# The RIVER PARRETT TRAIL

... Following a river from source to mouth

## Langport & River Parrett Visitor Centre

**Information Pack for Teachers and Students**

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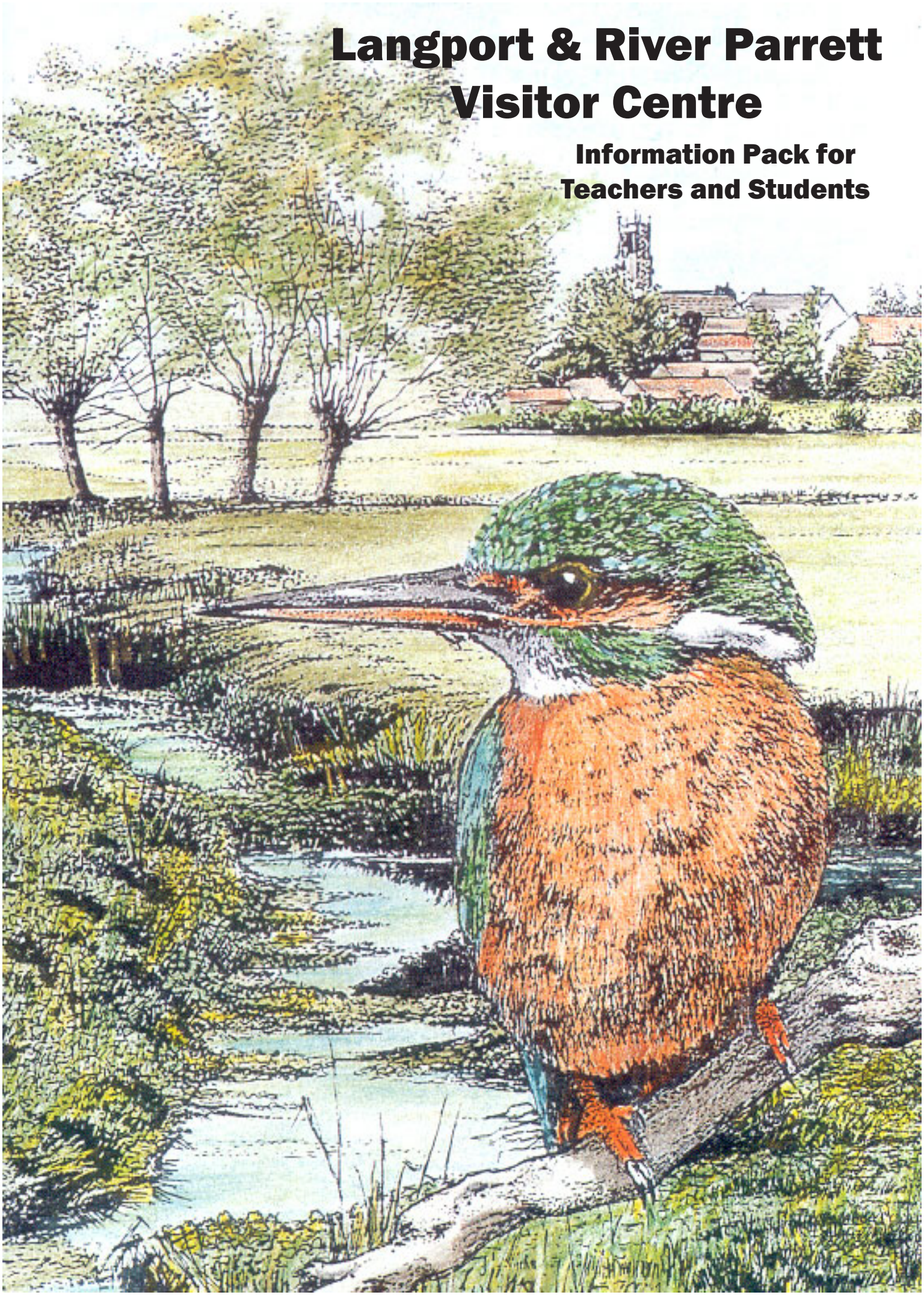
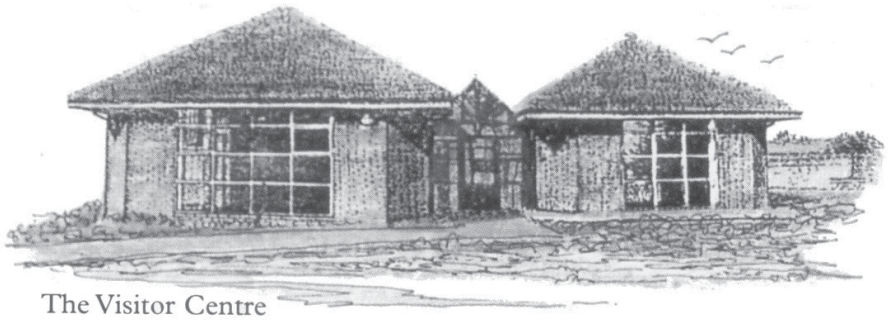
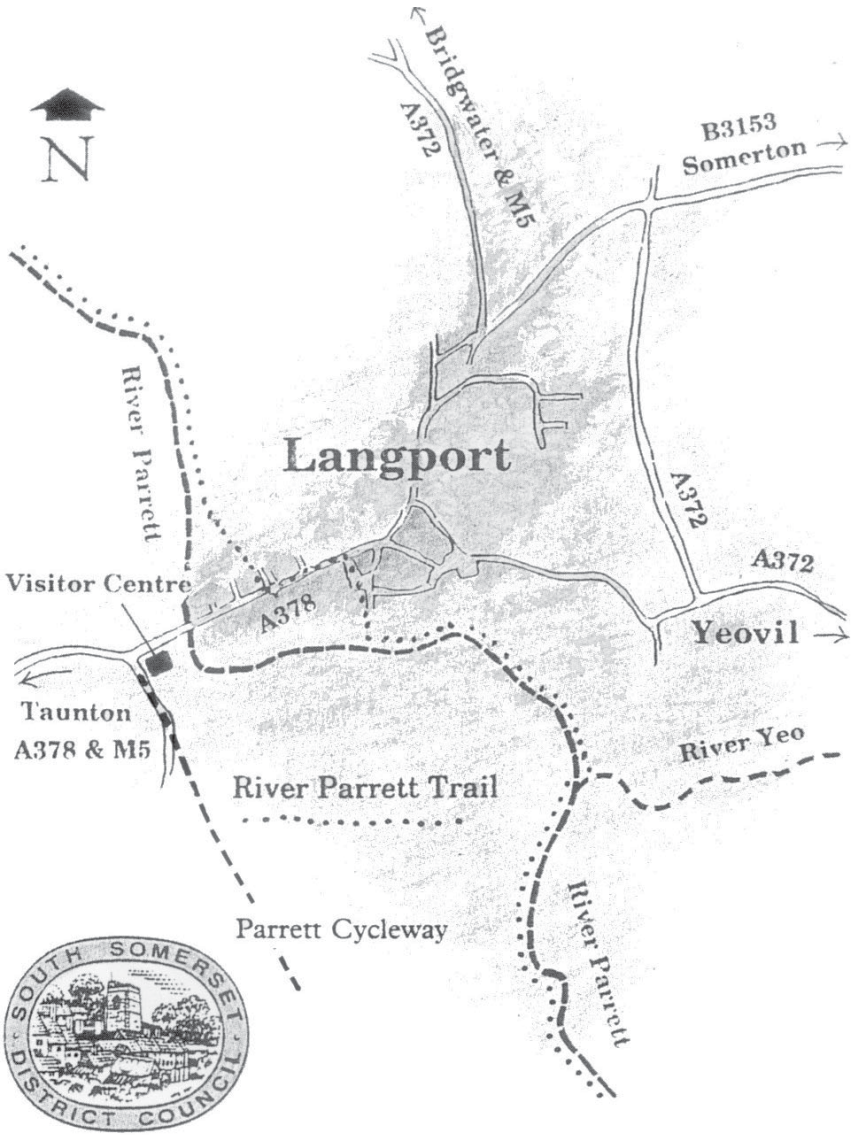




