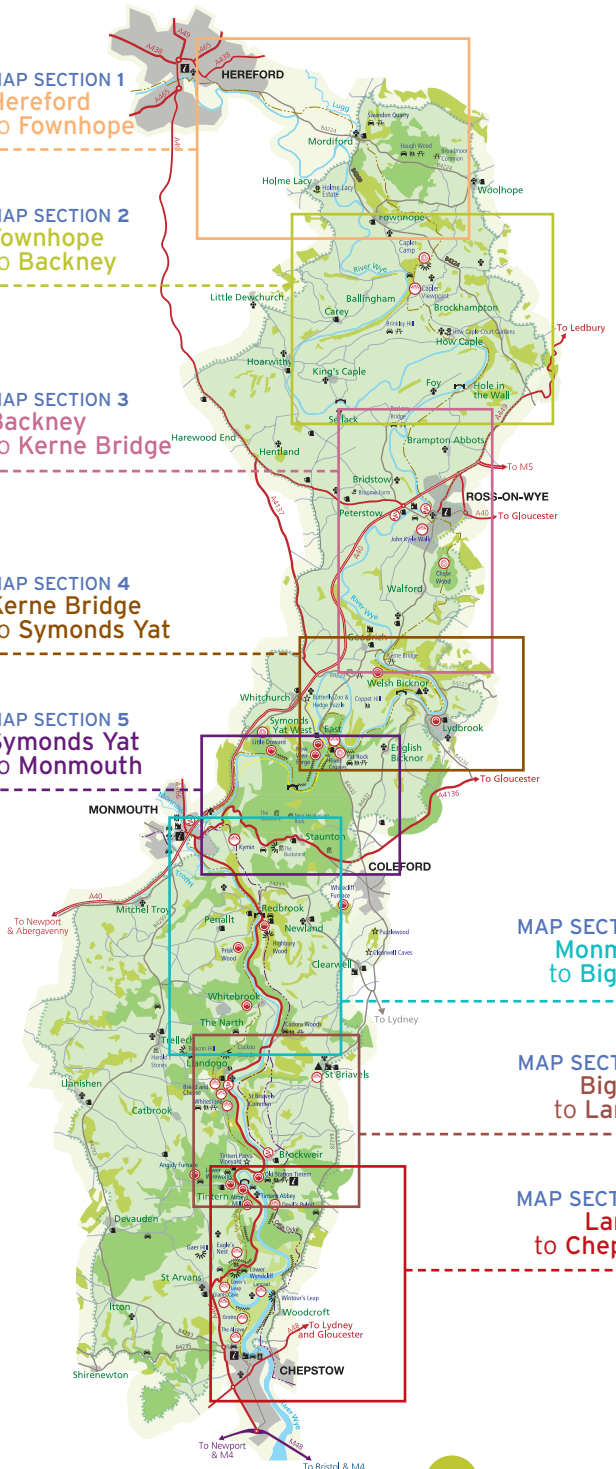
MAP SECTION 7  
Bigsweir  
to Lancaut

MAP SECTION 8  
Lancaut  
to Chepstow

- Wye Valley AONB Boundary
- A Roads
- B Roads
- Minor Roads
- Wye Valley Walk
- Offa's Dyke Path
- Cycle Path
- Rivers
- Woodland Areas
- Public Access Woodland
- Cliffs
- Town or Village
- Footbridge
- Viewpoint
- Car Park
- Walk
- Picnic Site
- Public House
- Standing Stones
- Museum
- Castle
- Historic Church or Abbey
- Visitor Attraction
- Gardens or Grounds
- Youth Hostel
- Information Points

## Overlooking the Wye

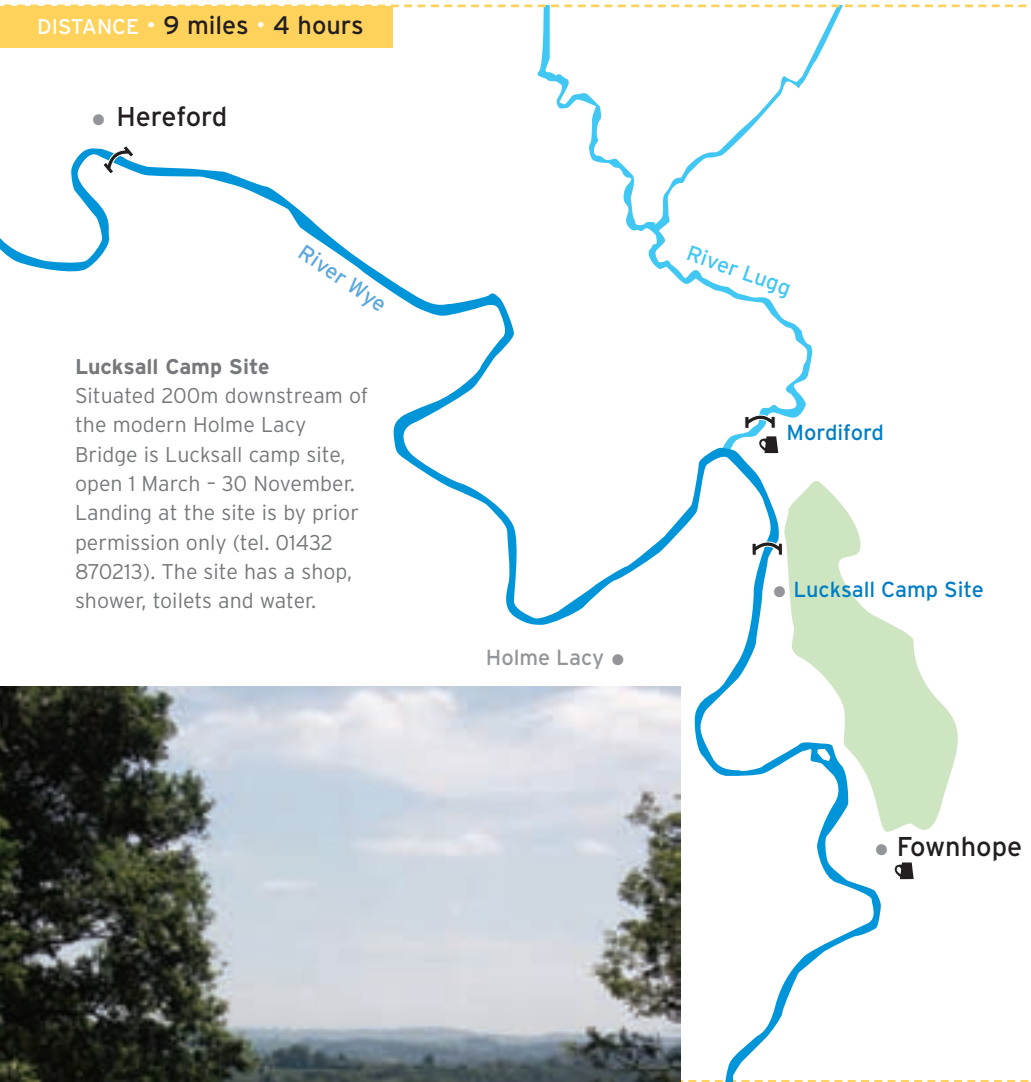
- Viewpoint
- Hillfort
- Hidden Industry
- River Connections



