

6. Stour Catchment Case Studies

6.1. Imagery depicting the physical and environmental characteristics of the River Stour from source to sea – its fluvial processes and observable changes over time

Introduction

The River Stour, and its wider catchment, extends from Wiltshire, through Dorset, to drain into the English Channel, encompassing a total geographical area of some 1,240 square kilometres. The river flows through a widely varying landscape, which has been determined by the underlying geology which comprises mainly chalk, limestone, clay or mixed sands and gravels. This varied landscape, which is characterized within the catchment by elevated chalk downs, limestone ridges, and low-lying clay valleys, is designated in part as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Along its course, from source to sea, the Stour is swollen in size by numerous tributaries as it follows a southern then south-easterly course, from south of Stourhead to Christchurch Harbour. From the north-east side, the Stour is fed by the Shreen Water, the River Lodden, the Iwerne, the Tarrant, the Allen, and the Moors River. From the west and south-west, its tributaries include the Cale, the Lydden, the Divelish, and the River Winterbourne.

Between the high chalk downs can be found wide vales and floodplains, such as the Blackmore Vale, which is bounded on its eastern side by Cranborne Chase, to the north from above Gillingham and extending toward Sherborne to the west. The high hills bordering the Stour offer outstanding vantage points for observing the course of the river as it meanders through its upper and middle reaches on its journey down towards the coast.

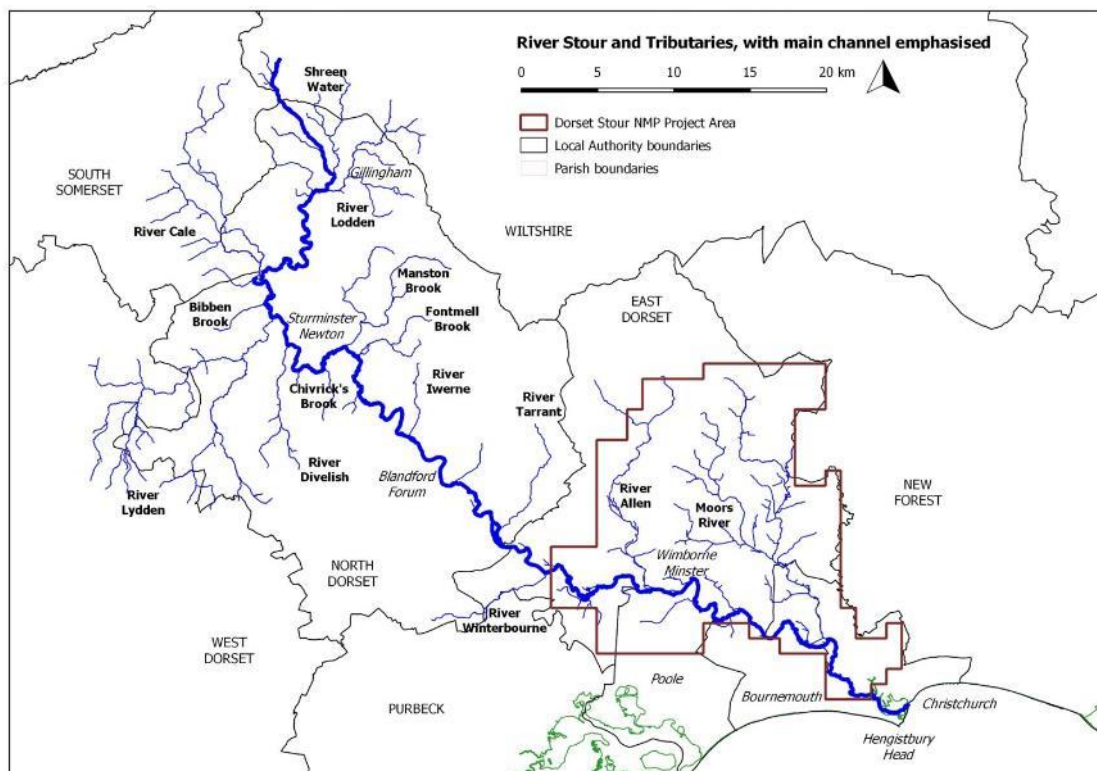


Figure 56: River Stour catchment – Study area map. Courtesy Fjoridr Limited (2017).



Figure 57 (above): A view of Gillingham from the north-west in 1930 showing the Blackmore Vale beyond. Image courtesy of 'Britain From Above' © Historic England.

Figure 58 (below): Looking down the Stour Valley from the hill at Kingston Magna in Dorset's Blackmore Vale. Image courtesy of Shutterstock/Joe Dunckley.



Imagery depicting the characteristics of the Stour catchment are most usually focussed on the great country estates, the towns and villages of architectural quality, and other key buildings of historical importance; views of the mouth of the river in the vicinity of Christchurch are also more numerous. The rural stretches of the river were painted much less frequently except by some local Dorset artists and engravers but, from the 1860s onwards, black and white photographs of the landscape started to appear, although, again, these were not prolific until the late nineteenth century when photographing the landscape became much more popular.

The course of the Stour itself has been adapted for commercial and agricultural purposes over time, not least following the construction of numerous mills, which were able to take advantage of water power for a wide range of rural industrial purposes. Mills, such as Cutt Mill at Hinton St. Mary near Sturminster Newton, derived its name from the old English word 'Cut' or a 'water channel', which necessitated alteration to the river channel.

The principal natural process affecting the Stour catchment is the impacts of rainfall run-off in terms of soil erosion and flooding. The natural weathering and erosion of soil from steep hillsides within the Stour valley was also aggravated as a result of the intensification of agriculture, particularly during the War when vast areas of downland pasture were ploughed for the growth of crops. This increased farming activity had a significant impact on not just the landscape but also on some of the most important archaeological sites that occupy hilltop and hillside positions overlooking the Stour valley (Groube & Bowden, 1982¹).

The source of the Stour, in the vicinity of Stourhead, lies within a landscape that has seen significant alteration and 'improvement' as seen through the eyes of wealthy landowners in the eighteenth century. With a romantic eye for classical scenery and great wealth, famous architects, including Capability Brown, William Kent and others, helped to beautify the landscape drawing on the great sights that they had observed on the Grand Tour. Views such as that of the pleasure grounds at Stourhead provide a detailed appreciation of the landscape at that time, even though some exaggeration of the topography can be observed (see Figure 15).

To the north and south of Gillingham, artistic depictions of the Stour itself are rare, although there are many photographic images of the riverside mills that are so numerous along this frontage. The river itself, for example at West Stour, Stour Provost and Marnhull, has a very modest flow and it is not until the tributaries start to join the main river that the volume increases significantly. As the river flows through the wide Blackmore Vale, it follows a meandering course through a pastoral landscape, within a wide and settled floodplain. *'Small blocks of wet woodland alongside the river provide structure and diversity and a sense of intimacy to this otherwise flat and open landscape. Dense hedgerows with trees, small scale fields and occasional grassy meadows and remnant withy beds along the river give way to nucleated villages and large blocks of deciduous woodland along the valley sides'* (Dorset County Council, 2014²). In places remnants of water meadows can be found, a resource that fell out of use from the late nineteenth century onwards, following the onset of a deep agricultural recession, which continued almost unabated up until the Second World War.

Therefore, the extent and nature of the river and its wider landscape characteristics can be seen most clearly in nineteenth century and later photographs, which have usually been taken in the vicinity of historic mills, such as Cutt Mill at Hinton St. Mary, as well as numerous photographs around Sturminster Newton. Photographic evidence and historical artworks, where they are available, suggest the overall landscape of the river from Stourhead down to Blandford Forum would be easily recognisable to landowners and farmers from a century and a half before.



Figure 59: The Stour at West Stour from the bridge on the A30.