The Visitor Centre

Where to find the Langport & River Parrett Visitor Centre

## Tel: 01458 250350



## Useful Names, Addresses & Web Sites.

**Somerset Archive & Record Office**
Taunton 01823 355510

**Somerset Wildlife Trust**
Nr. Bridgwater 01823 451587

**Environment Agency**
Bridgwater 01278

**Somerset Rural Life Museum**
Glastonbury 01458 831197

**Willows & Wetlands Centre**
Stoke St Gregory 01823 490249

**Muchelney Abbey (English Heritage)**
Langport 01458 250664 - spring and summer only

**Westonzoyland Pumping Station**
Westonzoyland 01823 275795

**Langport & River Parrett Visitor Centre**
Langport 01458 250350

## Websites:

**www.rchme.gov.uk**
Click on education for details on various resources and sites etc.

**www.southsomerset.gov.uk**
General information about South Somerset

**www.riverparrett-trail.org.uk**
Website for the River Parrett Trail including photo's.

**www.somerset.gov.uk/levels**
General information (some in depth) about the Levels and Moors.

All information correct at time of going to print
October 2002

**South Somerset District Council**
Area North
Old Kelways
Somerton Road
LANGPORT
TA10 9YE
Tel: 01458 257400 Fax: 01458 257474
www.southsomerset.gov.uk

**The information contained within this pack is not targeted towards any specific key stage or topic, but aims to provide general information for teachers and students. Should you require further information, please contact South Somerset District Council on the telephone numbers given below.**

## Miscellaneous Information

It would be helpful if you could let either the Council or the Visitor Centre know about your visit in advance. Please do so, even if your visit is expected to be a short one, and you know exactly what you are doing and where. Advance notice gives us the opportunity to provide you with up to date information regarding access, local events, conservation and safety etc. It also gives us valuable information on how the centre is being used and by who, and hence how we may be able to improve our service to you. South Somerset District Council can be contacted on 01458 257400, and the Visitor Centre on 01458 250350.

## Planning a visit

Responsibility for a successful visit rests with the group leader. The importance of planning and preparation cannot be over stated! Primarily the visit should be a safe, enjoyable and worthwhile visit for both the pupils, yourself and anyone else involved in the activity.

- Ensure group safety is a priority.
- Make clear objectives for the visit.
- Plan all the activities to gain the most from your visit.
- Check you have all the resources you need and information for the visit.

**Please call if you dont, we may be able to help!**

## Guidelines for planning a visit

- Visit the site before hand to get information, and look at study sites etc.
- Check what facilities are available such as refreshments, toilets, seating, or locations in case of bad weather etc.
- Please make sure your party come suitably clothed for the activity planned. On many occasions people have come unprepared for sudden changes in the weather. Its called ‘wetland for a reason!
- Make sure you have an ‘interim plan’ should poor weather spoil your planned activity.
- Please keep your party to a manageable size with adequate helpers or supervisors.
- Please make sure you know the country code, and follow it at all times.

## Working near water

The dangers of working in, or near water are well known and documented. Working near the rhynes and rivers in this area can be particularly hazardous as the rivers are often deeper than they appear, and the banks are steep and very slippery. Dense vegetation also makes the banks appear wider than they actually are.

## Out and about in the community

- Large groups of people whether adults or children require special attention and management when out and about.
- Disturbance to the local community is always a possible issue, whether around the town or in local shops.
- Pavements through the centre of Langport are often narrow, with heavy traffic and large vehicles travelling close to the kerb. Safety and inconvenience can be possible issues to all users, both yourselves and others. It is important that all groups have a respect for other users, especially the elderly and the less physically able.
- If visiting local shops, please check with staff that it is OK for your group to enter. Large groups are often difficult to manage in small spaces. Several small groups may be preferred.

## Information for teachers, group leaders and students

While we do not have a dedicated Education Officer, members of staff within the Area North offices at South Somerset District Council will do all they can to help you with all aspects of educational group visits, and curriculum projects. *Please call 01458 257400 if you need further information or advice.*

## Group visits

We have a lot of useful information for groups planning a visit, whether its looking for suitable field sites, activities, educational attractions or organising an outside event. Please contact us for more information, or if you have any queries which are not answered in this education pack. Even if we do not have the answer to your questions, we will most likely be able to put you in contact with someone who does!

## Requests for information

We get many requests for information, most of which need to be dealt with on an individual basis. Most information can be supplied free of charge. Please be as specific as possible about what it is you actually require.

## Resources

We have limited resources available for use by groups, details are enclosed in this pack. These include, books, maps, photographs, and various items of field equipment. If you have any specific requirements, please discuss them with us prior to your visit as we may be able to help.

## Slide sets

We do not have a specific set of slides available for Langport, but we do have some colour OHP's of the pictures used in this publication and in the Visitor Centre. By arrangement however we could organise some slides which show some of the characteristics of the area, such as general landscape pictures and recreation etc. These resources are available on short-term loan prior to visits.

## Books

We do not have books specific to the area available in our resources kit. However you may find the following books useful for further background information. Most books are available through the Somerset County Library Service.

Somerset, the Complete Guide
.....Robin Bush

Wetland, Life in the Somerset Levels
.....P. Sutherland & A. Nicolson

The Somerset Levels
.....R. & R. Williams

The Somerset Levels & Moors
.....Ken Fletcher

The Natural History of The Somerset Levels
.....Bernard Storer

Victoria County History Series

Kellys Directories

Also of interest may be the two 'Enquire Within booklets available from the libraries. These are useful for finding further sources of information and artefacts that may be held elsewhere such as in the various museums throughout the county, and the record office.

By arrangement, we have the following books, maps and equipment available free of charge. Any, or all of these items may be borrowed for short periods of time (depending on demand) for use either in the classroom prior to a field visit, or on the day. Please telephone Becky Dandridge on 01458 257436 to check availability.

## Maps

**OS 1:50,000 Maps**

Yeovil & Frome
covers the area from Yeovil to Wells, Frome & Shaftesbury. (2 copies)

Taunton & Lyme Regis
covers Lyme, Wellington, Taunton, Somerton & Crewkerne. (3 copies)

Dorchester & Weymouth
covers Weymouth, West Coker & Blandford. (1 copy)

**OS 1:25,000 Maps**

Yeovil & Sherborne
covers Shepton Beauchamp to Langport & Somerton, Wincanton, Gillingham, Sturminster and Yetminster. (5 copies)

**OS 1:2500 Large Scale**

single sheets only may be available by ringing Becky Dandridge on 01458 257436.

## Books

We have the following identification books available.

**Collins Gem Wild Flowers**
Pocket guide with illustrations of 350 species of common British wild flowers. Contains a basic key to aid identification. (4 copies)

**Collins Gem Ponds & Streams**
Pocket guide on pond habitats and illustrations for identification of common species of plants, insects and animals found in or near water. (3 copies)

**Collins Gem Trees**
Pocket Guide for the identification of 200 trees and large shrubs, includes illustrations of the whole tree, leaves, bark, twigs, flowers and fruit. (3 copies)

**Collins Gem Insects (photoguide)**
Pocket guide with photographs to identify 240 commonly found species. Gives details of the appearance, habitat, and months when you are likely to see the insect. (3 copies)

**Collins Gem Butterflies & Moths (photoguide)**
Pocket guide to 240 species of butterflies and moths. Gives details of appearance, habitat, and months when you are likely to see the moths and butterflies. (2 copies)

**Collins Gem Mushrooms & Toadstools (photo's)**
Pocket guide to 236 common species. Gives information on appearance, season, and whether the species are edible or poisonous. (1 copy)

**Collins Gem Birds (photoguide)**
Pocket guide to 240 species of birds found in Europe. (1 copy)

**Collins Wild Guide - Butterflies & Moths**
Photographs and illustrations to identify butterflies and moths, and some of their caterpillars. An ID guide to each species gives details of their food plants, size and description. (2 copies)

**A Field Guide to Insects**
Identifies most species found in Britain, contains over 700 colour photographs for easier identification with details of appearance and habitat. (2 copies)

**Collins Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers**
Only pocket sized for those with large pockets! A comprehensive guide to the wild flowers of Britain, carefully illustrated with associated text on the same page for easier use in the field. There is a simple key at the front of the book for those who have some experience of using keys. (1 copy)

**Shell Easy Bird Guide**
A comprehensive field guide to Britain's birds, with photographs and illustrations for each species. Informative text gives details on behaviour, lifestyle and breeding, distribution maps and silhouettes for size comparison. (1 copy)

**Eye Witness Guide - How Nature Works**
A book suitable for teachers or team leaders. A book full of ideas for fun ways to discover the secrets of the natural world. Contains step by step instructions for safe, practical experiments and projects to carry out in the classroom or in the field. (1 copy)