# MAP SECTION 1

## Hereford to Fownhope

DISTANCE • 9 miles • 4 hours



• Hereford

River Wye

River Lugg

### Lucksall Camp Site

Situated 200m downstream of the modern Holme Lacy Bridge is Lucksall camp site, open 1 March - 30 November. Landing at the site is by prior permission only (tel. 01432 870213). The site has a shop, shower, toilets and water.

Holme Lacy •

Mordiford

• Lucksall Camp Site

• Fownhope



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View from Capler Viewpoint



Mordiford Bridge and Church

## Mordiford Village

Mordiford village grew up around an ancient ford over the River Lugg. The river is now crossed by the oldest surviving bridge in Herefordshire, dating in part to c. 1352 and completed in the 16th century. Legend has it that Mordiford was once terrorised by a dragon that lived in nearby Haugh Wood. The dragon, green in colour, was said to have loved a small girl named Maud who resided in Mordiford and had nurtured it from infancy. When the dragon grew it desired meat and started devouring sheep and cattle and on occasion even the locals! Only Maud remained safe from its reign up until it was eventually slain by a local nobleman.

Mordiford is also where the river Lugg flows into the Wye (the Lugg enters from the left) and the boundary of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



Riverbank at Fownhope

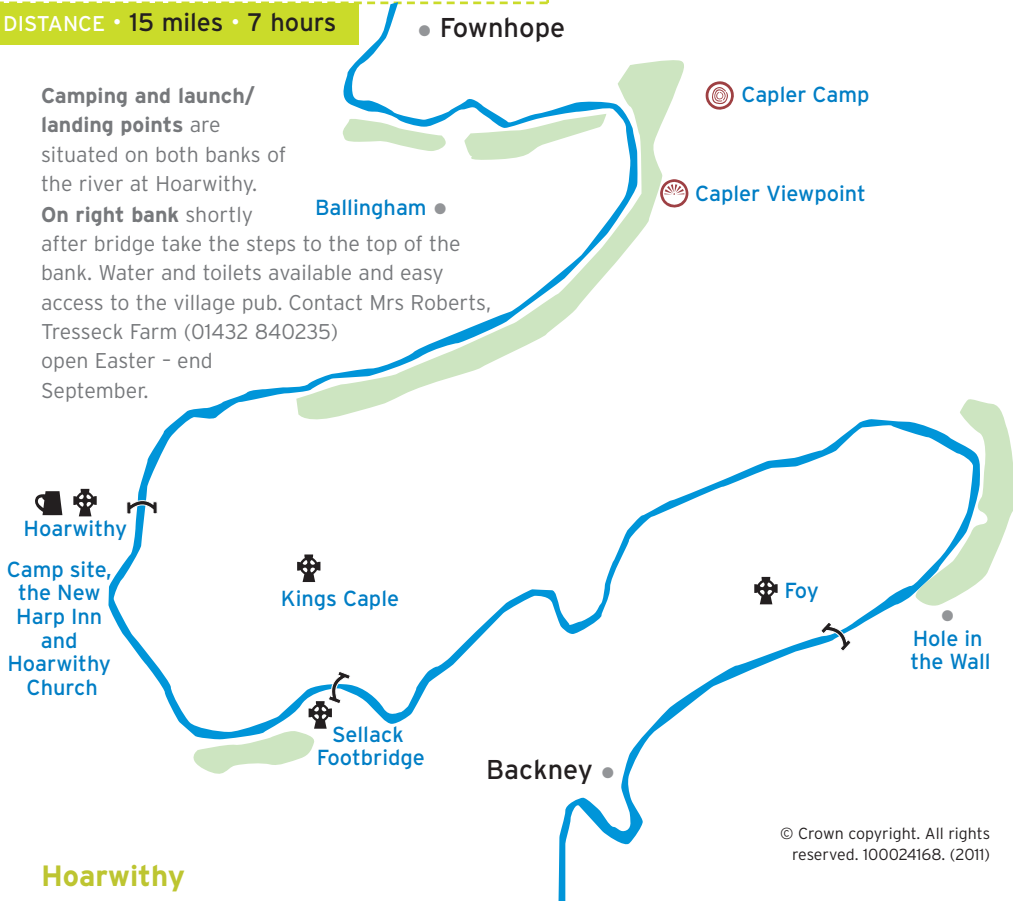
## Hereford City

The name 'Hereford' is said to come from the Anglo Saxon 'here', an army or formation of soldiers, and the 'ford', a place for crossing a river. The City's most famous landmark is its Cathedral which dates from 1079 and contains the Mappa Mundi, a medieval map of the world dating from the 13th century. It also contains the world famous Chained Library. The city is an important agricultural trading place. Locally distinctive products include; cider and Herefordshire cattle. The city is also known for being home to the British Special Air Service (SAS).

