

Extracted from the book "Priestley's Navigable Rivers and Canals" by Joseph Priestley which was originally published in April 1831. NOTE: The book was originally called "Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals, and Railways, of Great Britain".

AVON RIVER.

17 Charles II. Cap. 12, Royal Assent 2nd March, 1664.

This river has its source three miles east of the town of Devizes, in Wiltshire, and after passing Park Shipton, and Rushall, it takes a southerly course along the east-end of Salisbury Plain, passing Enford Priory, Syrencot House, and the town of Amesbury; and two miles to the west of Stonehenge, it proceeds by Lake House, and the ruins of Old Sarum, to New Sarum, or Salisbury, where its stream is considerably augmented, by being united with the little Rivers Wily, the Nadder, and the Bourne. From Salisbury, its course is nearly south, through a delightful country, to the town of Fording Bridge, thence to Ringwood, and to Christchurch Bay, where it falls into the sea.

This river was made navigable, from Christchurch to Salisbury, under the powers of an act of the 17th Charles II. entitled, '*An Act for making the River Avon navigable from Christchurch to the city of New Sarum,*' but the whole of the works having been swept away by a flood, soon after its completion, it was suffered to continue in that ruinous condition until the year 1771, when the celebrated Brindley surveyed its course, and recommended a new canal to be cut parallel with the river.

Though this suggestion of Mr. Brindley's was not carried into execution, some repairs of the old works were commenced; these, however, were so inefficient, as to give rise to the scheme of a canal from Southampton to Salisbury.

When the act was obtained for the above scheme, the River Avon, as a navigation, was abandoned; and it is now navigable only as a tide river, free of toll, for very small vessels only, for the distance of two miles from the sea, with 5½ feet water at spring tides. At other times, the bar, at the entrance of Christchurch Harbour, is an insurmountable obstacle, which may be further inferred from the circumstance that there are but four small vessels belonging to Christchurch.

The length of the original navigation, to Salisbury, was thirty-six miles, viz. from Christchurch to Ringwood, thirteen miles and a half; from thence to Fording Bridge, seven miles and a half; and from thence to Salisbury, fifteen miles.