**Learning Through Landscapes - Identification of Land & Water Invertebrates**
Photocopiable identification sheets for land & water invertebrates. Contains notes for the collection and study of invertebrates, including photocopiable worksheets for studying abundance, habitat & food chains. Mainly suited to Key Stages 1 and 2. (1 copy)

**River Parrett Trail Guides**
10 copies available in ringbinders.

## Equipment

By arrangement we have limited field equipment available for loan free of charge. All items must be booked at least 24 hours in advance.

| | |
|---|---|
| 6 | One metre rulers - white plastic |
| 2 | Floating thermometers - with string |
| 2 | Wall / room thermometers |
| 2 | Long handled pond nets (coarse mesh) |
| 12 | Short handled pond nets (fine mesh) |
| 25 | Small clear plastic sample tubes (film pot size) |
| 15 | Match box size sample boxes |
| 25 | Pooters, insect pots |
| 24 | Insect magnifying pots (small) |
| 5 | Insect magnifying pots (medium) |
| 4 | Collapsible quadrats. 50cm x 50cm |
| 4 | Butterfly nets |
| 1 | Trundle wheel |
| 10 | Compass |
| 20 | Plastic petri dishes |
| 10 | Observation trays - various colours |
| 40 | Cardboard & bulldog clips (clip-boards) |

**Miscellaneous items**
- Parrett Trail Video
- Battle of Langport Video
- Small booklet on the Battle of Langport

**Most of the pictures used in this pack and in the Visitor Centre, plus a few others are available in colour on O.H.Ps.**
Please see separate sheet for details.

## Where are the Somerset Levels and Moors?

The Levels and Moors lie in the heart of Somerset. They stretch south of Langport, to Taunton and Bridgwater in the West, almost to Weston-Super-Mare and Cheddar to the North, and Glastonbury to the East. In total they cover an area of approximately 250 square miles or 57000 hectares. The area is uncrowded and remote, with may hidden places to discover and explore.


Map showing the extent of the Somerset Levels and Moors (pale colour)

*The Somerset Levels and Moors are a unique flat landscape, one of the best remaining wetlands in the country, covering an area of 250 square miles (57000 hectares). There is a distinct difference between the Levels and the Moors. The Levels are a clay belt along the coast, about 20 feet above sea level. The peat moors are inland flood plains, only about 10 feet above sea level.*

*The wetlands have given Somerset its name - 'Sumer saeta, Saxon for 'land of the summer people. Dwellers moved to higher ground in times of flood, returning to the moors in summer when the land dried out.*

*Todays landscape has been shaped through the centuries by mans efforts to reclaim the land for agriculture. The first major attempts to drain the marshes were made in the 13th century by the religious houses of Wells and Glastonbury, and the Abbeys of Muchelney and Athelney. Enclosure acts of the 18th and 19th centuries created the landscape patterns of field and drainage systems found today.*

## Landscape

The main features of this landscape are its openness, lack of buildings, and large areas of almost treeless pasture land. It is a flat and open landscape, dominated by distant views in any direction of the surrounding hills.

Typical landscape
- view across West Sedge Moor

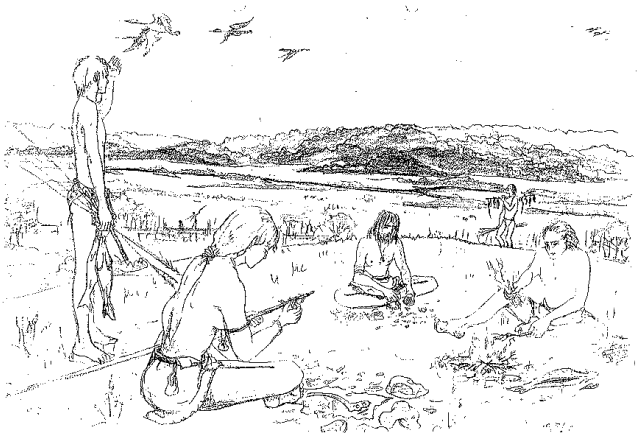
Typical landscape
Photograph Courtesy of DEFRA.

## Challenges facing the landscape.

The landscape of the area has evolved slowly over the centuries without major alteration, but it is now subject to new pressures. These quicken the rate of change and can have a dramatic impact. These include farming more intensively, such as improving field drainage, clearing hedges, trees and woods, peat extraction and the construction of large modern buildings.

## Key stages in the history of Langport and the Somerset Moors.

**9000 - 650BC Hunters and Farmers**
As the climate warmed after the last ice-age more people returned to this area and lived by hunting and fishing. Around 4000BC settlers arrived with new agricultural skills and began farming. Copper, and then bronze working arrived in Britain about 2500 BC.



**650 BC - 43 AD Celts**
The Celts originated from central Europe. The key to their success was making weapons and other implements from iron. The Parrett, with the rivers Yeo and Isle, were vital corridors through the territory of a tribe called the Durotriges. These people held the hill forts at Ham Hill and Cannington.

**43 - c.410 AD Romans**
The Romans saw Britain as a useful source of vital materials, particularly lead and tin, and arrived in 43 AD to take them away. They overpowered the Celts, occupied their hillforts and built the Fosse Way, now the busy A303.

**450 - 700 AD The Dark Ages**
Eventually the Roman Empire began to collapse, and what followed was a period of breakdown and invasion, the Dark Ages - so called because little is known about them. The hillforts were re-occupied. The legends of King Arthur come from these troubled times.

**700 - 1066 AD Angles, Saxon and Vikings**
The invading tribes of the Anglo-Saxons were vigorous settlers and farmers, but they were constantly challenged for the land by the Vikings. The West Saxon king, Alfred successfully beat off the challenge in the 9th century but in 1066 the army of the Viking colony of the Norman's was victorious.

**878 AD**
Under the reign of King Alfred, Langport was made a fortified borough.

**925 - 1066**
Coins were issued from Langport's mint.

**1066 - 1645**
By the 11th century about 60% of the Levels and Moors were owned either by the Crown, or by the Abbots of Glastonbury, or the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The church was to lead the efforts to reclaim the marshes.

**1645**
July 10th, Battle of Langport. See section on history of Langport.

**1685**
Battle of Sedgemoor, the last battle on English soil took place north of Langport, near Westonzoyland. The troops of the King attacked leaving 700 rebels dead, 500 people taken prisoners, Monmouth was executed, 300 followers hanged, and 1000 transported.

**1732**
The town hall was erected.

**1840**
The present Great Bow Bridge built.

**1853**
Langport West Rail Station opened.

**1906**
Langport East Station opened.

## Water, a continuous cycle

*Rainwater seeps into the ground travelling down through gravity, through the rocks until it meets a layer of rock it cannot permeate. Then the water has to run sideways, emerging as a spring in the sides of a hill. These springs are the sources of streams and rivers.*

*Streams and young rivers will run quickly down the steeper gradients of hilly country but slowly when they reach the lesser gradient of the flood plain. As the rivers slow they drop particles of rock and other debris they are carrying, adding to the material of the flood plain.*

*The water cycle is continuous, moving as clouds through the atmosphere, running as streams and rivers across the land, churning in the oceans which cover $^{2}/_{3}$ of the earths surface. Water permeates every living process on the planet as well as levelling mountains and gnawing at the coastline.*

## Moorland water

Within each square mile of the Moors there are up to 20 miles of drainage channels. Depending on their size, these channels are called drains, rhynes or rhines (both pronounced reens) and ditches.

During the summer, the water in the channels is penned up so that the ditches are kept full and act as 'wet fences' (to keep stock in their fields), and also to maintain a high water table to keep the meadows lush and green. In winter, ditch water levels are reduced.

The Levels and Moors can be very wet! Over centuries people and wildlife have adapted to the environment. At times in the past, very heavy rains have resulted in flooding which blocked roads, and cut off people living in isolated villages for days, often weeks at a time. Today, river management and flood defence is controlled by the Environment Agency and prolonged flooding rarely occurs. Water has also been an important source of power on the moors with water wheels and mills being used for grinding corn, working threshing machines, and operating saw mills.

Ditches act as 'wet fences'.
Photograph courtesy of Somerset County Council

## Environment Agency

The Environment Agency look after and oversee the management of the water environment. They have statutory responsibilities for water resources, flood defences, fisheries and water related recreation and conservation. Their duties require them to balance the needs of agriculture and wildlife, with the defence of people and property from flooding.

