

Canoe touring on the River Severn

Individualist Environmentalists iGreens

The itinerary from Pool Quay to Stourport - mileages, weirs, islands, bridges, camping, youth hostels, pubs, access, contact details and general observations. If I've got it wrong email me [here](#).

For those canoeists who just can't stomach free-market environmentalism, I've italicised the iGreen comments! Have a great trip. See also [Privateers on the Wye](#)

Larkin link: *From Dec 1943 to Sept 1946, Philip Larkin lived in Wellington, six miles north of Ironbridge. Here he met Ruth Bowman, completed his first novel "Jill", and wrote the poetry collection "The North Ship" and his second novel "A Girl in Winter". He lived first at Glentworth, King Street, later at 7 Ladycroft, and worked at the Public Library on Walker street. His employer was Wellington Urban District Council, for which the councillors must be forgiven much. Click [here](#) to read The North Ship.*

0 miles; Pool Quay

Launch right above the farm bridge. This used to be the highest navigable point on the Severn. Tight bends between high banks for the next 12 miles or so.

8.25 miles; Llandrinio Bridge built 1775

Land left above the bridge. Camping. Mr. Nixon, Haimwood, Llandrinio Powys. Tel 01691 830764
Take centre arch.

12 miles; River Vyrnwy joins left

Up till now the river has been in Wales. From here for 1.5 miles it forms the border between Wales and England and then is entirely in England.

Paddle ½ mile up the Vrynwy into Melverly for a pub, the Tontine Arms.

12.25 miles; Crewgreen Bridge.

Originally a railway bridge it now carries the road to Melverley.

14.75 miles; The Royal Hill Inn

Land left. Small caravan park behind the pub but canoeists usually camp in the field between the road and the river. Ruby, who ran the pub for many years, died in 2000. Her cousin Barbara now runs it. It is still a wonderful canoe friendly pub. Tel 01743 741242.

The Upper Severn canoe rally (open canoes) stops here every year. In 2002 it will be 11 May. Contact [Drummond Outdoor](#) for details.

16-17.5 miles; MoD firing range left

No obvious landmarks but keep away. *Wildlife loves firing ranges :)*

18.25 miles; Old railway bridge now dismantled.

18.75 Shrawardine village left.

But no easy access that I've ever found.

22.25 miles; Montford bypass bridge A5

Picnic site toilets and car park. Mainly intended for drivers on the A5 but access is possible from right bank below the bypass bridge.

22.5 miles; Montford bridge

Built in 1792 by Thomas Telford. Either land right above bridge and camp in pub (Wingfield Arms) grounds, Tel 01743 850750

Or land left below bridge and use the Severn House campsite. Tel 01743 850229.

23.5 miles Montford island

Pass either side.

23.75 miles; Bromley Forge. River Perry joins left

Bickley Coppice scout camp right

25 miles; Isle Grange

The river makes a 4.5-mile loop around The Isle ending less than 0.5 miles from where it started. But don't try a short cut! It's a lovely loop of river and there's no access either side of Isle Grange.

31.5 miles; Shelton water works right

Severn Trent is extracting water here. I know we've all got to drink and wash but when are they going to stop giving it away to private customers free. Meter it and charge. We need water in the river too!

32.25 miles; Shopshire and West Midlands Show ground left

Coton Hill public slipway left. Access.

Shrewsbury (a thirteen-bridge town)

34 miles; Frankwell footbridge 1979

Canoe launching ramp right

34.25 miles; Welsh bridge built 1795.



There had been a toll bridge on this site as long ago as 1262
The Boat House Inn right

34.75 miles; Port Hill footbridge. built in 1922.



View from the bridge



Pengwern rowing club right.

35 miles; Kingsland Toll Bridge built 1881



Cars: 10p each way. Pedestrians: 1p. Hooray!

The Crown Inn right

35.25 miles; Greyfriars footbridge built 1879



Rea brook joins right. Brook can sometimes be paddled up to The Woodlands Youth hostel, Abbey Foregate. Shrewsbury. Tel 01743 360179

Access to brook from council car park.