## MAP SECTION 2

# Fownhope to Backney

DISTANCE • 15 miles • 7 hours



## Hoarwithy

The attractive village of Hoarwithy is dominated by the remarkable Italianate Church of St Catherine. The original church, built in 1840 by Reverend Thomas Hutchinson, was a simple rectangular stone structure. When William Poole became vicar in 1854 he was not impressed and decided to beautify it using sandstone in a Romanesque style. The church has since been used in many films and is an unusual, eye catching landmark.



Entrance to Hoarwithy Church

## Capler Camp and Viewpoint

At this point the wooded slope to your left rises up 150m (500 feet) to the Iron Age hillfort of Capler Camp. The camp was occupied from 500BC to approximately 200-300AD. Recent Geo-Physical surveys discovered evidence of a round house, possibly with a stone floor and central fire pit. The popular Capler Viewpoint is situated on the nearby Fownhope to Brockhampton Road with spectacular views west across the river and rolling Herefordshire countryside.

On the riverside below Capler Hill is the remains of a small quarry where stone was extracted and taken by barge upstream to Hereford for the construction of the cathedral.



Foy footbridge

## Foy and Hole in the Wall

A single span suspension bridge, built in 1919, links these two riverside hamlets. According to the Domesday records Hole in the Wall was originally called 'Turlestone', a name meaning 'Hole Stone'. It was the location of the early episodes of the apocalyptic 1970's TV series 'Survivors' by Terry Nation. The series has recently been remade. It was also the first PGL outdoor activity centre. Founder, Peter Gordon Lawrence (PGL) started what is now a multi-million pound company in 1957 with canoeing and camping trips down the Wye.

## Sellack Boat Footbridge

Sellack Boat connects Kings Caple with Sellack, and as the name suggests it was a ferry crossing replaced by the foot bridge in 1895. It is also told that one vicar in earlier times used stilts to ford the Wye here to avoid a lengthy detour. Under the bridge is a stone built into the buttress with the inscription - 'To the honour of God and the lasting union of these parishes'.

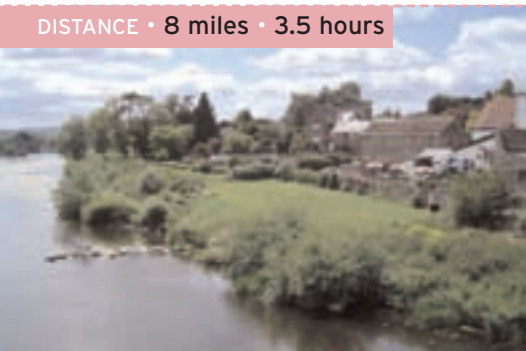


Sellack foot bridge and church

## MAP SECTION 3

# Backney to Kerne Bridge

DISTANCE • 8 miles • 3.5 hours



View south from Wilton Bridge

### The Wye Tour

Ross-on-Wye was traditionally the starting point for the 'Wye Tour' which in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was popular with artists and poets. At this time it was fashionable to take a boat tour down the Wye Valley, to view its romantic sites and picturesque landscape. These early 'tourists' dined at specific locations, took walks to particular viewpoints and visited specific romantic ruins, making the 'Wye Tour' one of the first 'package holidays'. Their historic journey can be repeated today by navigating the river in a canoe or kayak allowing you to view sights that inspired the likes of Coleridge, Turner and Wordsworth.

#### Kerne Bridge Launch

Landing at steps on left bank 800m below ancient road bridge. Picnic site and car park. No permission required. Please do not land/ launch at the bridge. The 'Inn on the Wye' Public House is a short walk up the road from the launch.

Backney

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Use middle arch of the **Wilton Bridge**, and channel to the right of the island

Wilton Bridge

Ross-on-Wye

**Ross-on-Wye** is situated on a horseshoe bend in the river from the A40 bridge to Wilton Bridge. Landing steps are situated 100m downstream of the Hope and Anchor Pub, no permission required. Please do not land at Wilton Bridge further downstream.

Goodrich Castle

Goodrich

Kerne Bridge

Canoe launch



Goodrich Castle

## Wilton Castle

Wilton Castle was originally a Norman earthwork motte and bailey fortress. It was originally built to guard the important strategic position where the road between Anglo-Saxon England and Wales crossed the River Wye. As part of their plan to consolidate their hold on their newly acquired land the Normans embarked on a vast program of castle building which included, in the Twelfth Century, construction of a new castle at Wilton using the locally available sandstone. In the 16th Century, Charles Brydges built an Elizabethan mansion on the site of the keep and gatehouse but it was attacked and burnt during the Civil War. Part of the ruined mansion was subsequently rebuilt and is now inhabited, parts of the Castle are open to the public periodically.