Figure 60: Downstream at Marnhull. Here the river is more a large stream until rivers join it lower down the catchment.



Figure 61: Flooding on Sackmore Lane, Marnhull in 1912. Many of the riverside villages have been affected historically by flooding, particularly in the middle and lower reaches of the Stour.

Private Collection.



Figure 6.2: Stour Provost Mill in about 1920.

Private Collection.



Figure 63: The ruin of Cut Mill at Hinton St Mary near Sturminster Newton; here the river volume has increased significantly as flows from the wider catchment joins it. Unlike many of the historic mills along the Stour, Cut Mill has not been restored.

Image courtesy of Helen Hotson/Shutterstock.

Figure 64: The Stour Valley near the old railway viaduct at Colber Bridge at Sturminster Newton.

Image courtesy of Flickr/Joe Dunckley.



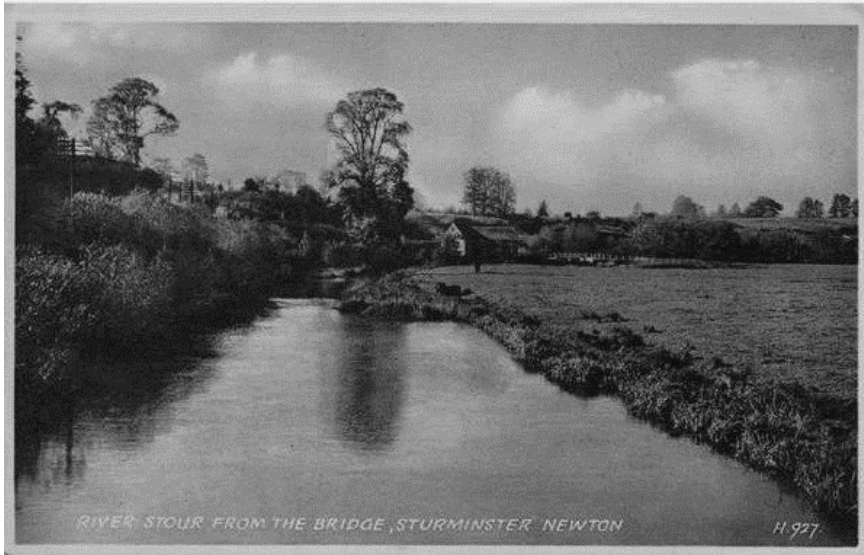


Figure 65: The Stour from the bridge at Sturminster Newton in about 1910, looking down river towards Fiddleford. From here the river turns north, then east following a meandering course past Shillingstone and beneath Hod Hill towards Blandford Forum.



Figure 66: The Stour valley viewed from the Iron Age fort at Hod Hill in about 1920. The river flows close to the foot of the hill, which is now heavily wooded.

Image courtesy of Dorset History Centre.



Figure 67: The Stour downstream of Blandford Forum presents a tranquil scene in this photograph c.1900.

Image courtesy of Dorset History Centre.



Figure 68: This view of the ancient bridge at Blandford Forum shows a clear expanse of river on the lower side. c.1915.



Figure 69 (left) and Figure 70 (below) show the nature of the river today. It has a more natural appearance with reeds, lilies and weed extending across the whole width. Large trees extend along the banks blocking the more open vistas that were enjoyed in Victorian and Edwardian times.



Historical imagery depicts heritage features such as mills, riverside manors and bridges and the changes that have affected them over time, but also the changing natural environments as a result of agricultural practices as well as development.

From Sturminster Newton, south-eastwards towards Wimborne, images of the river become more numerous, partly because of the picturesque nature of both this historic landscape and of the towns and villages such as Sturminster Newton itself, Shapwick, Sturminster Marshall, and Wimborne Minster. Additional artworks and photographs also feature the important archaeological sites located on high ground, such as Hod Hill, Hambledon Hill, Spetisbury Rump, and Badbury Rings, whilst important mansions in the vicinity, including Kingston Lacy House, and Bryanston at Blandford Forum are also frequently illustrated in nineteenth century topographical books.

Whilst a scattering of sites through the upper reaches of the Stour catchment are affected by flooding, the river south-east of Blandford, past Wimborne, and to the north of Bournemouth, has experienced numerous flooding incidents and some of the historic bridges and mills are frequently affected by inundation. Such flood events are monitored and recorded by the Environment Agency. The bridges and riverbanks bordering the Stour, for example at Blandford, provide the opportunity to make comparisons over the last century. Old photographs appear to show the river at Blandford largely clear of vegetation, whilst today the river takes on a more natural appearance with water weed, reeds and lilies in abundance.



Figure 71: Extensive flooding at White Mill Bridge near Sturminster Marshall in February 2017.

Image courtesy of Robert Hurworth/Shutterstock.



Figure 72: Flooding at White Mill, Sturminster Marshall in November 2016. The mill, which is in the ownership of the National Trust, forms part of the Kingston Lacy estate.

Image courtesy of Shutterstock.



Figure 73: White Mill in the summer. This was one of eight mills on the Stour that were listed in the Domesday Book.

At Wimborne Minster, which is also built close to the Stour floodplain, a sequence of photographic images shows an increasing encroachment of vegetation, both scrub and trees, adjacent to the riverbank in areas that were previously largely pasture land.



Figure 74: The River Stour looking towards Wimborne Minster was illustrated by the watercolourist, Walter Frederick Tyndale, in 'Wessex' by C. Holland (1906). Water meadows occupy the floodplain south of the town.



Figure 75: This postcard c.1930 shows a slightly closer view of the town but, overall, there is relatively little change to the river environment over the intervening period.



Figure 76: From slightly further to the west the present day view shows more recent residential development between the river and the Minster.

Flowing east and then south-east from Wimborne Minster, the Stour follows a winding course forming a northern boundary to the Bournemouth conurbation. At Throop once again the river's waters have been harnessed and their volume can be clearly seen in the photograph of the mill and weir at Throop (see Figure 77 below). The wider river floodplain becomes more confined past Blackwater, the site of a popular ferry crossing and tavern in Victorian and Edwardian times. From there the river flows past Iford and Tuckton to Wick, before emerging into Christchurch Harbour. There are many artworks depicting scenes of the harbour, particularly of views looking across the water towards Christchurch Priory.



Figure 77: The Stour towards Throop Mill marks the northern boundary of Bournemouth. This section of the Stour has been subjected to alteration for flood defence, water abstraction and highway improvement purposes.

Figure 78 (below): The picturesque Inn at the Blackwater Rope Ferry crossing was demolished in 1925; the site was chosen by many artists. The improvement of the A338 and other development have left the site overgrown and lost in time (see **Figure 79, right**).

Image courtesy of Sue Newman (Newman, 2009³).



On the northern side of the River Avon, at its confluence with the Stour, lies the Medieval town of Christchurch, which contains a designated conservation area with numerous Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments; one of these is Christchurch Priory. The watercolour drawings and oil paintings by artists from the middle and late nineteenth centuries show the Priory set slightly above the adjacent river and water meadows. Other historic buildings, including Place Mill, benefitted from improved flood defence measures particularly after floods in 1979 and later. The openness of the harbour and the channel known as ‘The Run’ were also depicted by artists both for the quality of the natural landscape and for the distant views offered of the Priory from across the waters from Mudeford to the north-east and from Hengistbury Head to the south-west.



Figure 80: ‘Priory Church, Christchurch’ c.1840, a lithograph by B. Hawkins. The view from across the river was selected by many artists. On the right is the Constable’s House, which, with the castle, dates back to Norman times.

Image courtesy of the Red House Museum, Christchurch.

