

The Severn Ham

This is perhaps the finest of many 'Hams'. The name derives from the Saxon word 'ham' or 'hamm' meaning 'meadow in the bend of a river', 'water meadow' or 'flood plain'.
The Ham was once owned by the Abbey, then for many centuries by the local landed and political elite and now by the Town Council. The town's burghers retained their ancient rights of Lammas – to graze animals on the second crop of grass (or aftermath). This was all secured by the Inclosure Act of 1808.

The Ham and the rivers bordering it are fundamental to the town's history, providing sites for industries, routes for the trading of materials, goods and produce as well as venues for several historic leisure pursuits.



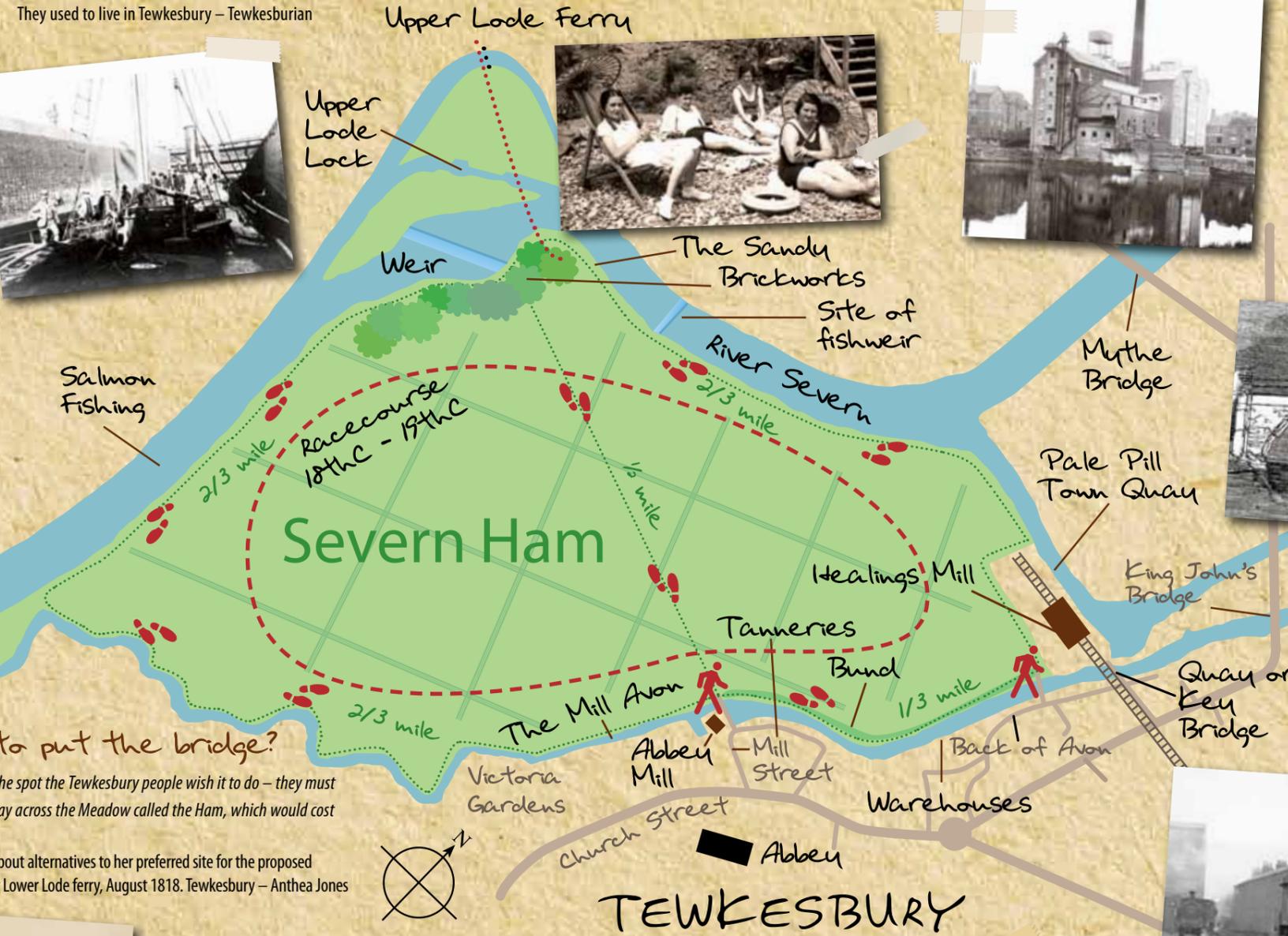
A view from the Toot*
— a fair field full of folk stretched out below. It was a very fair field indeed, with the townsfolk going to and fro upon it in the calm of the evening; with the silver rivers ribboned all round it, the tumbling weir with the small withy-grown islands in mid-stream, the old mill above its placid millpool...
Portrait of Elmbury, John Moore
*The side of Mythe Hill.