## The Parrett

The fall of the River Parrett, between Langport and Bridgwater is only 1 foot per mile, or 20cm per km. Tides in the Bristol Channel are the second highest in the world with a range of 14 metres, more than 6 metres above mean sea level. In times of heavy rain and high tides the rivers spill out over the land. Before any locks were built, the river was tidal as far as Langport, some 32 km (20 miles) inland, and a range of up to 15 cm could be seen.

At times the river Parrett becomes 'tide locked', when the incoming tide prevents the river from draining into the sea. During periods of heavy rain, when the river is already full, even the artificial raised banks will not prevent the river spilling over onto the land.

## Draining the land

Draining the land to create more pasture for longer periods of the year has been practised since at least the 13th century, but major changes occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. The enclosure movement with improvement schemes criss-crossed the wet land with drainage ditches to create the landscape we see today.

New rhynes were cut, the main river channels were straightened and improved, and a new channel was cut to the sea - the Kings Sedgemoor Drain (north of the River Parrett). Even so it was found that gravity alone was insufficient to clear the land of excess water.

In 1830 the first pumping station was built on the Parrett at Westonzoyland. Powered by steam, it was the first of a dozen pumping stations built at different locations on the Parrett. In time steam has given way to diesel and then electricity - more powerful pumps meant water levels fell more quickly.

In the last 20 years other machinery has become available - to cut deeper rhynes, and field pumps to speed the water away to the rivers. Deeper drainage has made it possible to plant deeper rooted, more productive grasses giving more milk, and even to grow arable crops, but all this comes at a price. The cost of low water levels is the loss of the rich wildlife of the wetland.

## Working the river

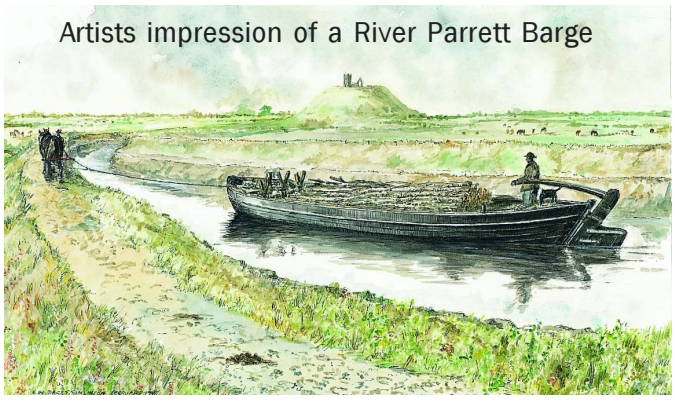
*Since ancient times, the River Parrett has been a source of food and transport, and a centre for trading. River trade in Langport reached its peak in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Goods were transported upstream on barges from Bridgwater. The larger of these Parrett barges were over 60 feet in length, and could carry up to 25 tons of goods.*

*There were wharves and warehouses near Bow Bridge and, at one time, 20 captains lived in Langport. Meanwhile young men were apprenticed to local merchants and the bank.*

*The increasing use of coal during the 17th and 18th centuries led to Acts of Parliament to improve local river navigation. Tolls were introduced to cover the costs and the Parrett Navigation Company was formed.*

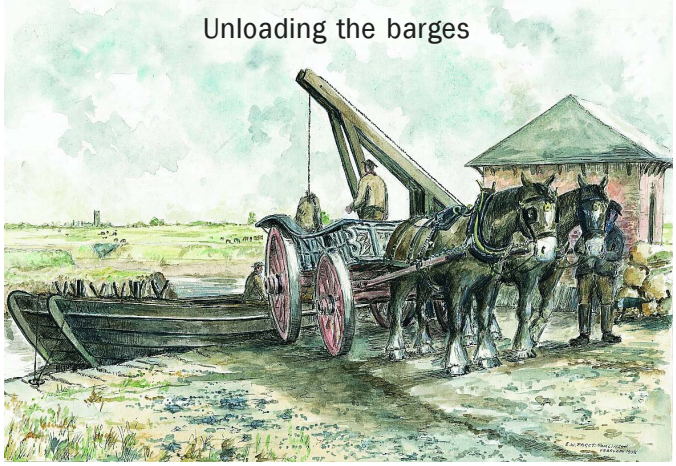
*Great Bow Bridge, in Langport, was a barrier to barges. They were unloaded by hand into smaller barges, which then continued upstream to Long Load and Ilchester. In 1839, the Parrett Navigation Company demolished the old bridge of nine arches and replaced it with the present bridge.*

Artists impression of a River Parrett Barge



*In 1840 the following goods were transported by barge: Stone, wheat, willows, earth, carrots, peas, gravel, cider, timber, dung, potatoes, reeds, apples, withies, drainpipes, coal and coke, manure and fish.*

Unloading the barges



## Taming the floods

*Three factors contribute to flooding on the River Parrett: high rainfall in the Somerset and Dorset hills, the flat land of the Somerset Levels and Moors, and the tidal range of the Bristol Channel.*

*The local moors are a natural flood plain for the rivers Parrett, Isle and Yeo. These rivers drain a vast area of land and have always overflowed after times of high rainfall.*

*The 1836 Parrett Navigation Act allowed the building of locks to raise water levels and improve navigation. This prevented the moors draining into the River Parrett. The Parrett Navigation Company had to build new channels to carry flood water into the river downstream of Langport Lock.*

*By the late 1870s with increasing competition from the railways, navigation works ceased, and the property of the Navigation Company passed to the Somersetshire Drainage Commissioners.*

*Pumping stations were built at Huish Episcopi, Midelney and Westover in the 1960s, and have dramatically improved drainage in the Langport area.*

*The relative height of the river banks has been carefully engineered and maintained. This protects built up areas such as parts of Langport, while still allowing local rivers to overtop onto the low-lying moors after high rainfall.*

*Once key river levels have subsided, the pumping stations remove water from the moors, a faster process than relying on gravity. Engineers can monitor today's drainage system 24 hours a day, from an office or home, using a system of computers and telephones - telemetry.*

Aerial view of flooding south of Langport.
Photograph courtesy of the Environment Agency

## Wells and smells

*Langport was a more pleasant place to live than some towns in the 19th century. Water for drinking was plentiful with many clean wells.*

*People without a well of their own could collect water from public pumps. Today Langport is one of many towns supplied by a regional mains water network.*

*In the 1800s if a town had a sewerage system it was prone to blockage as water use was low. Around Bow Street, a clever sewer cleansing system used water diverted from the River Parrett. Water flowed via sluices into the sewers, which passed under the street before returning to the river. The system has now been replaced by a modern treatment works.*

*While water quality under Bow Street has improved, traffic problems on top have not. Nowadays the A378 has to cope with far more vehicles, and Langport like many other towns has to contend with noise, vibration and pollution.*

Right:
Public Water Pump in Bow Street

Below:
Westover Pumping Station, near the Langport & River Parrett Visitor Centre.

Photographs courtesy of the Environment Agency


Generally there has been an increase in reported water pollution incidents across the country, however few have occurred on the Levels and Moors. The possible, or potential causes of pollution in this area are likely to be nitrates entering the water courses in run-off from fertilised land, or pollution from household waste, and silage or slurry effluent from farm yards.

## Where is Langport?
## Why is it situated here?

Looking at a map (1:25 000), it can be seen that the river valley narrows here. In the past, when the Parrett Valley was a vast swampy marsh, and a considerable barrier, this was the easiest bridging point for many miles up or downstream.

This bridging point was overlooked by a defensible hill, which gave excellent views both up and down the valley. The river was also the main highway for the area. Hence whoever controlled the hill and the bridge, controlled movements on the roads and river.

The Romans are generally acknowledged for building the first causeway and crossing for this part of the valley (although this has never been fully substantiated), whilst the Saxons are renowned for fortifying the hilltop around the church in the 9th Century. This valued crossing point between the road and the river created a natural trading place, hence how Langport got its name meaning, 'long market place.

Langport is situated on a hill as can easily be seen during times of flood. Photograph by John Davis.