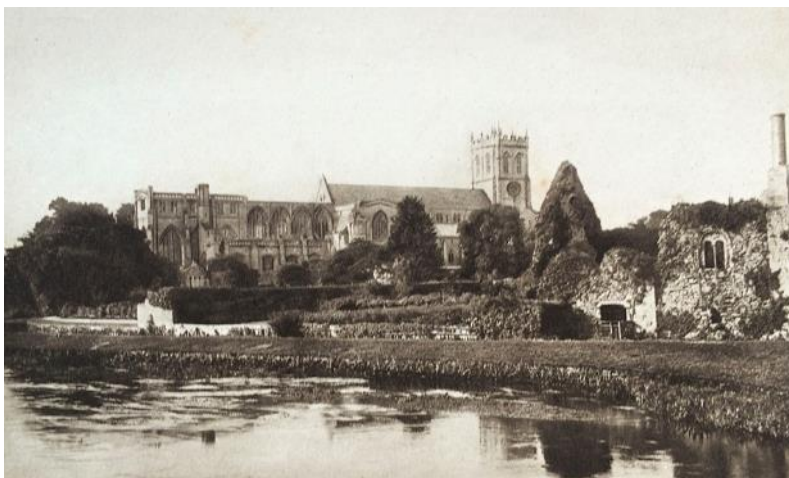


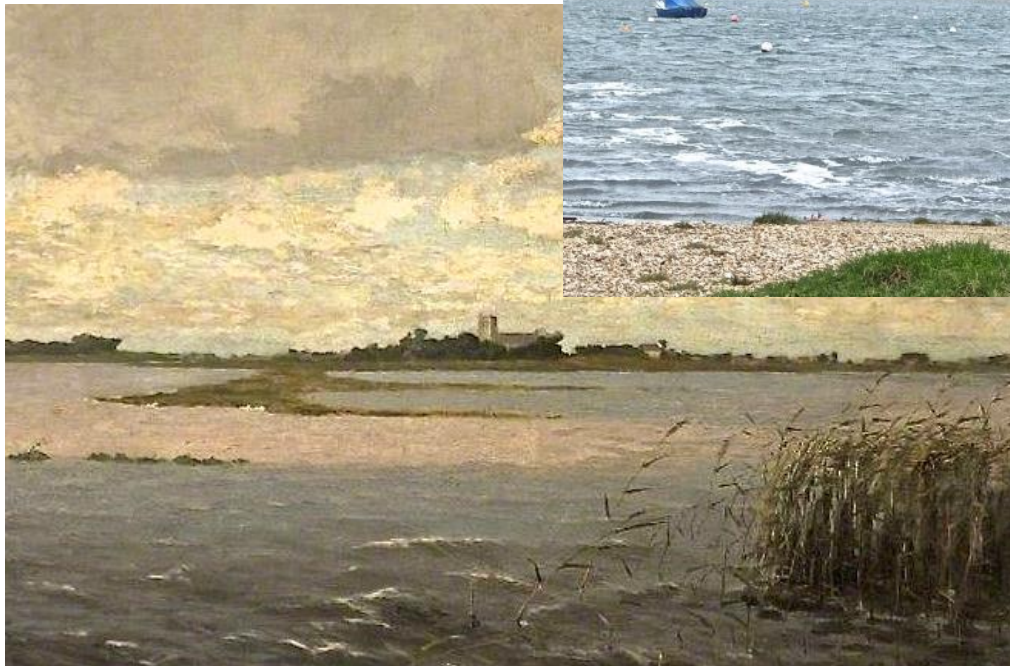
Figure 81: This sepia postcard, c.1910, shows the same view with a stone wall protecting the river bank. Further flood defence measures are under consideration.

Figure 82 (below left) shows the nature of the river from the eastern side where the vulnerability of waterfront properties at that time is clearly illustrated.



The Lower Stour flood defence scheme (1993) saw the provision of tide gates and other improvements to protect low-lying properties including Listed Buildings (**Figure 83 below**).





Figures 84 and 85 (above) show Christchurch Harbour as depicted by William Pitcairn Knowles (c.1846-c.1904), with the Priory Church on the horizon. The harbour is sheltered by Hengistbury Head to the south and east and Mudeford to the north-east.

Image courtesy of Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.

Figures 86 and 86 (below) show *'The Run'* at Mudeford painted by the same artist and a present day photograph from a similar vantage point.

Image courtesy of the Russell-Cotes Art gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.



Hengistbury Head runs eastwards from Bournemouth for a distance of approximately 3km, and protects Christchurch Harbour from the prevailing south-westerly storm waves. The location is particularly well-known for the '*Double Dykes*' which are at the seaward end of the Head. During the Iron Age, the headland was defended by this parallel pair of dykes that ran from the sea to the south across Hengistbury Head to Christchurch Harbour to the north. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the frontage is defended by a substantial beach along the south side, which is controlled by rock groynes. The Long Groyne, and the seventeen associated groynes sited due north of it at Hengistbury Head, fulfil a key coast protection function. Because of the nature of this landscape, it was not chosen by many artists as a subject in its own right in the past and there are very few historical artworks of it.

6.2. Images illustrating the heritage assets of the Stour Catchment, including mills, bridges and residences

The County of Dorset has a very rich heritage in terms of both its historic landscapes and the built environment, and a journey down the River Stour, and within its catchment from source to sea, clearly influences how its occupiers over time have changed the river landscape in a range of ways including river engineering and land drainage, urban development, the construction of riverside fortifications, water mills and bridges, as well as private residences. '*The Stour is particularly rich in terms of its historic mills and the Domesday Book of 1086 listed 226 working mills in Dorset*' (Guttridge, 2010⁴). Many of these, together with local farm buildings, manor houses and bridges have been carefully restored in line with the planning guidelines set out by Dorset County Council in its 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Plan' (Dorset County Council, 2010²).

Historic towns and villages built alongside the Stour contain numerous Listed Buildings and sixteen of these have their own designated Conservation Areas. The high land through which the rivers of the Stour catchment have carved their valleys offered the potential as a natural barrier against attack and in Prehistoric times hilltops, such as those at Hod Hill, Spetisbury, Badbury Rings and Hambledon Hill, formed local strongholds which were protected by ditches, earthworks and palisades from the Bronze Age and Iron Age; later, some of these were overrun and occupied by the invading Romans.

Whilst the Stour played an important role in terms of communication and the local economy of the area, it could also act as a barrier to cross-country movement, and from the Middle Ages bridges were constructed often initially of timber but, later, of stone or brick. The Stour valley has a remarkable heritage in terms of bridges, and those at Spetisbury, White Mill Bridge near Sturminster Marshall, Blandford, Wimborne and Sturminster Newton are some of the finest examples.

Alongside the rich farmlands of the Stour valley the villages and small towns contain numerous fine buildings, many of which are Listed on account of their historic interest. Apart from the great estates, such as Stourhead, Bryanston, and Kingston Lacy, which are frequently illustrated in major topographical works, many of the smaller houses were also illustrated in early-to-mid-nineteenth century local publications and travel guides, often as copperplate engravings or, later, as steel engravings which tended to offer finer detail. Such images can show how properties were altered and extended over time, or some lost altogether as a result of fire, neglect or change of use. Landmark buildings, such as Christchurch Priory close to where the Stour and Avon meet the sea at Christchurch Harbour, were painted by numerous artists on account of the striking scene provided by the Priory set against the low-lying surrounding land.

Local artists, such as the prolific Henry Joseph Moule (1825-1904), gave us an insight to the management of land, including streams and water meadows, in Dorset through some 1500 watercolours held by Dorset County Museum. Frederick William Newton Whitehead (1853-1938) was

a painter of the landscape, including also architectural subjects. His numerous works give an indication of the rural character of this part of Wessex and the day-to-day lives of local residents.