## Goodrich Castle

Goodrich stands majestically on a wooded hill commanding the passage of the River Wye as it enters the Wye gorge. The castle's construction began in the late 11th century and is considered to be one of the most complete sets of medieval domestic buildings surviving in any English castle. During the Civil War, Goodrich was held successively by both sides, Sir Henry Lingen's Royalists eventually surrendered in 1646 from threats of undermining the castle and a deadly Parliamentarian canon, the famous 'Roaring Meg', the only surviving Civil War canon.



Wilton Castle

## Wilton Wharves

At one time Wilton had wharves both upstream and downstream of the bridge on the western bank of the river. This is where barges were loaded and unloaded with goods. Large warehouses were once associated with these wharves to store goods, but little evidence of these remain. Only one wharf downstream of the bridge is now visible.

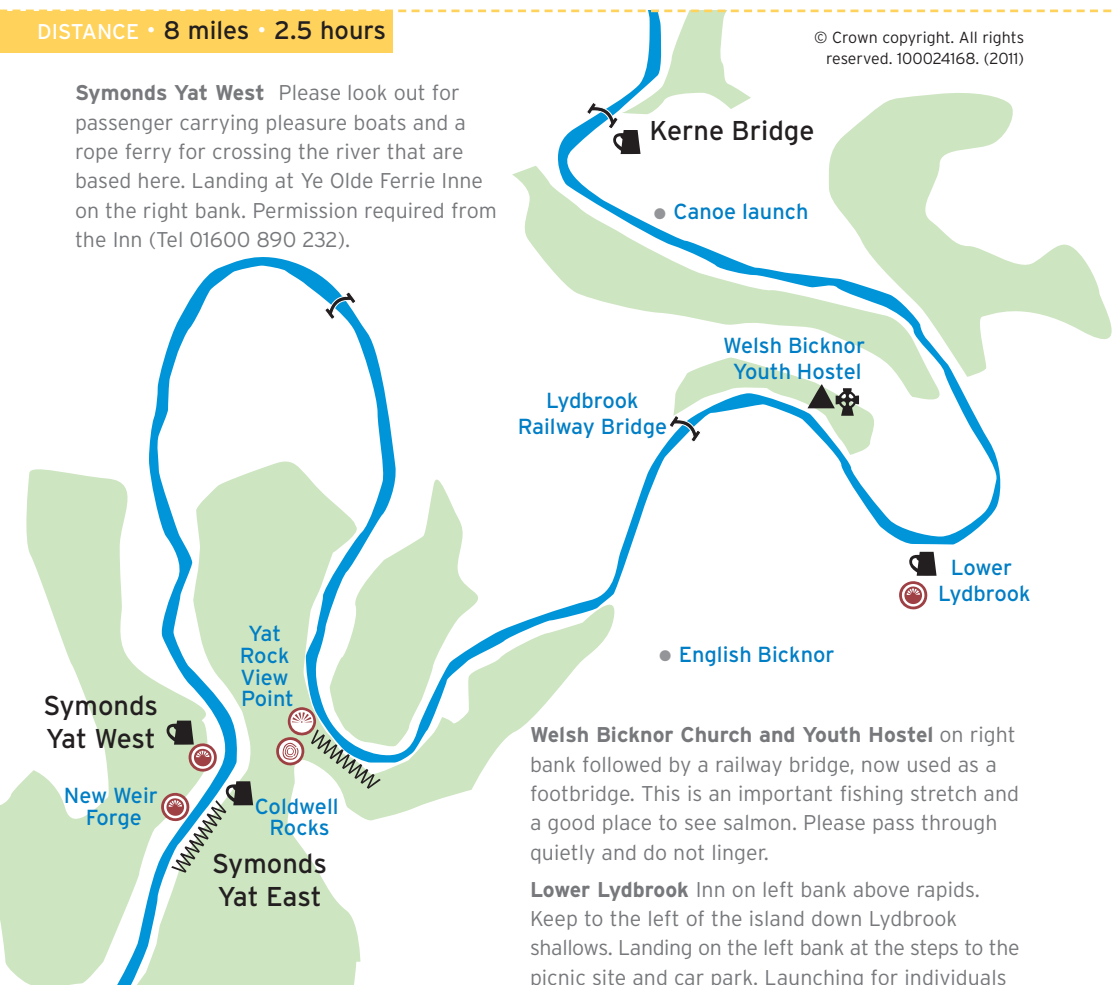
## Map Section 4

# Kerne Bridge to Symonds Yat

DISTANCE • 8 miles • 2.5 hours

**Symonds Yat West** Please look out for passenger carrying pleasure boats and a rope ferry for crossing the river that are based here. Landing at Ye Olde Ferrie Inne on the right bank. Permission required from the Inn (Tel 01600 890 232).

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**Welsh Bicknor Church and Youth Hostel** on right bank followed by a railway bridge, now used as a footbridge. This is an important fishing stretch and a good place to see salmon. Please pass through quietly and do not linger.

**Lower Lydbrook** Inn on left bank above rapids. Keep to the left of the island down Lydbrook shallows. Landing on the left bank at the steps to the picnic site and car park. Launching for individuals but NOT groups. Donations requested in honesty box.

## Lydbrook

Lydbrook was once a hive of metal working industry and a busy river port, although little evidence of these survive. Parts of the Trans Atlantic cable were manufactured in the Lydbrook cable works just downstream from the old railway bridge. There used to be a large railway viaduct that straddled the village but this was dismantled in the 1960s.



Welsh Bicknor Church





Coldwell Rocks near Symonds Yat  
Linda Wright

## Peregrine Falcons and Coldwell Rocks

The impressive cliffs that tower up to your left at this point are called Coldwell Rocks and since 1982 have provided home to successive families of peregrine falcons. From April to August they can frequently be seen from the river as they hunt and raise their young. The peregrine is the fastest animal in the world. The birds pair for several years and raise broods of up to four young. They live on medium-sized birds often catching wood pigeons in flight. Other birds of prey such as goshawks and buzzards can also be seen here.