35.5 miles; English bridge



Built 1774 but completely rebuilt to lower the steep gradient in 1927.

35.75 miles; Shrewsbury railway station bridge

36 miles; Castle walk footbridge

36 miles; Shrewsbury weir.

Portage left. Land left below the weir for Castle fields. Discrete camping possible.

36.5 miles; Holywell or Goffs Island

Pass left

36.75 miles; Telford Way Bridge

38miles; Pimley Island left

38.25 miles; Shrewsbury Bypass Bridge 1

38.75 miles; Uffington.

The Corbet Arms Inn left

Shallow water

39 miles; Shrewsbury Bypass Bridge 2

39.75 miles; Belvedere Railway Bridge

Shallow water

41.25 miles; Shrewsbury Bypass Bridge 3

41.5 miles; Emstry island pass left

43 miles; Chiltern island pass left

43.25 miles; Atcham New Bridge built 1929

Mock stone concrete. Land left above the bridge. Mytton and Mermaid Inn left.

43.25 miles Atcham Bridge

Built 1776 by John Gwynne who also built two other bridges over the Severn, the English Bridge in Shrewsbury and the Worcester bridge, as well as Magdalen bridge in Oxford. Beautiful

looking but with stone piers on timber piles it became unsafe in 1924. It is now preserved as a national monument. Used as footbridge only.

45.75 miles; River Tern joins left.

46.5 miles; Wroxeter island pass right

Land left just past the island for the Roman town of Viroconium. Watling Street crossed the river here, the lowest point at which the river was fordable. There are large stones visible in the river bed at low levels and some believe these were the piles of a wooden bridge

48 miles; Cound brook joins right

Island pass right. Sandstone cliff left

48.75 miles; The Chomondely Arms Hotel in Coundlane

Magnificently sited with views up a mile long reach of river. The landlord is happy to allow access and egress for patrons. Land right at the foot of the pub gardens.

Island just below.

51 miles; Cressage Bridge

Landing possible left above the bridge. Permission needed.

The Eagles Inn 0.5 mile

The next stretch to Buildwas, consists of wide meanders through the flood plain with the river flowing over a sandy bed. Lovely.

56 miles; Buildwas bridge built 1992



Caravan site marked on right bank below the bridge on 1981 OS Sheet 127 but I've not checked it out.

There has been a bridge on this site since medieval times. The first built by monks from the nearby abbey. In the five miles from here to Coalport, eight bridges span the river as it flows through Ironbridge gorge.

56.5 miles; Ironbridge "A" road bridge 1932

Originally providing road access to the old power station, it is now closed and only carries pipes. Click [here](#) for a picture.

57 miles; Ironbridge "B" road bridge 1963

Concrete bridge providing road access to the Ironbridge "B" power station. Nov 2003 update. This power station may be closing soon. click [here](#).

57.25 miles; Albert Edward bridge built 1864

Railway bridge carrying coal to Ironbridge "B"

Francis Oldroyd writes, 4 March 2003; "... we have camped next to the Rowing Club in the park below Albert Edward bridge."

57.75 miles; Car park and canoe ramp left.

The river enters Ironbridge gorge

58.25 miles; Iron Bridge 1779

The world's first great cast-iron bridge. Cast at Coalbrookdale in 1779 by Abraham Darby III. Opened in 1781. Fell into disrepair but restored in 1979. Now only a footbridge.

Town and shops left.

Youth Hostel: Paradise, Coalbrookdale. Telford. Tel 01952 433281

Islands. Pass left low water.

58.75 miles; Jackfield free bridge built 1994



An asymmetric cable stay from a 30-metre steel tower on the right bank.

The old Jackfield free bridge was built in 1909 by local subscription to avoid tolls on the Iron bridge and Coalport bridge. It gave trouble in the 1930's and required repeated repairs until in 1993 beyond repair it was knocked down and replaced with the present bridge. I wonder if the Iron and Coalport bridges of 1779 and 1818 outlasted it because someone had a financial interest in keeping them repaired!