6.2.1. Hill Forts

Figures 88 and 89 show the location of Rawlsbury Camp on a spur of Bulbarrow Hill near Blandford Forum. The painting is by the Dorset artist, Emma Lavinia Hardy (1840-1912), and clearly shows the embankments and ditches. The present day view shows increasing scrub growth on the hillsides as a result of reduced grazing, a feature commonly observed when comparing Victorian artworks with present day photographs.

Figure 88 (right): Photograph courtesy of Jim Champion.

Figure 89 (below): Courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



~ HILL FORTS ~



Figure 90 (above) is a pen, ink and wash drawing of Hod Hill looking from the west. Painted c.1930, this view looks across the Stour floodplain and the railway embankment to the Stour beyond, which closely follows the foot of the hill. The hill fort was inhabited from the Iron Age and was later the site of a Roman Camp in its north-west corner (Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum). The open downland contrasts with the heavily wooded slopes to be observed in the present day view (**Figure 91 below**). The railway line was closed in 1966.



~ HILL FORTS ~



Figure 92 (above): This pen, ink and wash view shows the village of Spetisbury which is located adjacent to the River Stour to the south-east of Blandford Forum. Behind this linear village is Spetisbury Rings, an Iron Age hill fort, which is visible on the summit in this drawing. The fine detail depicted here shows the River Stour in the foreground, the limited development at that time and the layout of the fields on the hillside. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum. **Figure 93 (below)** shows the present day view, which, even in late autumn, is largely obscured by the trees.



~ FINE MANSIONS ~

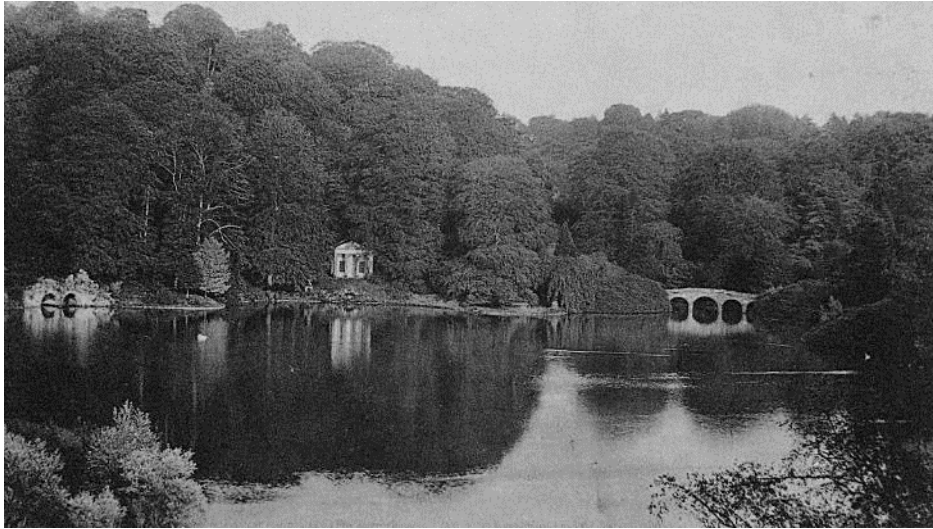


Figure 94: There are a wealth of drawings, watercolours and paintings of Stourhead and its grounds (see also Figures 14-16), which plot the gradual development and landscaping of this site since the eighteenth century. Many of these are in the collection of the National Trust and may be viewed online.



Figure 95: Early engravings such as this view of '*Stalbridge House*' by J. Nichols (1813) provide the only visual images of properties that have been lost through fire, changing tastes and demolition. This house was demolished in 1823, long before the days of photography.



Figure 96: Some properties such as '*Plumber Manor*' near Sturminster Newton on the River Divilish (which flows into the Stour) have been altered over time. This eighteenth century copperplate engraving shows the arrangement of the old house as well as depicting its landscaped grounds at that time; the property was modernised in the early twentieth century.

~ FINE MANSIONS ~



Figure 97: This copperplate engraving by Jan Kip (c.1709) from *'Britannia Illustrata'* (Kip, 1709⁵) shows the layout of formal gardens at Bryanston, the seat of Henry Portman. Although such views were not necessarily topographically accurate, or may have been aspirational, they can provide information on the layout of historical properties and their formal gardens.

Figure 98: This more detailed view of *'Bryanston'* by John Preston Neale (1831) is from *'Views of the Seats, Mansions, Castles, etc. of Noblemen and Gentlemen'* (Neale, 1831⁶). Engraved on a steel plate finer detail could be achieved compared to the copperplate engravings of Kip and others.



Figure 99: This view of *'Ranston'* on the River Iwerne, which flows into the Stour, is situated near Stourpaine. The scene was drawn by the leading late eighteenth century watercolourist, Thomas Hearne, in 1779. Early views of this kind form a starting point for the study of the architectural history of such properties.

~ FINE MANSIONS ~

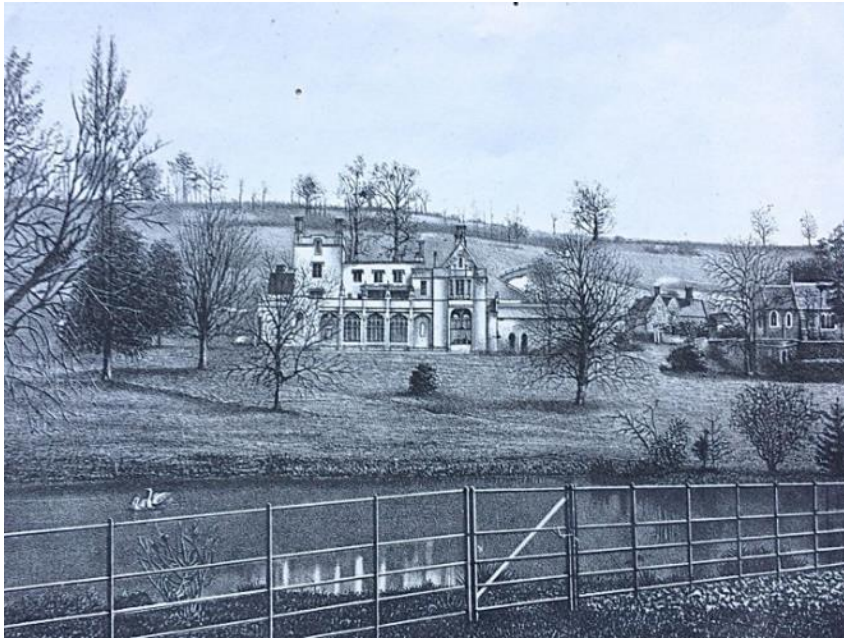


Figure 100: This engraving shows '*Wolland House*' on the River Divilish in 1857. The property has seen a long history of alterations since the seventeenth century and such changes have been recorded through the eyes of engravers.



Figure 101: This engraving of '*Kingston Hall*' (now known as Kingston Lacy) was drawn by John Preston Neale in 1831. It shows the home of the Bankes family and their extensive landholdings extended down to the River Stour. Artists such as Neale, and others with architectural draughtsmanship skills, provide valuable records of historic buildings, which are often very accurate.



Figure 102: The classical, two storey Kingston Hall was transformed by architect Charles Barry in the 1830s by encasing and enlarging the original building to produce an Italianate mansion.

Image courtesy of Andrew Matthewson/Geograph.

~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figure 103: John Constable RA (1776-1837) visited Gillingham in 1820 and 1823 and produced several views of 'Purn's Mill' or 'Parham's Mill' as well as one of the bridge (see also Figure 3 and 17). Constable had an eye for detail and his depictions in the Dorset Stour Valley can be considered to provide an accurate record of the locality in the early nineteenth century. This view of the Mill represents one of only two depictions of the building in full colour as it burnt down in September 1825. Image courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Figure 104 (left): This photograph, c.1950, shows Eccliffe Mill, Madjeston and bridge. There are fewer artworks of the lesser mills as they were seen by some artists as part of every day life and did not merit a painting. Fortunately, there is a rich photographic record such as that held by The Mills Archive (<http://catalogue.millsarchive.org>).