## Stepping back in time.....

*Langport was an ancient crossing point of the River Parrett. Its thought a causeway across the marshes was used in Roman times.*

*A causeway was certainly built in the 12th century, along which Bow Street now runs. Many believe that only the fronts of the buildings in Bow Street have their foundations on the causeway. This is why most of the buildings lean gently backwards!*

*In King Alfreds time (871-899 AD), Langport was a fortified town, or burh. The town defended the upper Parrett and the entrance to the Royal estate of Somerton. The original settlement was on the hill, where the church stands today. It has changed very little since medieval times.*

*The Hanging Chapel is believed to be the surviving east gate of the defended town. Built in the 14th century as a Chapel of the Blessed Mary, it has since been used as a grammar school, museum, armoury, Sunday school and today as a Masonic Lodge.*

## Local trade and industries

Trades and professions

In 1840 the following could be found in Langport:

2 Architects
1 Ironmonger
9 Shoemakers
1 Auctioneer
2 Clockmakers
2 Hairdressers
2 Pastry cooks
1 Tanner
2 Brewers/ Malsters
1 Engineer
4 Merchants
2 Surgeons
1 Bank
1 Cooper
4 Insurance officers
2 Seedsmen
2 Timber merchants
1 Chandler
2 Gardeners
1 Veterinary surgeon
1 Tinmen
1 Boat Builder
4 General shopkeepers
2 Plasterers & tilers
3 Trading companies
8 Butchers
4 Dressmakers
4 Masons
2 Bonnet makers
7 Bakers
1 Coach builder
8 Inn keepers
4 Saddlers
6 Tailors
8 Carpenters / builders
1 Fellmonger
4 Painters & plumbers
4 Teachers
4 Blacksmiths
2 Drapers
1 Iron founder
1 Screwmaker
3 Wine merchants
1 Chemist and druggist

The Hanging Chapel

This small town on the river became a vital link between the local and regional economies and the financial centre of London, where profits from agriculture could be re-invested in industry. In 1853 the railway arrived, and the long tradition of river trade dramatically declined and eventually ceased. There is little evidence to be seen today of the once busy quay sides.

Langport is also well known for two industries, banking and Kelways (the Royal Nurseries), and at Ham Down just outside Langport was the site for the Battle of Langport.


Bow street in the past, date unknown. Courtesy of the Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury

## Money, money, money

*George Stuckey and Thomas Bagehot were described as 'wharfingers and shipowners, with 14 East Indiamen and 19 barges within their company.*

*In the 1750s George Stuckey, a merchant and Thomas Bagehot, a malster, formed a company, trading in salt, coal, iron and corn. They traded by road and water with Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool and London. Their company brought a prosperity to Langport that lasted 150 years and the town became a centre for the carrying trade.*

*The Stuckey family expanded into banking services in the 1770s and, in 1806, established the Langport Bank of Stuckey & Co. In 1826 it became the second joint stock bank in the country. By 1909, when the bank was taken over, Stuckey & Co. had a bank note circulation second only to that of the Bank of England. The bank has since been absorbed into the National Westminster Bank.*

*In later years a descendant, Walter Bagehot, was to become involved with finance. He became a well known and influential economist, helping to develop the theories and practices of the international monetary system used today.*


Stuckey's Bank c.1900,
now the National Westminster Bank.
Photograph reproduced courtesy of Natwest Group Archives.

## Seeds, flowers and family

*A West Country Head Gardener, James Kelway, founded The Royal Nurseries in 1851.*

*James and his son, William, developed their business into a leading Nursery and Seed House. Kelways won many competitions and gained an International reputation. William specialised in growing Peonies, and James was noted for his Gladioli.*

Kelways were the largest employer
of labour in the district.

*Before the First World War, at the height of its reputation, Kelways employed 120 workers and 17 office staff. Contracts included the supply of agricultural seed to the United States Government.*

*In 1933, Kelways went bankrupt, and was later bought by a consortium. In 1992, the Nursery moved to Barrymore Farm in Huish Episcopi and is now owned by the Johnsons.*

The former Kelways buildings can still be seen, and have been converted into council offices, and the Kelway Inn which is well worth a visit.

Kelways pioneered new ways of
planting and growing gladioli

## King or Parliament

*The last major battle of the English Civil War took place on Thursday 10th July, 1645.*

*Parliament's re-organised New Model Army, commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, had defeated King Charles I at Naseby. Fairfax then went to Taunton, to relieve Colonel Robert Blake who was under attack by the King s army, led by Lord Goring.*

*When Fairfax arrived, the Kings army took up defensive positions along the Rivers Parrett and Yeo. Fairfax outflanked Goring, forcing him and his men to reform at Langport. On the 10th July, after Goring had deployed his army on Ham Down, just east of Langport and astride the road to Somerton, Fairfax attacked.*

Musketeer

*Gorings position was strong, but the Parliamentarian troops charged daringly up the steep hill into the middle of the waiting Royalists. After half an hour the Royalists suddenly broke ranks and fled from the onslaught.*

*The Kings foot soldiers retreated through Langport burning houses in Bow Street to delay pursuit, while Goring and his Royalist cavalry were chased to Bridgwater. The Kings last major army had been destroyed.*

Battle of Langport re-enactment 29 - 30 July 1995

## Meadows

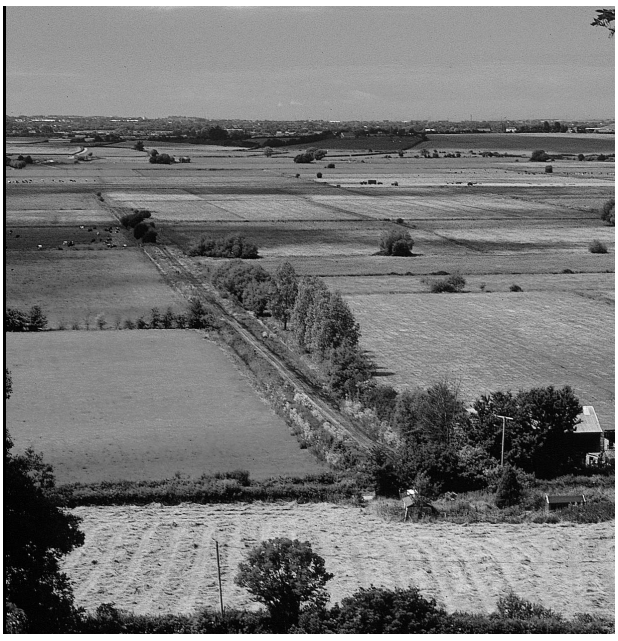
Meadows of permanent grassland used to be the traditional farming pattern over much of the Levels and Moors. In recent years many have been replaced or improved.

The traditional grazing and cutting management has gradually been changing as a result of drainage improvements. This has allowed replacement of permanent pastures with leys of more productive grasses, and also changes in farming practices such as the use of fertilisers and herbicides, and a change to silage making.

These changes may seem small but they affect nature conservation as the diversity (wealth) of plant and animal species (particularly insects) in an old unimproved meadow is replaced by just a few dominant species, usually grasses. While these grasses provide ample grazing, they support little else in the way of wildlife.

It must be remembered though that the survival of the wildlife depends on continued agricultural use. Any grassland habitat depends on grazing or cutting to maintain it, otherwise it will quickly return to coarse grassland, scrub and eventually woodland.

Traditional hay meadows are some of the best from a botanical point of view. For their wildlife value these meadows are cut as late as possible usually after the 1st July. Mowing late in the season allows the meadow plants to mature, flower and set seed, and also allows the chicks of nesting birds to fly beforehand.



Traditional hay and pasture meadows

## From pasture to plate

*From sunshine on lush green pastures we receive succulent meat, creamy milk and delicious cheese, all food on our plate!*

*Our need to cultivate the land to provide food has shaped the landscape we see today. The pastures of the Moors are man made and, without control, large areas of land would be under water for much of the year.*

*Cattle grazing and dairying are traditional farming methods on the Levels and Moors. Lowland pastures are cut for hay and silage during summer and then grazed by cattle and sheep. Dairying occurs on higher ground, near farm buildings and milking parlours.*

*Hidden in the landscape are the rhynes and ditches. These are more than just drainage channels, they act as 'wet fences, marking boundaries between fields. Modern farming practices have led to further drainage of the Moors. To encourage farmers to manage the land in traditional ways, grants are available to compensate for loss of income as a result of managing land with higher water levels.*

Traditional pastoral farming.
Courtesy of Somerset County Council

## The apple - a symbol of Somerset

*Pressed and fermented, they make tanglefoot, phlegm cutter and scrumpy, better known as cider!*

*The origins of cider making in Britain are not fully known. However, apples were grown before the Norman Conquest, while written records date from the 13th century.*

*Small orchards are found throughout the county. Most apples can be used to make cider, but in Somerset traditional varieties related to the wild crab apple are preferred. These varieties have wonderful names such as Porters Perfection, Kingston Black, Brown Snout, and the historic Red Streak.*