The new Jackfield free bridge is a striking structure. The tight road bends at each end discourage heavy traffic intentionally.

59 miles; Jackfield Rapids

Land left to inspect.

These used to be grade 2, but following bank stabilisation work on the south bank in 2001 has become more difficult. Now grade 3 or 4 in some levels. There is now a stopper and a difficult wave train for the less experienced. Land left just below the rapids to dry out. This is also the landing point for the Telford canoe club campsite. Adrian Reynolds, Secretary, Telford Canoe Club, 68 Court Street, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire TF7 5EP. Tel 01952 409622. An excellent small site with basic facilities.

59.75 miles War memorial footbridge 1922

Land right below the bridge for the pub. There's a campsite marked on the right bank on the 1981 OS map but I've never seen anyone camp there.

Francis Oldroyd writes, 4 March 2003; "We did camp there one year over 10 years ago. The campsite was run by the council - very badly, with disgusting toilets. Also the tents had to be pitched on a slope, and it's long way to carry your boats up to the site. So if it's still open I wouldn't recommend going there." iGreen comment. "Typical council site!"

60.25 Coalport bridge 1818

No longer a toll bridge. In 2001 closed to vehicles for repair but nothing much happening when we paddled past!

Immediately below the bridge land right for the Woodbridge Inn. The landlord allows free camping in the grounds for patrons. An excellent site. He's very relaxed, but if you want to phone first 01952 882054

63.25 miles; Apley Park Bridge 1905

Footbridge

Apley Hall left.

PG Wodehouse stayed here, and some believe it was the inspiration for Blandings castle. But click [here](#) to read more

iGreen note:

Apley Hall was one of the most beautiful private houses in England. It then fell into council hands and was used as a state boarding school until 1987. Click [here](#) to read about the school. The council then had no use for it but, being a public body, did not get round to selling it to someone who did. Instead they neglected it and despite (because of?) being a listed building it fell into disrepair.

In 1999 a private company "Apley Hall Restoration Ltd" brought the Hall and prepared plans to restore it. They dealt with the leaking roof, aired the rooms, gave it a lick of paint and had a party and invited the neighbours. Then guess what? The council refused to approve the plans because the building was listed! In March 2001 John Prescott refused the company's appeal. Keep visiting. iGreens are investigating and will have more to say on this.

66 miles; River Worfe joins left

High rock left

67 miles; Severn Park

Slipway and parking left bank.

Followed by Bridgnorth rowing club steps left.

67.25 miles; Bridgnorth Bridge 1810

This bridge has been continuously rebuilt and developed since medieval times.

Take right arch in low water.

Bridgnorth Scouts have their HQ near the river and are keen canoeists; contact John Humphries on 01746 763628.

67.25 miles; Bridgnorth bypass bridge 1985

69.5 miles; Quatford

The Danery Inn left.

71.75 miles; Mor brook joins right

Cast iron bridge over Mor brook carries the towpath.

72 miles; South Staffs Bridge 1965

A private bridge carrying water from Chelmarsh reservoir to waterworks. Owned by South Staffordshire Water Plc.

Come on guys. Get metering! Let's divert the flow from some of those dripping taps back into the river.

72.25 miles; Hampton Loade

Passenger Ferry - current (2002) toll charges: Pedestrians: 50p each way



National Trust car park left. The Lion Inn is an easy walk a few hundred yards downstream down a narrow road and set back from the river. Unusual pub. Good food but rather uptight management. Difficult to explain. Try it and tell me what you think. Tell me also how you solved the problem of getting back to camp after the ferry stopped running.

The Unicorn Inn and camping right. Tel 01746 861515

A superb campsite. No frills, cheap beer and a healthy disrespect for council red tape.

73 miles; Island.

Run either side. Right more interesting. Whirlpools in the breakout on R.

