

## 1. Introduction & References

The original posting of this document followed the course of the 6 main Lothian rivers from their respective sources to the points where they debouch into the Firth of Forth, while identifying and expatiating on nearby sites of present and especially past significance. The 6 rivers are the following;

The 'East Lothian' River Tyne

The Rivers South and North Esk, and after their confluence, the River Esk

The Water of Leith

The River Almond

The River Avon

Short accounts of 9 lesser streams were added, because they also flowed past interesting sites.

This revision has been prompted mainly by Alastair Robertson's recent work on water-powered threshing mills. Watermills were from the start seen as important historical artefacts in the river catchments of the Lothians, and featured strongly in the descriptions of the individual river journeys and in Appendix 2. Water-powered threshing mills were not neglected, but since the document was posted, Alastair has developed a methodology which allows their identification with much greater certainty and accuracy, and as a result many more are now thought to have existed in the century after 1790. In the revision, the additional information has been incorporated in two ways; firstly, the listings given at the end of each description of a river journey have been modified to include the extra threshing mills, which are in general located on individual farms, and secondly, Appendix 2 which gives an overview of watermills in the river catchments has been substantially modified to deal in more detail with threshing mills. In addition Alastair has identified watermills of all types, which are powered by streams too small to be included amongst the lesser streams, but the said watermills are listed under that heading. The full tabulation of the watermills in the Lothians, which also appears in Appendix 2, differs markedly from the previous version, but we think it is now very accurate, though we cannot guarantee that no mill has escaped our notice, and still hope to determine some of the few watermill functions as yet unknown. Finally, it should be noted that individual threshing mills rarely feature in the text accounts of the river journeys, because descriptions would be repetitive, and because there are so many that the accounts would be swamped by them. Of course, the revision has given the opportunity to look again at the whole document, and other changes, which include the addition of some extra historical artefacts, have been made. I return now to matters contained in the original introduction.

The river journeys have been in an important sense virtual, in that I have not tramped for miles along the river banks. There are some walkways, like that along the left bank of the River Tyne in Haddington, and others in country parks, which I have utilised, but for the most part, I have followed the rivers on maps and satellite views, identified sites of interest, and then worked out ways of getting near enough to see them, and to obtain photographs. Sometimes that has not been possible, usually because sites are private, which status has been respected; where access is available occasionally or conditionally, I have sometimes used photographs from the Internet. Many sources, including books and published papers have been referenced, but it is appropriate to highlight McWilliam's volume 'Lothians except Edinburgh' in the Buildings of Scotland series, which has been indispensable, and can be used to fill out many of the short sketches presented here, and the maps on the

National Library of Scotland website, [maps.nls.uk](http://maps.nls.uk) which have been indispensable in identifying the sites of watermills in the past.

The places described are all near to the rivers in question; in some of the towns on their banks I have strayed to places where the river or its valley cannot be seen, but otherwise I have kept close. Rather less attention has been given to tributaries than to the chosen rivers; they have not been tracked as systematically but sites of interest on their banks have been included. The aim has been to keep the rivers central to the narrative, rather than using them as a vehicle for a wider study of the lands around them. I have thought hard about how best to cover the Water of Leith, because I know of a couple of studies of that river which would, to some extent, be duplicated if I maintained my usual format, and there is no lack of easily obtainable information about most aspects of Edinburgh, including those parts bordering the river. However, it would have left a gap if the Water of Leith had been omitted, so my compromise has been to include a relatively brief account, truncating especially descriptions within the city boundary, but highlighting some aspects that are less considered elsewhere, including the old bridges which once crossed the river, and the now largely hidden tributaries which flow into it. There are several smaller streams of interest in the Lothians, such as the Braid and Niddry Burns in Edinburgh, and the two Peffer Burns in East Lothian; in total I deal with 9 of them in a 'wash-up' section.

While tracking the upper reaches of the Rivers Esk, their importance in the development of Edinburgh's water supplies became very clear, and the other rivers dealt with here also had a role in providing water for domestic and industrial purposes. In order to avoid too many digressions and much repetition, a short history of the development of clean water supplies for the city has been included as Appendix 1. Watermills are featured in the river-specific essays, and my colleague Alastair Robertson has prepared maps showing the courses of the 6 main rivers and their largest tributaries, which appear in appendices to these essays. At this point, I should make the distinction between stand-alone, commercial mills which are indeed mapped, and farm mills, mainly threshing mills, which are listed but not mapped. The maps should also help in following the river journey accounts. I have already dealt with Appendix 2, in which both classes of watermill are looked at more generally. Appendix 3 pulls together information on 17<sup>th</sup> century bridges obtained from the old maps produced by Blaeu and Adair, and estimates rates of survival by identifying those on the maps which still stand today.

It seems to me that there has been an increase, indeed in some regards almost an explosion of interest in the Lothian rivers in the past few decades, with the creation of walkways and trails, and the opening of visitor centres. I should like to think that the movement would gain more strength in the future, and hope that this document might make a small contribution to that. I have appended to this introduction a page of references.

## References/Bibliography

Title	Author (s)	Publisher	Date
Exploring the Edinburgh to Glasgow Canals	Brown H.	Mercat	2006
Villages of Edinburgh, Vol. 1	Cant M.	John Donald	1986
Discovering the Water of Leith	Coghill H.	John Donald	1988
The Edinburgh and District Water Supply: A Historical Sketch.	Colston J.	Private Circulation	1890
Medieval Bridges	Cook M.	Shire	1998
Medieval Religious Houses - Scotland	Cowan I.B. & Easson D.E.	Longman	1976
The Buildings of Scotland - Edinburgh	Gifford J. et al	Penguin	1984
Discovering the River Forth	Hendrie W.F.	John Donald	1996
Scotland's First Oil Boom	McKay J.	Birlinn	2012
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The Castles of Lothian and the Borders	Salter M.	Folly	1994
Water Mills in Scotland 1550 - 1870	Shaw J.	John Donald	1984
Lost East Lothian	Statham C.	Birlinn	2011
Water and Wind Power	Watts M.	Shire	2005
Account of the Number of People in Scotland in 1755	Webster A.	Various Modern Transcriptions	

## Websites

Site	Comment
<a href="http://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk">britishlistedbuildings.co.uk</a>	
<a href="http://rcahms.gov.uk">rcahms.gov.uk</a>	Scottish historic buildings
<a href="http://maps.nls.uk">maps.nls.uk</a>	Digitised historic maps - indispensable
<a href="http://gridreferencefinder.com">gridreferencefinder.com</a>	Convenient access to Google & OS maps
<a href="http://drtomsbooks.files.wordpress.com">drtomsbooks.files.wordpress.com</a>	My own gazetteer of ancient bridges
<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org">en.wikipedia.org</a>	
<a href="http://ceh.ac.uk/index">ceh.ac.uk/index</a>	Hosts the National River Flow archive
<a href="https://drmarkjardine.wordpress.com/">https://drmarkjardine.wordpress.com/</a>	Covenanting history
<a href="https://scotlandsoldestbridges.co.uk/one.html">https://scotlandsoldestbridges.co.uk/one.html</a>	Mr. Simpson's excellent gazetteer

I have accessed many guide books and websites dealing with specific sites and places in the search for information while preparing the document. Where I have used actual content like photographs, I usually state the source in the text, but to include all the sources which have given me hints or ideas would make for an overly long reference list for a document which is not a learned paper. Any reader wishing to follow these footsteps needs only to enter the relevant entity in a web search engine.