## Yat Rock

As you follow the sweep of the river under Coldwell Rocks the Yat Rock viewpoint comes into view, noticeable by its flagpole. The most famous of the Wye Valley viewpoints, it is visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors a year to appreciate the scenery and watch the peregrine falcons. It is also an Iron Age hillfort and the ramparts of the hillfort are still visible as concentric 'curves' which cross the pathway from the car park to the log cabin. It was also very popular on the Wye Tour as many tourists left their boats and walked up to the viewpoint at Yat Rock whilst the crew rowed the boat around the four mile loop to meet them on the other side.



Pleasure cruises at Symonds Yat

## New Weir Forge, Symonds Yat West

New Weir Forge is located on the right bank, opposite the island by the rapids and was in use from at least the 1590s and up until the 1800s. This was one of the many sites in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean involved in iron production. The site would have been chosen because of the proximity of iron ore from the Forest, charcoal from the woodland and water to power the waterwheels. New Weir is so named because of the weir that controlled water flow into the ironworks. Boats would have navigated the river via a lock which was on the left bank. The slag from the furnace and the remains of the Weir are now part of the island and rapids.

## Map Section 5

# Symonds Yat to Monmouth

DISTANCE • 5 miles • 2 hours



Excavations at New Weir Forge



Rainbow over Wyastone and the River Wye

### Monmouth

The river runs alongside the A40 for approximately 1 mile on the approach to Monmouth. Landing at the second set of steps on the right immediately downstream of rowing club by the car park. No permission required. The town is a short walk from the canoe launch where there are numerous shops and services.

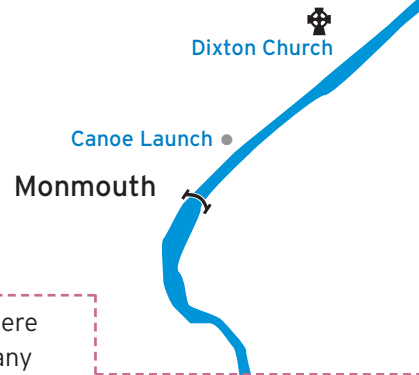
### Seven Sisters

The Lower Wye landscape was formed by the river acting on a series of rock layers that dip towards the east and the Forest of Dean. The river cuts through carboniferous limestone to form a gorge with substantial river cliffs such as the Seven Sisters.

### Monmouth and its Quay

Monmouth was the half way stage on the Wye Tour where travellers would stop overnight in one of the town's many hotels and inns. The impressive and recently restored Shire Hall is situated in Monmouth's Agincourt Square. Erected in 1724, the building was designed to house two "Courts of Judicature" and a room for the Grand Jury at Assizes and Sessions. One of the most famous trials held here was that of the leaders of the Chartists, originally condemned to death but subsequently transported to Van Diemen's Land.

The Quay that is visible today is only a small part of the river port that existed here since Roman times, in the 19th century warehouses dominated the riverside scene. These were demolished in the 1960s when the dual carriageway was built. The remaining quay was restored in 2009.





### King Arthurs Cave

High above the present day River Wye on Little Doward Hill is evidence that the river once flowed far from its current course. Limestone cliffs have been eroded and worn smooth by the Wye's running water and formed numerous caves. One of these is King Arthur's Cave, an important site showing early human occupation from Palaeolithic times (during the Stone Age, 10,000 to 12,000 years ago). Early excavations by the Revd W S Symond in 1871 also found the remains of hyena, lion, cave and brown bears, giant Irish elk, reindeer, mammoth, woolly rhino and a horse! Many of the bones had been gnawed by hyenas.

### Little Doward Hillfort

Little Doward to your right has an Iron Age Hillfort at its summit and a limekiln at the foot of the hill, close by the Wye Valley Walk alongside the river. This hillfort is protected by a rampart and steep cliffs. The surrounding landscape was changed from common land in the early 19th century into a private deer park and 'designed landscape' by Richard Blakemore, an ironmaster at Wyastone Leys. In 2008 conifers were cleared to reveal the features of the hillfort, open up viewpoints and restore the site to natural limestone grassland habitat.



Little Doward Hillfort

# Map Section 6

## Monmouth to Bigsweir

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DISTANCE • 6 miles • 2.5 hours