Image courtesy of The Mills Archive.

Figure 105 (below) shows the present condition of the mill, the wheel and sluices having been removed.



~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figures 106 and 107: Dating back to the Domesday Book Stour Provost Mill was one of many along the upper reaches of the river. The early nineteenth century mill buildings have been carefully restored.
Image courtesy of The Mills Archive.



Figures 108 and 109: Dating from the 1820s the picturesque King's Mill at Marnhull is clearly depicted in this photograph taken in about 1931. The mill wheel is on the left hand of the building.
Image courtesy of The Mills Archive.

~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figures 110-113: The mill at Sturminster Newton (left) is finely painted in watercolour by Dorset artist, Henry Joseph Moule (1825-1904). The ancient mill dates from the seventeenth century and is in working order. The scene has changed little over the last three centuries.

Images courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



Figure 113 (above): This very clear photograph shows the rear view of the mill in about 1900. Private Collection.

~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figure 114 (left): A short distance down river is Fiddleford Mill, the site also being well-known for its Manor House, which is in the care of English Heritage.



Figures 115 and 116: The engraving from about 1870 and the photographic postcard below show Durweston Mill.

Constructed of red brick this substantial mill ground flour though now it forms residential apartments. The sluices in the engraving and the bridge can be seen in both views, although the side of the mill had been substantially altered by 1900. Present day views of the mill are shown in Figures 117-1190.



~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figure 117: Today's view shows the significant modification of Durweston Mill over a period of 150 years, although the sluices and bridge remain. The roar of the water passing under the bridge contrasts with the tranquillity of the mill pond (**Figure 118, middle**).



Figure 119: View of the mill today from the south-east side.

~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figure 120: This very detailed oil painting by Arthur Henry Davis (1881) shows the rear view of Walford Mill at Wimborne Minster on the River Allen. Such artworks allow us to make direct comparisons with the present day view (**Figure 121 below**). Today the old thatched mill now has a tiled roof and the buildings have been restored beautifully. However, the mill pond is now overgrown and just an area of marshy ground.

Image of painting courtesy of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth.



~ HISTORIC MILLS ~



Figure 122: White Mill on the Kingston Lacy estate is one of the oldest mills on the Stour. No artworks have been found of the Mill despite its picturesque location.

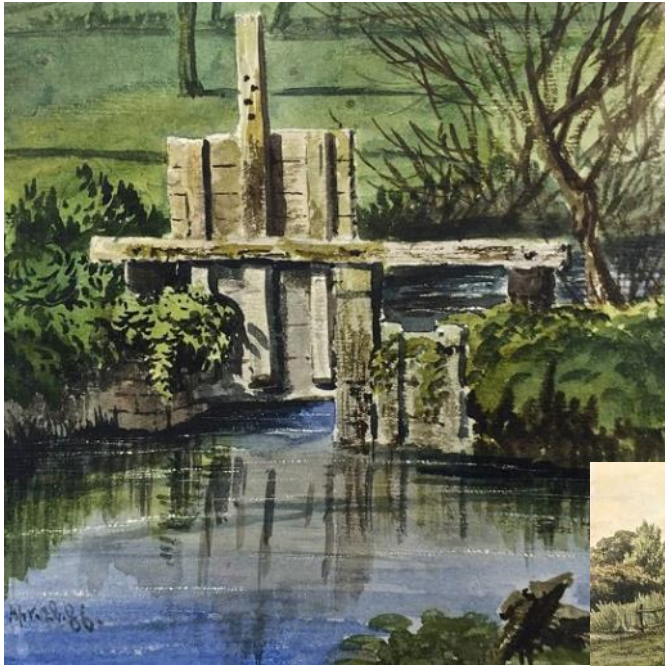


Figure 123: This view shows the Victorian Throop Mill in about 1900, although its origins date back to the Domesday Book. The brick mill remains today in excellent condition and virtually unaltered from the Victorian photograph. A detailed history of the mill is provided in *'The Stour Valley'* (Legg, 2003⁷).



Figure 124: A present day view of the mill.

~ RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT ~



The depiction of weirs, traps, water wheels and other such local features were often ignored by artists, with the exception of local artists/antiquarians who were fascinated with rural life and practices. In Dorset Henry Joseph Moule (1825-1904) painted rural scenes such as these (**Figures 125-129**) along Dorset's rivers and streams. Although not of the Stour, these scenes are typical of the river landscapes and structures within the catchment. Moule did, however, paint views on the Stour including the mill at Sturminster Newton (front cover).



Images courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



~ BRIDGES ~

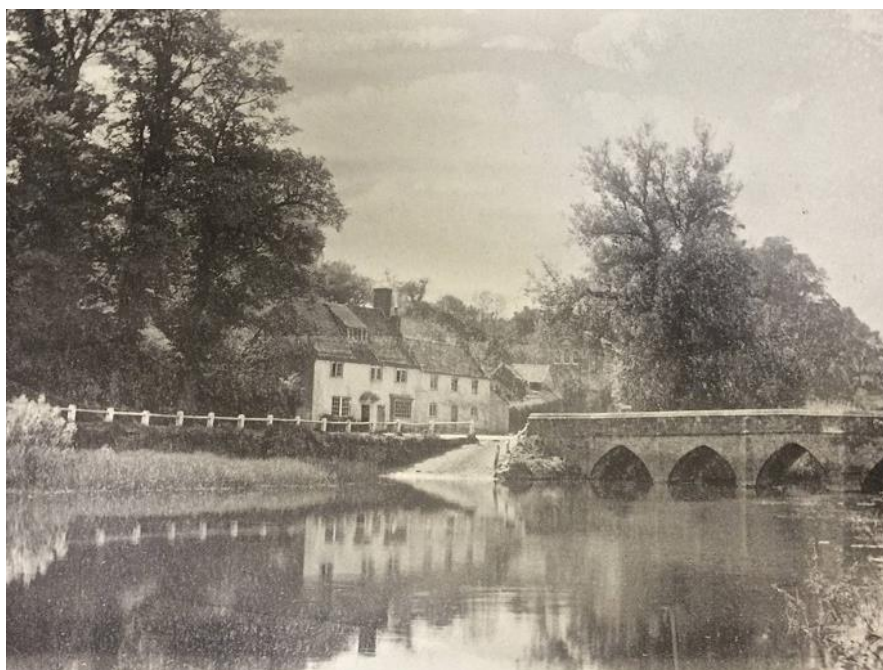


Figure 130: In 1811 Dr John Fisher introduced his nephew, John Fisher, to Constable. The younger Fisher became the artist's closest friend, providing moral and financial support whenever they were needed and often purchasing works from Constable which he could ill afford. In 1819 Fisher became Vicar of Gillingham in Dorset and Constable was invited to stay there in 1820 and again in 1823. On the second occasion he painted this picture of the bridge with the village church beyond. Fisher's son, Osmond, later recalled seeing Constable sitting with his easel in the meadow at the right hand corner. Image courtesy of Tate Images © 2017.

Figure 131 (below): This early copperplate engraving by T. Rackett shows King's Stag Bridge over the River Lydden, south-east of Sturminster Newton in 1813. It was published in the monthly '*Gentleman's Magazine*' (1731⁸) which is a rich source of such early antiquarian subjects.