*Cider can also be distilled to make cider brandy. The craft is being revived by the Somerset Cider Brandy Company, located near Burrow Hill. The company was granted the first full cider distilling licence in recorded history.*

Above:
Harvested apples

Making a cider 'cheese' - an old art.
Picture courtesy of the Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury

## More than just a pint

*Until the 19th century, the quality of local drinking water could not be guaranteed. Tea was a drink for the rich - so cider became a necessity!*

*In the 18th and 19th centuries, most farms produced their own cider. This provided quantities for the farmers own use - and his labourers with a suitable drink.*

*Cider was part of a farm labourers wage, under the system known as the 'cider truck. Daily allowances ranged from a few pints to over a gallon. Its a wonder they were able to work at all!*

*Making farmhouse cider is in principle a simple process. Juice is extracted from ripe apples by milling and pressing. It is then put into wooden barrels to ferment, and left for a period of several months before drinking.*

## Crops grown on the Somerset Moors

***Barley*** *- is grown for animal feed, but also as an essential ingredient in brewing beer. This involves spreading the barley grain over the floor of a malting shed, where it is moistened and allowed to sprout. The sprouted grain is full of sugars which are extracted by heating. It was first cultivated in the Near East 8500 years ago, and has been used in brewing for nearly as long.*

***Sugar Beet*** *- the French developed sugar beet from wild sea beet in the 18th Century during the Napoleonic Wars when the British cut off their supplies of cane sugar from the West Indies. Nowadays it is a common crop in England and more than ½ of the sugar we eat comes from sugar beet, identified by the 'Silver Spoon label.*

***Oil Seed Rape*** *- the brilliant yellow fields that we see in the early summer are created by the flowers of this plant. Rape is a member of the cabbage family. It is grown for its seed which yields a protein rich oil, used as both a food stuff (margarine and cooking oil), and as a lubricant in industry (e.g. aircraft engines and farm machinery).*

***Maize*** *- Englands climate is only just warm enough to grow the sweeter & more tender sweetcorn. Most maize seen growing is turned into cattle feed. First cultivated in South America 5000 years ago, it's only become a familiar crop here in the last 20 years.*

***Wheat*** *- is our staple crop, as a food it is highly nutritious containing carbohydrate, protein, minerals, fat, fibre and Vitamins A and B. Cultivated from wild grasses 11,000 years ago in the near East, it was the earliest cultivated plant. Introduced into Britain some 9000 years ago.*

***Linseed*** *- Usually grown now for its oil rich seeds but another variety of the same plant is flax whose fibres are processed to make linen - a very important crop in Somerset in the 18th and 19th centuries when linen was used to make sail cloth for the wind driven ships of the period. Linseed is used as a food for both animals and humans, but it is also used as a lubricant and for making products such as paint, putty and linoleum.*

## Buffs, browns and whites

*For thousands of years, man has made use of the wetland willow. Chair legs, baskets and medicine are only some of its uses.*

*Willows were planted alongside roads and droves across the Moors, to mark them during floods. Pollarding, trimming the willow back to its trunk, has been practiced for centuries, and provides firewood, thatching spars and cheap hurdles.*

*Withies are grown as shrubs, rather than trees and their strong, flexible stems are used for weaving baskets. Plants are cut back to ground level each year, encouraging long straight shoots to grow the following season.*

*Withies are normally harvested, by hand, in November. Depending on the colour required and the end use, they are boiled, soaked or left untouched, to give buffs, browns and whites.*

Harvested withies
Photograph by John Davies

Withy sculpture
Photograph by John Davis

## Changes in agriculture

*Once the great majority of the population would have worked on the land. Over the last two centuries new techniques and increasing mechanisation have transformed the life of the countryside.*

*In 1850 it would have taken about 140 days of labour to harvest 20 acres of wheat with the aid of horses. This would have included hand reaping, carting and storing in the barn, and hand flailing.*

*The same job in 1930, with some mechanisation would have required about 55 days of labour. Today the same job, using a combine would take just 2 days.*

*Dozens of other operations on the farm are now achieved with machinery, ploughing, sowing, hedging and ditching, milking etc. - vastly reducing the number of people needed to work on the land to less than 2% of the working population.*

Building a hay rick.
Courtesy of the Somerset Rural Life Museum

The landscape changes and adapts to new ways of working - larger tractors demand larger fields, footpaths are used for leisure rather than walking to work, and the heavy working horse has all but disappeared.

During World War II, farmers joined a national movement to produce as much food as possible. Since then technology has led to improvements in crop yields, more efficient use of pesticides and fertilisers, and improvements in the breeding of livestock. As a result farmers started to produce more food than was actually required - surpluses.

Over production has occurred throughout the European Community and so quotas (specifying how much a farmer can produce) have been introduced to control output, and so reduce surpluses.

P.T.O.

Improvements in farm machinery has resulted in fewer people being employed on farms, many who have not found new jobs locally have moved away.

As well as traditional farming systems there are various farm based projects linked to the tourism industry, including farm bed and breakfast, camp sites and holiday cottages. These new projects can provide a useful, or alternative income for farmers whose income from traditional farming practices has dropped due to changes in agricultural policy.

## Farming and the environment

The deep drainage issue has caused great conflict and is still a matter of concern, but conservation bodies have now, in some areas, become landowners in their own right. Legislation along with a system of government grants, has allowed farmers to receive compensation for lost income as a result of land being managed with high water levels at important times of the year.

## Continuing tradition

*Continuing traditional farming methods is essential if the unique wildlife and landscape of the Levels and Moors is to be safeguarded.*

*The Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme operated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is a nationwide initiative providing a way of conserving the best of the countryside. Over 112 square miles of the Somerset Levels and Moors have been designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area.*

*To help protect and conserve the Levels and Moors, farmers within the Environmentally Sensitive Area are offered a 10 year agreement, which rewards them with an annual payment for following traditional systems of pastoral livestock farming and maintaining high water levels.*

*Encouraging these agricultural practices helps make sure that this areas unique landscape, wildlife and archaeology will be conserved for future generations. It also enables farmers to combine conservation with commercial farming.*

If the drainage of the land is improved it is capable of supporting arable farming, although the fragmentation of the land causes access problems, and the risk of flooding limits its development. The trend towards intensive dairy systems has led to improvements to grassland, with increases in silage making and fodder crops at the expense of hay and permanent pasture.

## Leaves, legs, fins and feathers

*The Levels and Moors have a rich variety of wildlife and a worldwide reputation as a site for migrating birds and breeding waders.*

*Lowland meadows and pastures flood in winter. The floating seeds and invertebrates living in the mud attract wildfowl - such as Teal, Wigeon and Bewicks Swans. As water levels fall, flocks of waders, such as Lapwing and Curlew, probe the soft ground for worms and insects.*

*Animal life abounds, from beetles and dragonflies, to badgers and deer, and the wetlands are one of the few areas in Britain where Otters still live. The basis of all life on the Levels and Moors are the plants. These grow in abundance: from the tiny duckweed, giving rhynes their characteristic green colour, to the pollarded willows.*

*Rhynes and lush green meadows area a sensory experience in spring and summer. A profusion of colour can be seen from meadow flowers such as Kingcups, Purple Loosestrife, Marsh Orchids, and sweetly perfumed Meadowsweet.*

## Facts and figures about species and populations to be found etc.

22 species of butterfly are found in the area, including the rare Marsh Fritillary. The area is also of national importance for water beetles, with over 80 species being recorded. Over 200 plant species have been identified in the meadows locally.

A huge amount of animal life can be found across the whole of the Somerset Levels and Moors, in all habitats, whether it is the water, ditches, pastures or villages. From Bernard Storers book, the Natural History of the Somerset Levels it was noted that there were 599 species of moth, 41 species of butterfly and 531 species of beetle. These figures were true of the early 1970s when the book was first published. The figure may have increased or decreased due to new species being identified, or losses due to changes in the environment and loss of habitats. However the figures still represent the huge diversity of life to be found on the Levels and Moors.