### Junction of River

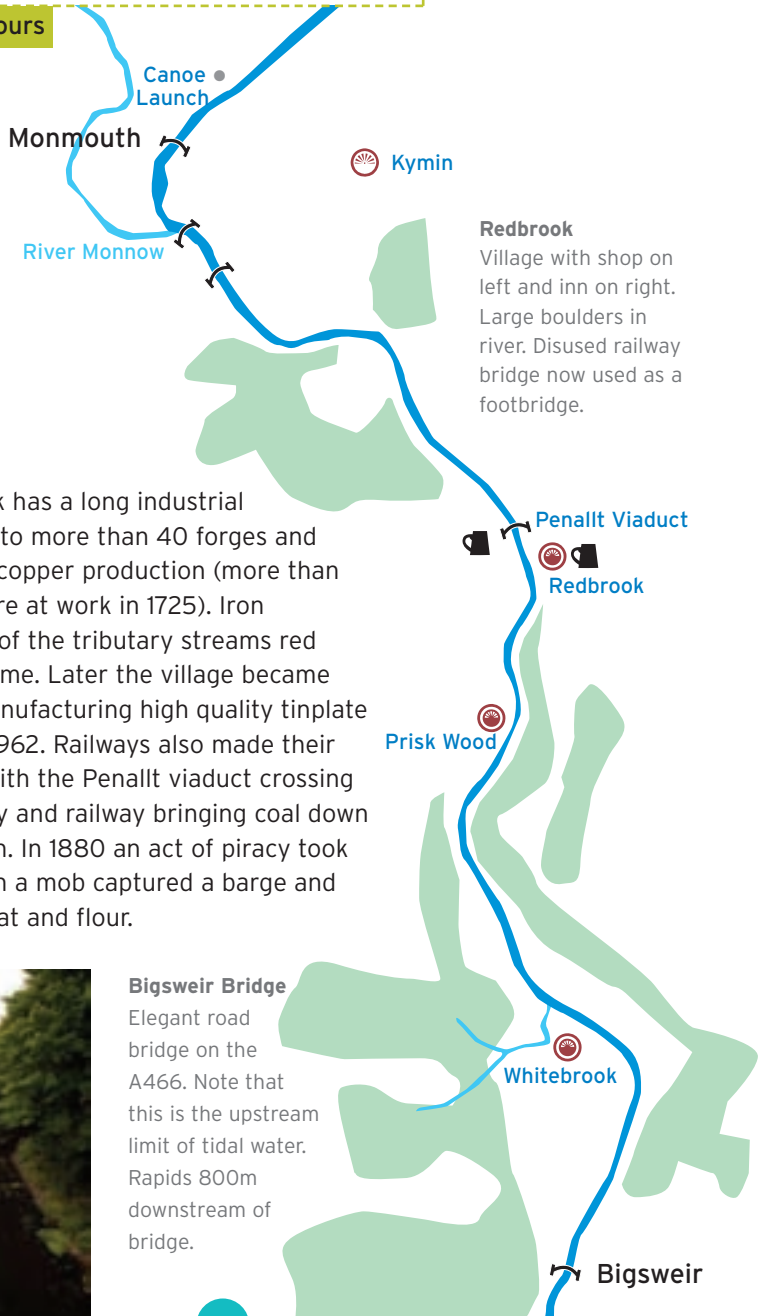
**Monnow River Monnow** joins the Wye from the right. Beware of underwater obstructions resulting from the demolition of the two railway bridges. Rocky shallows in this area.

### Redbrook

The village of Redbrook has a long industrial past at one time home to more than 40 forges and mills for both iron and copper production (more than 26 copper furnaces were at work in 1725). Iron workings turned many of the tributary streams red giving the village its name. Later the village became world renowned for manufacturing high quality tinplate which continued until 1962. Railways also made their impact on the village with the Penallt viaduct crossing the river and a tramway and railway bringing coal down from the Forest of Dean. In 1880 an act of piracy took place in Redbrook when a mob captured a barge and seized its cargo of wheat and flour.



View north from Penallt viaduct Linda Wright



### Bigsweir Bridge

Elegant road bridge on the A466. Note that this is the upstream limit of tidal water. Rapids 800m downstream of bridge.



The Kymin Roundhouse, Linda Wright

## The Kymin

The small two-storey circular Georgian banqueting house, also known as the Round House, that stands on top of The Kymin was built in 1794 by the Monmouth Picnic Club. Guests who came here received instructions on how to observe the views in the 'correct' Picturesque manner. A Naval Temple was built in 1801 and when Nelson visited Monmouth the following year guns boomed out from the Temple to greet him as his boat came into view on the river below. Nelson it is said enjoyed a 'handsome' breakfast in the Round House. The site is now owned by The National Trust and is open to the public.

## Whitebrook

At this point the Whitebrook stream flows into the river on your right. The Whitebrook Valley was an important water-powered industrial base between the 17th and 19th centuries. A branch of Tintern wireworks was established here in 1606, and wire working continued to be the main industry of the valley until about 1720. By about 1760, paper mills had taken over, and much of the housing in the valley was built for millworkers around that time. Pollution from the paper mills turned the brook white giving the village its name.



## Map Section 7 Bigsweir to Lancaut

DISTANCE • 9 miles • 4 hours

### **Brockweir (and downstream)**

Village on left with shop and an inn. Landing at Brockweir Quay on left bank just upstream of the bridge. Can be awkward and muddy. No permission required. Old Station Tintern, now a teasshop, information centre and picnic site, can be accessed by crossing the bridge and walking half a mile along the old railway track