74.5 miles; Alveley Colliery bridge 1937

The colliery closed in 1969. Look how well the slag heaps have healed!

The bridge is now used only as a footbridge.

75 miles; Highley.

Access right bank by the Inn. Camping upstream of buildings on right bank.

76 miles; Borle brook joins right.

76.25 Shallows and small rapid.

Pass left of small island

77.75 miles; Upper Arley footbridge 1971

Quay left, and slipway right. Both above the footbridge.

Inn and Arley station on the right. The Severn Valley Railway appeared recently as the Hogwart Express in the Harry Potter films.

78.5 miles; Victoria bridge Upper Arley 1861



When built this was the largest cast iron bridge ever constructed, twice as long as the iron bridge.

It still carries the Severn Valley Railway. The Wyre forest is on the right.

Shingle bank 100 yards below bridge. Pass on left.

79.25 miles; Eymore rapid.

Island. Pass left taking channel down main chute of rapid. (You can pole up the backwater and run the drop as many times as you like. Paddling up is harder but possible, and tracking up with lines can also be done - mind the nettles!)

200 yards below the island is a rock ledge with a break on the right hand side. (This can also be jumped going back upstream with a pole, so you can run this a few times too.)

Eymore is the last natural rapid on the river. The rest have been flooded by weirs.

Severn pipe bridge 1900. Trimpey

Carrying water from the Elan Valley to Birmingham.

Think of all those Brummie garden hoses and car washing. The river needs the water too, so lets make them pay. Turn off those taps.

Access immediately after bridge on the left. Steps to small car park at the end of Rag Lane.

Railway bridge dismantled

Dowles brook joins right immediately after

81.5 miles; Bewdley bridge 1801



Designed by Thomas Telford. Originally a toll bridge the toll house was removed in the 1960s. :(

Rowing club left above bridge.

Land right above and below bridge. Also land left below bridge. Pay and display car park is on right 200 yards above the bridge.

Wyre forest canoe club left below bridge

Bewdley bypass bridge 1987

Island under bridge. Channel left

Gladder brook enters right and marks head of navigation. Below this licence required from British waterways Llanothy warehouse, Gloucester Docks, GL1 2EJ Tel 01452 318000. Also from lock keepers.

River deepens and powerboats appear.

85.5 Stourport bridge 1870

Canal basin left below bridge. Junction with Staffs and Worcester canal and River Stour

87 miles; Lincombe lock

Highest on river. Tel 012 993 2887

This is where I, and most canoeists, stop. Who wants to paddle amongst the power boaters, as they drive up and down the canalised river? If you do go on down ponder the thought that some people want to build weirs on the higher stretches. They say it will benefit the river by raising water levels in summer. I say it

would be environmental vandalism, and is driven by the desire of the power boaters to go higher. Read more [here](#), and [here](#), and [here](#). Vote [here](#).

Finally, a few iGreen landmarks on the lower sections.

91.25 miles; Holt bridge 1828



The last toll bridge in Worcestershire. Tolls ceased in 1900. ☹️

94.75 miles; Bevere island bridge 1844



A private bridge linking Bevere to the island ☺️

115 miles; Mythe bridge 1826



Designed by Thomas Telford at the same time as he was building the Menai Straights suspension bridge. He said “I reckon this the most handsomest bridge which has been built under my direction.”

Originally a toll bridge, the tolls did not prove adequate and in 1850 all debts had to be written off.

☹️

And don't forget the Severn M4 Suspension Bridge.

While the environmental damage from this government-built motorway is incalculable, at least the long suffering taxpayer was not forced to pay for all of it. It is a Toll bridge, so the polluting cars and lorries pay something towards the damage they cause. ☺️

Acknowledgements

Sue Drummond's excellent Canoeist's Guide to the River Severn. Sue is the BCU Access Officer for the Severn, and can be contacted at Drummond Outdoor, South View, 8 Severn Bank, Shrewsbury SY1 2JD (Tel: 01743 365022) for a free copy.