## Secret movers of the night

*After 4000 miles, and 3 years at sea, millions of eel larvae reach Englands rivers as elvers. The eel has an amazingly life cycle. Spawned in the Sargasso Sea, near Bermuda, the larvae drift across the Atlantic.*

*As they near land, their extraordinary sense of smell attracts them to fresh water and, on a spring night at high tide, they move secretly across land at night, to invade any rhyne or ditch. Seven to ten years later, as 'silvers, mature eels make the return journey to the Sargasso Sea.*

*Elvers and eels have always been an important source of food in Somerset, especially during the last war. In the Domesday book they appear as a type of moorland currency - two fisheries at Muchelney Abbey produced 6000 eels a year.*

## Otters

Otters are shy nocturnal mammals about one metre long when adult. They have a streamlined shape, built for swimming, although they are equally at home on the land. Otters are carnivorous (meat eating) and their main diet is eels and other fish. Once common, their population has greatly reduced over recent decades, and they are now restricted to relatively unpolluted areas.

A big decrease in the otter population in England happened in the 1950s, and was probably caused by the use of pesticides, which reached the water-courses and accumulated in the otters via their food chain. For various reasons the population has not recovered, and otters have disappeared from many parts of the country. The Somerset Levels and Moors are one of only a handful of areas in southern England where otters can still be found, and their population could still be critically low.

Otters are difficult to study as they are very shy elusive animals, spending much of their time in water and often travelling long distances (up to 25 km). It is difficult to be precise about the causes of the otters decline, but there are several likely causes that have been discussed by experts including: accidental death from traffic accidents, disease, competition from mink, disturbance directly or indirectly from humans - for example dogs and night fishing. However the two most likely reasons for the decline are probably pollution and loss of habitat.

Changes to the otter's habitat affect the populations as the otters have a large range, and are very particular in their requirements for holts, and so the otter is quickly affected by farming and drainage changes. The Levels and Moors environment has been greatly changed in recent years with more intensive farming, drainage schemes and intensive river bank management. All these activities have resulted in the clearance of wood and scrub cover from river banks, and hence sites for holts.

It is not too late for the otter population to recover if we take action now. We need to conserve and protect what is left of the otter's habitat by minimising disturbance either directly or indirectly, and preventing or minimising pollution of the waterways.

## Life in the rhynes

Many of the plants found in the rhynes and ditches are those which would have been found in the original marsh. Plants correspond to the time cycles of cleaning and hence can be an environmental indicator.

Over the page is a table of information collated from Bernard Storer's book, the Natural History of the Somerset Levels that shows the results of rhyne vegetation surveys undertaken by the author.

The information indicates how many plants were observed along set lengths of rhynes at set points along these lengths. Ditches and rhynes of different ages were observed, that is to say how recently they had been dredged and cleaned. The ages can be defined as follows:

New - Cleaned within 2 months in summer, or within 6 months if done in the autumn.
Recent - 75% of the surface is open, either open water or floating aquatics.
Middle - 50% or less of the surface is open.
Old - less than 25% of the surface is open due to overgrowth.

**Plants recorded / observed**

| | | N |
|---|---|---|
| Common duckweed | *Lemna minor* | 1 |
| Fat duckweed | *L. gibba* | 8 |
| Great duckweed | *L. polyrhiza* | 3 |
| Ivy duckweed | *L. triscula* | 5 |
| Frog bit | *Hydrocharis morsusranae* | 2 |
| Blanket-weed | *Algae* | 2 |
| Starwort | *Callitriche* spp | |
| Canadian Pondweed | *Elodea canadensis* | |
| Reed-grass | *Phalaris arundinacea* | |
| Reed-grass | *Glyseria maxima* | |
| Reed | *Phragmites communis* | |
| Bur-reed | *Sparganium ramosum* | |
| Rushes | *Juncus* spp | |
| Sedges | *Carex* spp | |
| Meadow-sweet | *Filipendula ulmaria* | |
| Stinging Nettle | *Urtica dioica* | |
| Marsh Bedstraw | *Galium palustre* | |
| Yellow flag | *Iris pseudacorus* | |
| Bittersweet | *Solanum dulcamara* | |
| Great Water Dock | *Rumex hydrolapathum* | |
| Water parsnip | *Berula erecta* | |
| Water fern | *Azolla filiculoides* | |
| Least duckweed | *Wolffia arrhiza* | |
| Stoneworts | *Characeae* | |
| Hornwort | *Ceratophyllum demersum* | |
| Bladderwort | *Utricularia vulgaris* | |
| Water crowfoot | *Ranunculaus aquatilis* | |
| Water violet | *Hottonia palustris* | |
| Amphibious bistort | *Polygonum amphibium* | |
| Water plantain | *Alisma plantago-aquatica* | |

## Recreation & Tourism

The remoteness of the area provides a relaxing atmosphere for quiet leisure pursuits such as fishing, horse riding and walking. The activities of the area tend to concentrate on the main rivers and other watercourses which are popular for fishing.

Although there is a demand for other water sports on the rivers, the waterways are generally considered to be unsuitable for reasons such as shallow or tidal water, high and steep river banks, obstructions to navigation and difficult access to the water because of the nature of the river banks.

*The River Parrett rises in the hills of the Somerset and Dorset borders, flows across the Somerset Levels and Moors, and then into the sea.*

*Following the River Parrett Trail on foot or bicycle is not just an outing in the country - it is an opportunity to discover and understand a unique river landscape. The trail passes through beautiful and fascinating areas of orchards and woods, then crosses the network of rhynes and water courses to the sea.*

*On the trail (and in the Trail Guide), theres information about these landscapes: how they were shaped; their indigenous animals and plants; and how they have adapted over thousands of years to settlement, agriculture and industry.*

Coarse fishing is the most widespread sport within the area, with approximately 120 miles of river available for fishing. Two other sports are also popular locally, cricket and skittles.

Since much of the area was marsh, there is not the network of footpaths and bridleways that were established in most parts of the country. Walking is an ideal way to enjoy this unique area, but cycling is also popular as the area is so flat. Most visitors aim for the provided car parking areas, or villages as a start for their visit. Parking on minor roads is almost impossible without blocking gateways or the road, and the ditches prevent you from pulling off the road onto verges.

## Tourism in the countryside

Most people use the countryside for casual activities such as picnics, short walks, dog walking and visiting sites of interest, but more and more people are becoming involved in outdoor sports. Particularly noticeable is the increase in the use of the countryside for the 'new leisure pursuits of mountain biking and motorcycle trail riding as well as the increased use of off road 4 x 4 vehicles.

The increasing use of the countryside by so many people doing so many different activities has led to user conflicts and demands on the environment. In certain areas, especially those which are environmentally sensitive it has become necessary to manage these activities, and at times limit, or control them.

## Tourism on the moors

The Levels and Moors alone do not attract many tourists. Nearby attractions such as Cheddar Gorge, Wookey Hole and Glastonbury Tor bring many visitors to this part of Somerset. The general lack of facilities together with the attraction of other nearby areas such as the Mendips, Quantocks and Exmoor, means that the majority of visitors usually pass throught he area.

With an increase in farm tourism and second holidays or short breaks, visitor numbers are increasing. In South Somerset, tourism supports 3% of actual jobs.

## Geography of the Langport area

Most of the land immediately around Langport is less than 10 metres above sea level, with areas around Curry Rivel rising up to 100 metres and High Ham to the north, up to 200 metres above sea level.

## What are the Moors like?

The central lowlands were once extensive marshes over which peat developed. The moors consist of peaty, open, waterlogged soils where permanent pasture is grazed by cattle or dairy herds, or traditionally cropped for hay.

The Somerset Levels and Moors are essentially a huge, reclaimed swamp, where the pastures are divided not by hedges or fences, but by a vast network of drainage channels. Most of the land is privately owned, although a small percentage is owned by conservation bodies, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the local Wildlife Trusts.

## Settlement patterns.

The settlement pattern of the area is quite distinctive. Most villages are fairly isolated being located on slightly higher ground to take advantage of drier land and the rich grazing pastures of the wetlands. It has been dictated by the nature of the landscape.

There are no major towns actually within the area of the Somerset Levels and Moors. Most of the population is situated within easy reach of the main urban centres just outside the area. For example Yeovil, Taunton and Bridgwater.