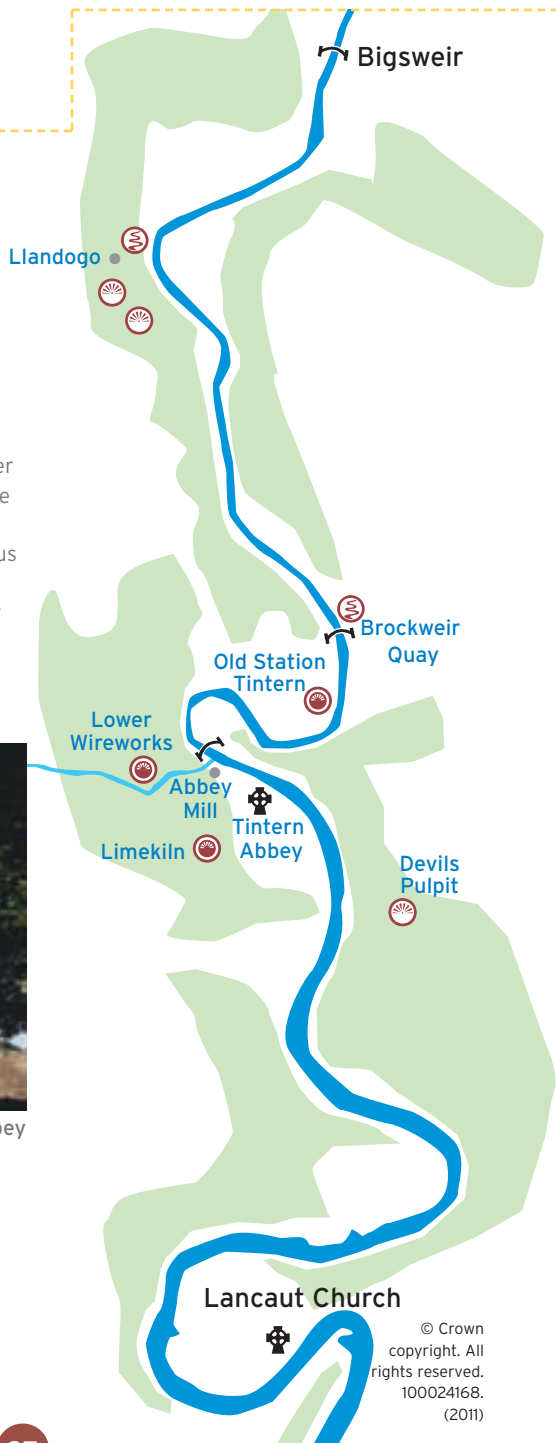
**Important:** Downstream from Brockweir, the river should only be used by canoeists with reasonable experience. There is currently no landing site at Tintern or downstream until Chepstow. Dangerous weirs are exposed at low water. The tide is considerable and canoeists should leave no later than one hour after high water and travel straight through to Chepstow. High water at Tintern is four hours before Dover.



Tintern Abbey

### **Tintern Abbey**

Built by Cistercian monks in 1131, Tintern Abbey was the architectural highlight of the Wye Tour, a tourist destination since the 1750s when The Duke of Beaufort cleared the interior of the Abbey and laid a lawn to make it easier for visitors to view the ruins.





Brockweir Quay

## Brockweir Quay

Brockweir Quay is the last remaining functional quay on the Wye. In the 17th and 18th centuries, large trows navigated from Bristol and Chepstow on a high tide to unload goods on to smaller barges. These were pulled upstream by teams of men called 'bow hauliers' to Monmouth, Ross and Hereford. Ships were built here in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was a busy port with vessels loading and unloading cargoes, sailors and crew working the trows and steamers, and the noise of construction and repairs.

## The Angidy Valley

Industrial activity began in the Angidy Valley in the 1500s. By 1800 up to 20 waterwheels powered furnaces and mills along the river. Two of these sites are still accessible using the footpath which follows the route of the leat from Lower Wireworks upstream to Angidy Furnace. In 1568 the first brass in Britain was produced in Tintern, whilst later part of the trans-atlantic cable was manufactured in Lower Wireworks. The site was convenient, as the Wye offered transportation, the Angidy stream water power, trees in nearby woods provided charcoal fuel and the Forest of Dean iron ore.

## Abbey Mill

Abbey Mill was an important part of the industrial heritage of Tintern where goods were loaded on to vessels in the tidal dock that was here until the dock was filled in as part of a flood alleviation scheme. Originally the site was used to mill corn for the nearby Tintern Abbey and was possibly also used as a woollen mill. Finally the site was used as a wood turnery and saw mill until the 1970s. Today the Abbey Mill complex houses craft shops and a licensed restaurant.



View of Tintern Abbey from Devil's Pulpit, Linda Wright

## Devil's Pulpit

Nestled high in the trees to the south east of Tintern Abbey is 'Devil's Pulpit' a popular viewpoint on the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. Devil's Pulpit itself is a small rocky outcrop that overlooks the Abbey. According to local legend, the Devil used to preach from the outcrop and attempt to seduce the abbey's monks away from Christianity.