~ BRIDGES ~

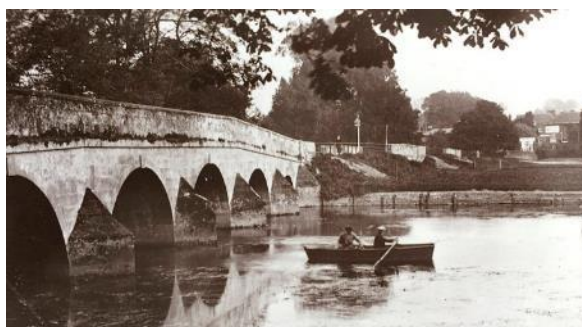


Figures 132 (top) and 133 (middle) show the Sturminster Town Bridge in the 1930s and the present day view of the structure. It is one of several iconic bridges over the Stour and others are depicted overleaf.



Figure 132 courtesy of Dorset County Museum.

Figures 134 and 135 (below) are a steel engraving and a photograph (c.1920) of Blandford Bridge, which dates back to the thirteenth century. Colour artworks of this bridge have not been found, although there is a rich photographic resource.



~ BRIDGES ~



Figure 136: Crawford Bridge at Spetisbury and **Figure 137 (middle)**

White Mill Bridge near Sturminster Marshall are both of considerable historical importance and aesthetically pleasing. Despite this, artworks of bridges are rare and, therefore, the best medium for research is old photographs or photographic postcards.



Figures 138 and 139 (below) are of the Grade I Listed Julian's Bridge at the entrance to Wimborne Minster from the south-west. The land adjoining the riverbank has since been developed.



~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figure 140 (above): This oil painting of '*Shapwick Church*' by Dorset artist, Frederick Whitehead (1853-1938), shows the church located very close to the north bank of the River Stour. Its picturesque location is illustrated clearly in the aerial photograph (as **Figure 141 below**). Whitehead produced over fifty paintings of Dorset, which are held in public collections, and this view was selected in view of its careful portrayal of the historic character of the waterside village.

Figure 140 courtesy of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum. Figure 141 courtesy of Archaeology National Trust SW.wordpress.com.



~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figure 142 (left): This photograph of Shapwick (c.1950s) still shows the apparent vulnerability of the church and flooding in its location immediately adjacent to the River Stour.



Figure 143 (left): The present day view of Shapwick Church. The riverside properties now have the additional protection of flood defence measures including gates.



Figure 144: For each site included within these case studies images were taken to the sites concerned in order that direct comparisons could be made in terms of both topographical and architectural accuracy. The results were used to inform the artists' ranking system and scoring. In addition, this allowed an on-site assessment to be made of the sites' contribution to our understanding of how imagery can inform us of the historical character of the Stour catchment.

~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figures 145-158 (following) provide a sequence of depictions, in chronological order, of one of Dorset's (formerly Hampshire's) most painted locations – Christchurch Priory. Such sequences of artworks illustrate differing artistic styles and media and also test artistic accuracy, as well as depicting the historical character of the site. **Figure 145 (above)** is an aquatint engraving by the topographical artist, William Daniell RA, and is a plate from his '*Voyage Round Great Britain*' (Daniell & Ayton, 1814-1825⁹). **Figure 146 (below)** is a lithograph taken from across the river by Louis Haghe in about 1840.



~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figure 147: This oil painting by Christina Allen shows '*Place Mill and the Priory*' in c.1880 and can be compared with the present day view (**Figure 149 below**).

Image courtesy of the Red House Museum, Christchurch.

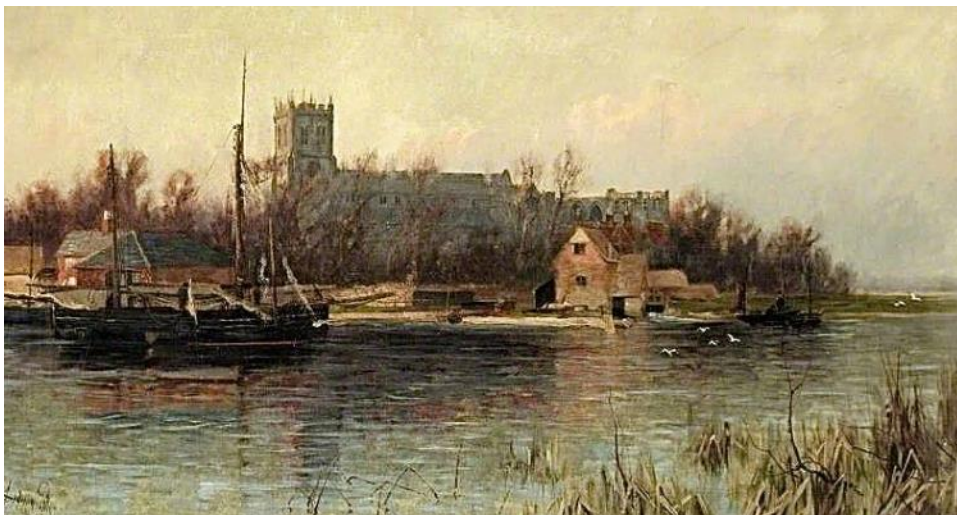


Figure 148: Sidney Pike, a prolific painter of south coast views in oils, painted the Priory in 1896. It compares favourably with the present day view.

Image courtesy of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.



Figure 149: The present day view remains virtually unaltered except for the mature trees, which in summer obscure the Priory from the water.

~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figure 150: The prolific postcard artist, Alfred Robert Quinton (active 1900-1934), painted several views of Christchurch with his bright watercolour palate. This view is taken from Wick across the river in about 1915.

Image courtesy of J. & F. Salmon Limited of Sevenoaks.



Figure 151: This photographic postcard, c.1900, is taken from almost the same location. Place Mill stands out in the centre right of the view.



Figure 152: This aerial view of Christchurch Priory in 1951 shows its location close to the confluence of the Avon and the Stour and almost surrounded by water. Although more development has taken place Victorian and Edwardian visitors would notice relatively little change as the historical character of the waterfront is well preserved.

Image courtesy of Britain From Above © Historic England.

~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



This series of views of Christchurch Priory are all taken from the north-east and include in the foreground (right) the ruins of the Constable's House and Keep, which date back to Norman Times.

Figure 153 is a lithograph by Day & Haigh, c.1850, and shows the open view of the waterfront.

Courtesy of the Red House Museum, Christchurch.



Figure 154: This further view by Sidney Pike of *'The Priory and Constable's House'* was painted in 1894, and the scene is virtually unchanged. Image courtesy of the Red House Museum, Christchurch.



Figure 155: This attractive watercolour by Henry B. Wimbush, c.1900, provides a closer and more detailed view of the riverside architecture at that time.

Private Collection.

~ ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS ~



Figure 156: A further view by A. R. Quinton, a contemporary of Wimbush, painted in about 1910 provides more architectural detail of the Priory.

Image courtesy of J. & F. Salmon Limited of Sevenoaks.



Figure 157: A photographic postcard, c.1920, closely replicates the watercolours of Wimbush and Quinton and confirm the attention to detail provided in their artworks.



Figure 158: The present day view with the growth of trees along the riverside and around the Priory now partially obscures the architecture.

6.3. Images illustrating the working lives of riverside communities

The Stour catchment of Dorset is a key feature of the landscape for at least 2,000 years, it has contributed to the development and culture of the County. Art and photographic imagery, dating back to the late eighteenth century, provide an insight into daily life of residents within the Stour valley, for which an important focus was agriculture, in terms of grazing on the water meadows and adjacent hillsides, and the growth of crops. The river itself provided resources in terms of reeds (osiers) for the manufacture of household goods. The river was also a source of food, with marine species being common in the lower reaches, including flatfish, bass and mullet, as well as annual runs of salmon and sea trout; higher up the river eel fisheries were historically important.

Riverside residents often occupied small thatched cottages immediately abutting streams and rivers which were prone to regular flooding, whilst more substantial mills were constructed where the opportunity for harnessing water power could be maximised.

