

The river and leat from Swatchford to Kingsbury waterfall (Milborne Port)

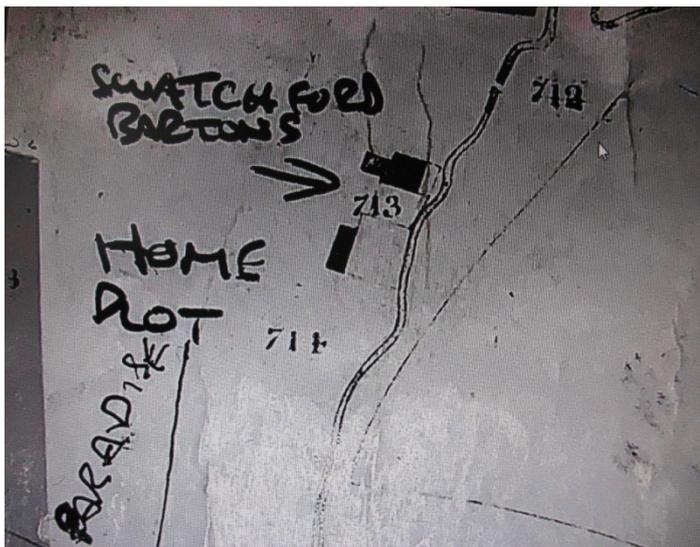
1781



1808



1839



1880



1888-1913



1937-1961



## River course upstream of Kingsbury waterfall

Unfortunately, the earliest map of the river (1781) only shows the new direction of the river (leat) and not where the river original flowed. The leat was built for the overshot mill at Kingsbury and was to improve the efficiency in the milling of the flour.

However, by observation of the fields between Swatchford and Kingsbury waterfall, it is possible to map the flow of the original river course pre-leat by observing the way in which areas of the field (see images 1 + 2 below) and lower lying grass occasionally fill with water during heavy rain/flooding. This field also best shows the result of the difference in height of the leat from what was the original river at its lower level.

It is possible that as far upstream as the railway, the banks of the river were heightened to allow for a rise in the head of water; although there is little evidence of this, it is possible to see some height difference in places (river clearance over time may have also caused this). The re-coursing of the river appears to have taken place below the buildings that once stood at Swatchford; whilst this is at first not overly apparent, by studying the available maps we can see that the river is shown to straighten after a series of bends upstream and opposite the now demolished buildings of Swatchford, possibly where depression in the bank occurs which is shown in Image 7. The leat then starts to flow south, following the rising contours of the fields to the east; the 1781 map names these fields *The Shittles*.

This identification of the location of the start of the leat is based on an assumption that in redirecting the river for the leat, it would seem improbable to then plan in bends in the leat; this is best shown on maps 1781 and 1888-1913 above and in image 8 below.

As the course of the river flows through the southern half of Swatchford, the rise in the westerly bank becomes more prominent; this is also much more visible in the field immediately above the waterfall.

The leat may not have only been redirected and banked but some alteration to the original river bed at and above Swatchford may have taken place to achieve the desired gradient flow.

Hugh Vincent, April 2022

*Image 1*

Looking north from waterfall with river  
river course sweeping to the left.



*Image 2*

Looking south towards waterfall original  
original river course to the right.



*Image 3*

Leading up to Swatchford looking north



*Image 4*

Swatchford looking north



Image 5  
Swatchford looking South



Image 6  
Swatchford looking North



Image 7  
Swatchford looking south



Image 8  
Below Swatchford bridge looking north