## Map Section 8

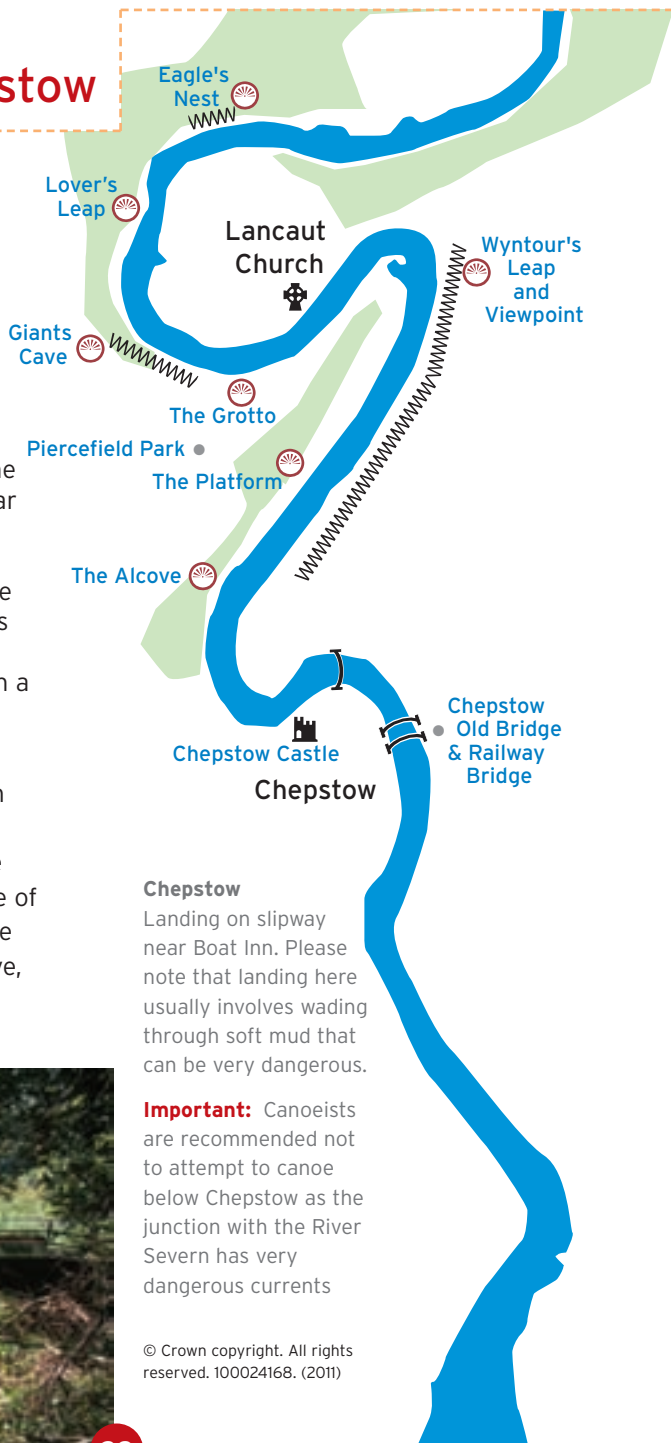
# Lancaut to Chepstow

DISTANCE • 2.5 miles • 1.5 hours

### Piercefield Park - a designed landscape

The wooded landscape of Piercefield Park contains the remains of paths laid out by Valentine Morris in the 1750s. Morris's picturesque walks had viewpoints and features along the route and were extremely popular with tourists on the Wye Tour. In fact, Piercefield became an unmissable attraction on the Wye Tour as Gilpin wrote, "Mr Morris's improvements at Persfield.... are generally thought as much worth a traveller's notice, as anything on the banks of the Wye."

Many of Morris's features remain and underwent substantial conservation works in 2009. The Wye Valley Walk links a sequence of viewpoints called The Alcove, The Platform, The Grotto, Giant's Cave, Lover's Leap and Eagle's Nest



#### Chepstow

Landing on slipway near Boat Inn. Please note that landing here usually involves wading through soft mud that can be very dangerous.

**Important:** Canoeists are recommended not to attempt to canoe below Chepstow as the junction with the River Severn has very dangerous currents

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Eagles Nest viewpoint





Lancaut Church



View from Wyntours Leap

## Lancaut Church

The remains of Lancaut Church, nestled on the banks of the Wye, can be seen on your left as you complete the meander around the Lancaut peninsula. The name is derived from Llan Cewydd, a 6th Century Welsh Saint to which the church was originally dedicated although later its dedication was changed to St James. The church is thought to date from the mid-twelfth century but received major restoration work in the 18th century. It continued to serve a small congregation before falling out of use around 1865. Conservation works here have involved the re-construction of the churchyard wall.

## Wyntours Leap

One of the finest viewpoints on the Wye is from Wyntours Leap situated high atop the cliffs on your left. The views can be accessed via the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. Legend has it that Sir John Wyntour, an ardent Royalist, burnt Whitecross House in 1645 to stop it falling into the hands of the Roundheads. Fleeing the Roundheads on horseback he was said to have jumped off the cliffs at Woodcroft. However, he may have known a 'secret' path down to the river and therefore evaded capture, but the escapade gave rise to the name 'Wyntours Leap' for the cliff face.

## Chepstow Castle

In the late eighteenth century the ruins of Chepstow Castle were the highlight at the end of the Wye Tour. The Castle is the oldest surviving stone fortification in Britain. Construction started from 1067 under the instruction of the Norman Lord William FitzOsbern, later made Earl of Hereford and was the southernmost of a chain of castles built along the English-Welsh border in the Welsh Marches.

## Chepstow Museum

To find out more about the Picturesque tour and the Wye Valley take the time to visit Chepstow Museum. This also has extensive material about the Piercefield Estate and its people. Similarly it describes local industries in Chepstow and houses an example of a stopnet fishing boat which was used to catch salmon in the Wye. You can also experience a 'virtual' Wye Tour to compare to your canoe trip.

# NEW THREATS TO THE RIVER WYE

## Important Information for canoeists

All river users benefit from a healthy aquatic environment. Clothing and equipment that has not been thoroughly dried or disinfected can carry invasive species and diseases that can infect water bodies, often with devastating effects. Crayfish plague is just such a disease.

Another potentially damaging plague is *Gyrodactylus salaris* (GS) which affects salmon and this could be brought in from the continent. It has devastated rivers in Norway.

Another, more recent threat has come from the killer shrimp *Dikerogammarus villosus*, a destructive species that has arrived in UK waters from Eastern Europe. It too could have a devastating effect on wildlife and fish. They can easily be transported in the webbing and water in the bottom of canoes and kayaks.

To reduce the risk of Crayfish plague, GS and killer shrimp spreading in UK waters it is important to take the following precautions.

### WHAT YOU MUST DO

If you intend to reuse your canoeing equipment on trips to different UK waters or abroad and there will be less than a seven day gap between your trips, you must ensure that your clothing and equipment has been properly sterilised through one of the following methods.

#### METHOD A

Drying to a minimum of 20 degC for at least 2 days.

#### Method B

Heating to above 60 degC for at least one hour.

#### Method C

Deep freezing for at least one day.

#### Method D

Immersion of materials in a solution of, or addition of one of the following chemicals to the concentration indicated for a minimum of 10 minutes:

- Virkon 1%
- Wescodyne 1%
- Sodium chloride (common salt) 3%
- Sodium hydroxide 0.2%



Canoeists below Yat Rock



Canoes at Symonds Yat



'This project has been supported by Advantage West Midlands' Natural Assets Programme in partnership with Natural England'

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[www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk](http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk)   [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)