- KEY**
- Access to Ham
 - Walking trail
 - WW2 Ditches
 - Ancient track



The Passage Cart controversy

The Overlade ferry was the one anciently used by the farmers on the Bushley/Longdon side of the Severn to bring their produce to Tewkesbury. Nicholas Wyatt, grandson of William Wyatt who obtained the rights of the Overlade at the Dissolution in 1542, tried to fix a new tariff. Locals went to Court in 1624 in protest. Hitherto farms paid in sheaves of wheat, either a thrave (24 sheaves) and or a thrass (12 sheaves), collected by a "Passage Cart" and stored in the "Passage Barn". No other payment was demanded but payment was due even in times of plague when the ferry was not used. They used to live in Tewkesbury – Tewkesburian



Where to put the bridge?
If it is to go over at the spot the Tewkesbury people wish it to do – they must raise a high Causeway across the Meadow called the Ham, which would cost them £4,900.
Mary Yorke talking about alternatives to her preferred site for the proposed Severn bridge, at her Lower Lode ferry, August 1818. Tewkesbury – Anthea Jones

Tewkesbury Races, September 2nd

All the Ton (sic) of Cheltenham were at our races, where the Company was extremely numerous... Blacklegs (swindlers) in abundance were on the course; and if we may judge from the numerous losses of tankards, silver cups, saddle bags, &c, &c, which were stole from inns, many depredators of all descriptions attended the races.
Times, 5 September 1793

The Agricultural Show

The meeting of the Gloucestershire Agricultural Society at Tewkesbury, continuing for several days last week, attracted many visitors to that pleasant little town.
London Illustrated News July 1865

Inclosure Act of 1808

No horses of Royal Regiment of Dragoons, or any bulls or pigs are to be stocked on the Ham; no horses or neat cattle shall be stocked there between 10th October and 20th November unless these shall be stocked there at the same term 3 sheep at the least for every acre; from 20th November to 13th February stocking is limited to sheep only.

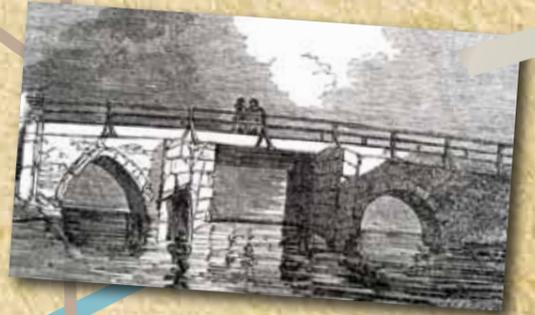
The opening of the Locks August 1858

At twelve o'clock the tide began to flow. Various vessels made their way round to the lower entrance to the New Locks; the barges were profusely decorated with flags and a band was provided. The Abbey bells rang out. People arrived to witness the driving in of piles and sinking of barges, intended to obstruct the old river bed, while others watched from their boats. The locks gradually filled and the Opening of the Locks was fully carried out.
Tewkesbury Register & Gazette



Tewkesbury's own little Revolution - 1795

(French Revolution – 1789-1799)
1795 – On July 1st, provisions being dear, a mob of women assembled at the Quay, and seized a quantity of flour, in order to prevent it being sent off by water. Five of the most active of them; Hester MacMaster, Mary Aldridge, Ann Mayall, Sarah Kinson, Happy Fielder, were accused of rioting, tried at the Gloucester assizes, and sentenced to six months imprisonment each.
The History of Tewkesbury – James Bennett /They Used to live in Tewkesbury – Tewkesburian



Quay or Key Bridge

This was originally a drawbridge with red sandstone supports that some say was built by the Duke of Clarence. It was repaired and altered in 1592 but by 1808 was unusable and a temporary bridge of boats was in use... until a new, light, single-arched iron bridge was opened in 1822.
The Book of Tewkesbury – Kathleen Ross

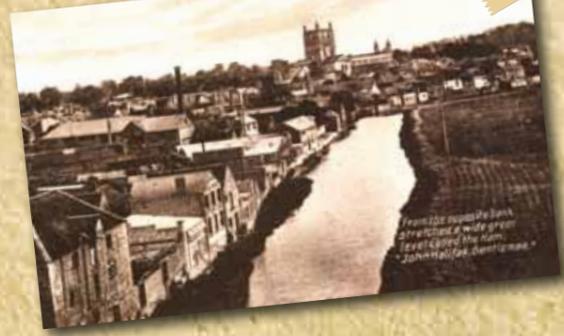


Emptying The Floodgate

1827 – In July, the large floodgate pit at the Quay, was emptied. This arduous task was voluntarily undertaken by twenty-four labourers, with no expectation of reward, excepting what might arise from the sale of such property as the pit contained. It occupied ten days and nights, but they were very poorly paid for their labour.
The History of Tewkesbury – James Bennett

Floods

A Tewkesbury flood in 1484 was known as "Buckingham's Water" because it stopped the Duke of Buckingham from crossing the Severn with his forces to oppose Richard III. His men lacking pay and provisions, deserted him, and he was captured, brought to Richard and executed!
The Book of Tewkesbury, Kathleen Ross



My father's Tanyard was a little farther on, I perceived the familiar odour, a not unpleasant, barky smell.
John Halifax, Gentleman.