In those locations where bridges did not exist, local ferries fulfilled a useful role, such as those at Wick near Christchurch and the Blackwater Ferry. On account of the human interest and the opportunities to portray attractive rural scenes, the 'ferry' was a popular subject for both artists and, later, photographers.



Figure 159: Riverside life for farm workers might seem idyllic in the watercolours of Myles Birket Foster from the late nineteenth century but often cottagers lived in very poor conditions with their properties at risk of flooding. Although of an unidentified location, this watercolour '*Fetching Water*' depicts a typical scene from daily life, which is echoed in the watercolours of Dorset artist, Henry J. Moule (see **Figures 175 and 176**).

Image courtesy of Bonham's.

~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figure 160: Larger quantities of water were collected using a barrel mounted on a horse-drawn cart as here at Blandford Forum in about 1890.

Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



Figure 161: This wicker enclosure on the banks of the Stour at Shapwick may have been cut into the river bank, which is supported by timber shuttering providing access into the water and the dip.

Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



Figure 162: This watercolour by H. J. Moule, late nineteenth century, shows farmworkers sawing logs; a routine task for winter fuel. Moule's Dorset riverside watercolours provide a wealth of local detail on life in the countryside along the county's rivers.

Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.

~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figures 163 (top) and 164 (middle): Rushing or the utilisation of the Bullrushes (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) along the river banks is a well-documented activity stretching back to ancient times, and was undertaken along the River Stour.

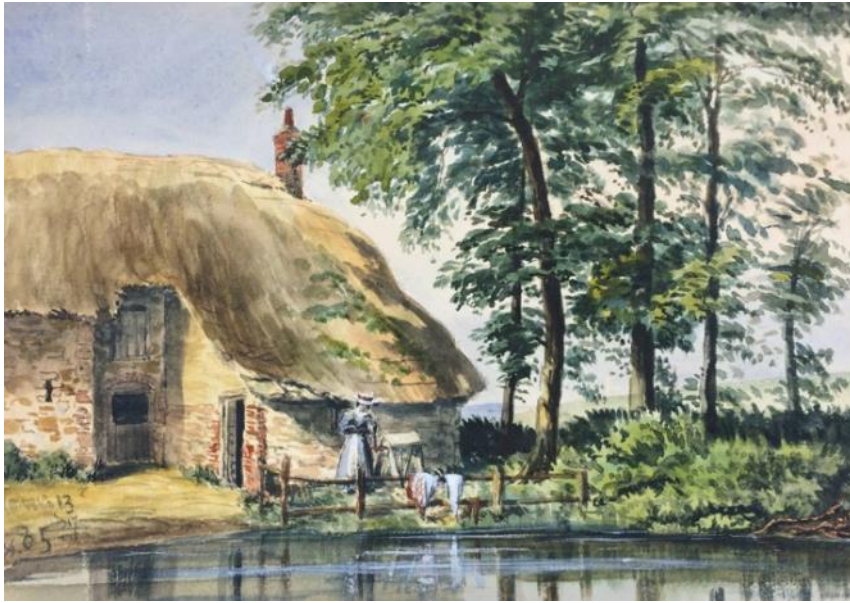
Traditionally, the men harvested the rushes in bundles and the family collaborated to turn these into goods such as floor mats, chairs, baskets and footwear during the winter for use and sale, with each cutter owning a right to a certain length of river bank (Parker, 2007¹⁰). These woodcuts (also Figures 168, 173 and 177 below) are from an article on 'Life on the Upper Thames' (Sept. 1873). These activities were typical also of the Dorset Stour.



Figure 165: Water meadows are irrigated areas of agricultural land alongside rivers which, thanks to the carefully engineered and maintained channels, produced rich crops and lush grazing land due to nutrient trapping and a steady water supply. In the south-west of England these became popular from the thirteenth century and were highly sought after until the late nineteenth century when cheaper imports and artificial fertilisers became more economically viable. Water meadows are found along the banks of the Stour including at Blandford,

Shillingstone, Durweston, Sturminster and Stourpaine (Historic England, 2007¹¹). This oil painting by Peter Monstead (1908, oil on canvas) depicts a typical rural scene. Image courtesy of Bonham's.

~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figures 166-168 depict typical scenes of riverside life in the late nineteenth century.



Figures 166 (top) and 167 (middle) are watercolours by Dorset artist, Henry J. Moule (1825-1904) whose collections of over 1,400 local views form a valuable archive of Dorset riverside and rural life; they are held by Dorset County Museum.



Figure 168 (bottom) is a late nineteenth century woodcut engraving from *'The Graphic'*, a popular illustrated magazine, which described English riverside life.

~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figures 169-171 show harvesting scenes adjacent to the river within the flood plains and water meadows. The upper and middle images are again depictions by H. J. Moule, whose late nineteenth century watercolours are often finely detailed.

Images courtesy of Dorset County Museum.



On some stretches of rivers it was possible to use shallow-bottomed barges for local transport of hay or reeds where conditions permitted (**Figure 180 bottom**). This oil by Henry H. Parker (1858-1930) depicts such a scene.

Image courtesy of Bonham's



~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figures 172-174 depict fishing scenes.

The Stour is recognised as a historically important fishery of Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) and Salmon. These species used the river as a migratory corridor and this made capture using eel traps and nets relatively easy. Stationary traps were the traditional, passive method of catching eels and fish as they swam up or down the river, typically made from timbers, rubble and wicker baskets. Other structures include weirs, derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for fish trap, also create a barrier to the fish. The traps have not changed significantly over the last 3,000 years. On the Stour an eel weir is still in use, this works through a slightly different mechanism by channelling the eels up towards the surface where they can be captured (Historic England, 2011¹²; Righton & Roberts, 2014¹³).



Figure 172 image courtesy of the Red House Museum, Christchurch.



Figure 173 from *'Life on the Upper Thames'* (1873) shows a scene that would be typical also on the Stour.

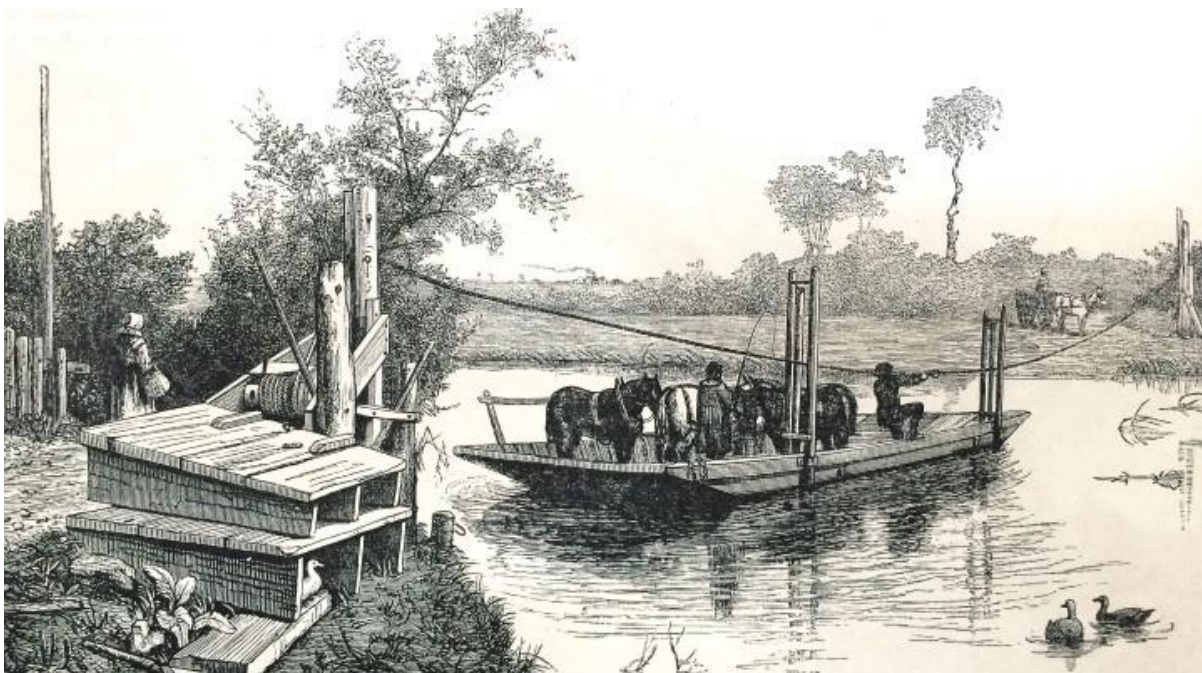
Figure 174: Salmon fishing at Christchurch in 1905.

~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Figures 175-180 (and overleaf) illustrate ferries, which formed a vital communication link where bridges were unavailable. Examples of these are illustrated here.

Figure 175 (top left) shows the rope ferry at Blackwater to the north-east of Bournemouth (image © Francis Frith Collection), whilst the oil painting in **Figure 176 (top right)** shows a simple passenger link. This oil is by E. B. Leighton (1996); image courtesy of Bonham's. Where livestock or other larger items required transport, rope bridges could also be used, as illustrated in this woodcut (**Figure 177 below**).



~ WORKING LIVES OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES ~



Where passenger traffic increased as a result of recreation ferries fulfilled a key role such as at Wick near Christchurch.

Figures 178-180 below provide three such views.

Figure 178: *'Wick Ferry'* by Arthur H. Davis in 1879.

Image courtesy of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth.



Figure 179: *'Wick Ferry West Landing'* in 1900.

Image courtesy © Francis Frith Collection.



Figure 180: *'Wick Ferry'*, c.1910. Fishermen could gain income from the provision of ferry services during the summer season as Christchurch's visitor numbers increased steadily.

6.4. Imagery and leisure within the Stour catchment

The depictions of social life along the River Stour vary considerably depending on the location and the wealth of the adjacent land and property owners. At Stourhead, at the headwaters of the river, the owners made continuous improvements to their property and to the estate with the assistance of the nation's leading architects and landscape gardeners. The result was that the owners often wished to show off their elegance and good taste by welcoming visitors who enjoyed the opportunity to admire the state rooms or to stroll through the pleasure grounds.

During the nineteenth century, the British middle classes began to revel in the varied delights of 'messaging about on the river' (Muir, 1986¹⁴). The publication of the *'The Compleat Angler'* in 1653 (Walton, 1653¹⁵) highlighted the recreational opportunities and benefits of angling and boating, and this became increasingly popular through the decades. There are numerous artistic depictions of both angling and leisure boating, which are often set against the backdrop of river scenery.

Recreational sailing and yacht racing became increasingly popular in the early part of the nineteenth century, but images by artists such as William Daniell RA depict small boats with sails on the lower Stour, set against Christchurch Priory in the background, whilst elegant ladies enjoyed rowing on the quieter stretches of the river where, on occasions, they gathered lilies to fill their garden ponds and lakes or to sell at market.



Figure 181 (left): *'View of the Pantheon and Gardens at Stourhead'* by Paul Sandby Munn (1817). Image courtesy of Guy Peppiatt Fine Art.

Figure 182 (bottom left): *'The Young Fisherman'* by Edward Wilkins Waite. Image courtesy of Bonham's.

Figure 183 (bottom right): *'Beside the river'* by Dorset artist, Henry J. Moule (1825-1904).



~ IMAGERY AND LEISURE ~



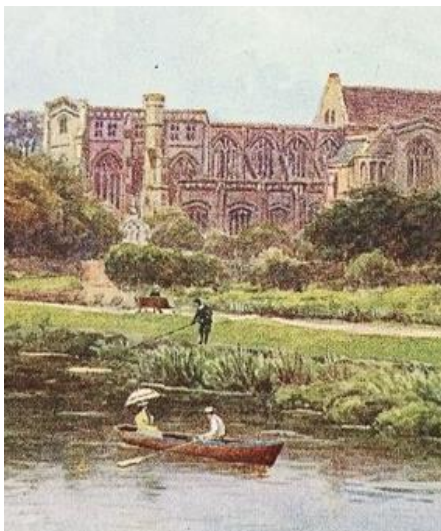
Figure 184: Elegant ladies and a gentleman rowing on the Stour in 1883.

Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum.

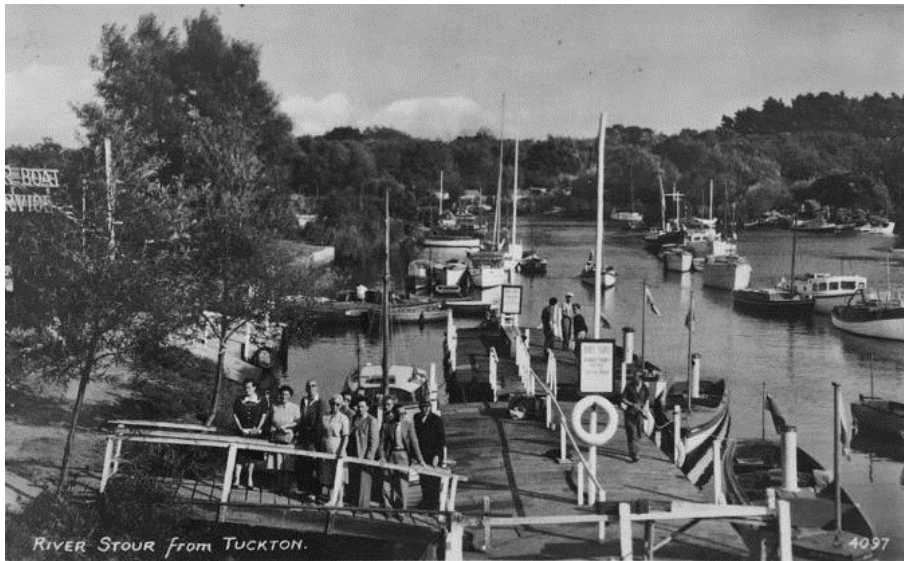


Figure 185: Ladies boating amongst the water lilies. Late nineteenth century woodcut.

Figures 186 (bottom left) and 187 (bottom right) show rowing and sailing against the backdrop of Christchurch Priory in 1910 and 1823 respectively.



~ IMAGERY AND LEISURE ~



Figures 188-190 on this page show the increased development and intensification of leisure boating along the banks of the river. The photographic postcard (top) shows the Stour at Tuckton in 1950, whilst the postcard in the middle, of the same date, shows steam launches lined up alongside the jetty.



Figure 190 (bottom) shows the river frontage today, with extensive property development and moored pleasure yachts.



Image courtesy of Ian Woodcock/Shutterstock.

Illness in the Victorian era, such as consumption, encouraged walking in the fresh air and riverside paths provided ideal walks for this purpose (see Figure 183).

The lower reaches of the Stour below Tuckton Bridge, leading down towards Christchurch Harbour, became increasingly popular into the twentieth century for recreational boating with visitors enjoying river cruises in small steamboats, which were drawn up in lines alongside the jetties. The popularity of this location has continued to the present day, with significant riverside development and anchorages for a wide range of craft, ranging from traditional to ultra-modern (see Figures 188-190).

Others preferred more leisurely pursuits, such as picnicking alongside the riverbanks, and the Blackwater Ferry site near Herne was particularly popular as Victorian and Edwardian visitors could enjoy refreshments overlooking the river and watching the ferryman passing back and forth with passengers by means of a rope straddling the river from side to side (see Figures 79).

From the late-nineteenth century into the twentieth century Christchurch Harbour and Hengistbury Head proved particularly popular venues for artists and photographers, and many of these views are contained in Dorset's public art galleries and museums.

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