## The population of Langport from local census returns

*Data from 1981 and 1991 which is indicated by an '*, indicates information from the Local Base Statistics and Small Area Statistics - Crown Copyright.*

| Year | Males | Females | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1801 | | | 754 |
| 1811 | | | 861 |
| 1821 | | | 1004 |
| 1831 | | | 1245 |
| 1841 | | | 1172 |
| 1851 | | | 1117 |
| 1861 | | | 1133 |
| 1871 | | | 1018 |
| 1881 | | | 897 |
| 1891 | 397 | 493 | 890 |
| 1901 | 381 | 432 | 813 |
| 1911 | 351 | 422 | 773 |
| 1921 | 349 | 432 | 781 |
| 1931 | 313 | 373 | 686 |
| 1951 | 353 | 419 | 772 |
| 1961 | 367 | 410 | 777 |
| 1971 | 402 | 454 | 856 |
| 1981* | | | 947 |
| 1991* | | | 997* |

## Age Structure* in 1991

– within the parishes of Langport and Huish, the proportions in 1991 were as follows:
17.7% of residents 0-15 years
13.6% are between 16 – 24 years olds
24.9% are between 25 – 44 years
16.7% between 45 and OAP
27% are OAPs.

## Getting about

Roads have always played an important part in everyday life. Most ancient roads have disappeared, but many modern routes follow routes laid out in former times. Wheeled traffic did not become common until the 16th century.

Public transport around Langport, especially bus services (apart from school buses) are infrequent, and although the town and surrounding villages are linked by a weekly or daily bus service, for most families a car is essential.

## Means of travelling to work*

- within the parishes of Langport and Huish, the proportions in 1991 were as follows:
67.6% private car
0.9% bus
0.9% train
1.9% motorcycle
3.7% pedal cycle
15.7% by foot
7.4% worked at home
1.9% other, did not specify.

## Employment - statistics

**Occupation *** - the kind of work performed by a person. Within the parishes of Langport and Huish, the proportions in 1991 were:

2.6% Armed forces/Government scheme/not stated
1.1% Professional
19.3% Managerial and technical
4.8% Non manual skilled
24.9% Manual skilled
13.4% Partly skilled
1.5% Unskilled
32.3% Retired

**Industry *** the business or activity in which a persons occupation is followed, proportions in 1991 for the parishes of Langport and Huish were;

2.8% agriculture, forestry and fishing
0.9% in energy and water industries
19.4% manufacturing and mining industries
15.7% construction industry
25.0% distribution and catering industries
0.9% transport industry
35.2% other service industries

# Looking at the River Bank

River banks are important habitats. They provide shelter & food for amphibians, reptiles, insects, birds & mammals including otters. For a river bank to be a useful place for an animal to live it needs to have a variety of features. This survey will enable you to give a river bank a score which will show how important it is for wildlife.

All you have to do is stand on the river bank, and for each feature listed over the page, select the description which suits your bank best. At the end add up your score and see how your bank has done.

**Vegetation** - Number of non-woody plants - NOT trees or shrubs.

| | |
|---|---|
| more than 30 | score 4 |
| 20 - 29 | score 3 |
| 10 - 19 | score 2 |
| less than 10 | score 1 |

**Habitat features**

| | |
|---|---|
| Very varied banks - cliffs, beaches, reeds and roots | score 4 |
| Varied banks with many reeds | score 3 |
| Fairly varied bank with nettles and grass | score 2 |
| Uniform (not varied) or artificial banks | score 1 |

**Tree and shrub cover**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lots of trees and shrubs | score 4 |
| Clumps of trees and shrubs | score 3 |
| Occasional single trees or shrubs | score 2 |
| No trees or shrubs | score 1 |

**Visual**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lots of meanders and a natural appearance | score 4 |
| Some river bends - may appear artificial | score 3 |
| Straight banks covered with grass or plants | score 2 |
| Straight banks of concrete, steel, brick or wood | score 1 |

**Human interference**

| | |
|---|---|
| Natural and wild looking banks | score 4 |
| Tall vegetation with only a little cutting | score 3 |
| Some mown and some natural areas | score 2 |
| Unnatural banks which are regularly cut | score 1 |

---

Total score

## How did your river bank score?

| | |
|---|---|
| 16 - 20 | Excellent |
| 11 - 15 | Good |
| 6 - 10 | Poor |
| 0 - 5 | Bad |

# Fact or Fiction

See how many facts you can find around the place. Some of the facts below may be fiction, so you need to find the facts to find the answer!

1. Who has shaped the landscape we see today?.....
2. What is a symbol of Somerset?.....
3. What was often drunk instead of water in the past?.....
4. The Battle of Langport took place in 1644 – **fact or fiction**?
5. What was Kelways, and what is it now?.....
6. When were pumping stations built and why?.....

   .....
7. The Moors are a natural.....
8. When was Langport a fortified town, and where?.....

   .....
9. a) When was the Langport bank of Stuckey & Co. established?.....

   b) Who owns it now?.....
10. How many arches did the old Bow Bridge have?.....
11. When was the current bridge built?.....
12. Eels / Elvers reach English rivers after 40,000 miles – **fact or fiction**?
13. a) What are withies?.....

    b) What gives them their colour of buff, brown and white?.....

    .....
14. What area do the Levels & Moors cover?.....
15. What are the names of the 3 types of drainage channel found on the Levels and Moors?.....

Please note:
Answers to this side can be found on the information boards, the other side in the 'discovery room'.

1. 40% of a frog is water – **fact or fiction**?
2. What does water vapour become?.....
3. What were the mills along the rivers used for?.....
4. Name 2 villages found at the upper reaches.....
5. Find 6 crops grown on the Moors, and what are they used for?.....

   .....

   .....

   .....
6. Quarrying of hamstone still occurs on Ham Hill – **fact or fiction**?
7. a) When did it take 140 days to harvest 20 acres of wheat?.....

   b) How many days did it take in 1930?.....
8. The Aller Dragon used to poison crops – **fact or fiction**?
9. The sun controls the tides – **fact or fiction**?
10. What height above sea level are the Levels and the Moors?.....
11. How long was a Parrett barge, and what load could it carry?.....
12. Who founded a trading company in Langport?.....
13. What does Langport mean?.....
14. Saxons were in Langport in the 10th century – **fact or fiction**?
15. a) When did the railway arrive?.....

    b) What happened to the river trade as a result?.....
16. Name 6 trades or professions in Langport during 1840.....

    .....
17. There were 3 boat builders in 1840 – **fact or fiction**?
18. Name 8 goods carried along the river.....

.....

19.Cups and saucers were built at Bridgwater – **fact or fiction**?

# Fact or Fiction – Answers

See how many facts you can find around the place. Some of the facts below may be fiction, so you need to find the facts to find the answer!

1. Who has shaped the landscape we see today?.....**MAN**
2. What is a symbol of Somerset?.....**APPLES**
3. What was often drunk instead of water in the past?.....**CIDER**
4. The Battle of Langport took place in 1644 – **fact or fiction**?.....**FICTION - 1645**
5. What was Kelways, and what is it now?.....**NURSERY - PUB & OFFICES**
6. When were pumping stations built and why?.....

   ..... ...**1830 ONWARDS TO IMPROVE DRAINAGE**
7. The Moors are a natural.....**FLOOD PLAIN**
8. When was Langport a fortified town, and where?.....

   .....**KING ALFRED'S TIME - ON THE HILL BY THE CHURCH**
9. a) When was the Langport bank of Stuckey & Co. established?.....**1806**

   b) Who owns it now?.....**NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK**
10. How many arches did the old Bow Bridge have?.....**NINE**
11. When was the current bridge built?.....**1839**
12. Eels / Elvers reach English rivers after 40,000 miles – **fact or fiction**?.....**FICTION**
13. a) What are withies?.....**WILLOWS GROWN AS SHRUBS**

    b) What gives them their colour of buff, brown and white?.....

    .....**TREATMENT - BOILING, SOAKING OR UNTOUCHED**
14. What area do the Levels & Moors cover?.....**250 SQ.MILES - 57000HA**
15. What are the names of the 3 types of drainage channel found on the Levels and Moors?.....**DRAINS, RHYNES & DITCHES**

1. 40% of a frog is water – **fact or fiction**?.....**FICTION - 80%**

2. What does water vapour become?.....**CLOUDS & RAIN**

3. What were the mills along the rivers used for?.....**GRINDING & PROCESSING**

4. Name 2 villages found at the upper reaches.....**LOOK AT THE WINDOW SHUTTERS**

5. Find 6 crops grown on the Moors, and what are they used for?.....

**BARLEY - BREWING** **WHEAT - FOOD** **LINSEED - FOOD & LUBRICANT OIL**

**POTATOES - FOOD** **OIL SEED RAPE - FOOD & LUBRICANT OIL,**

**MAIZE - CATTLE FEED** **BEANS - CATTLE FEED** **SUGAR BEET - FOOD**

6. Quarrying of hamstone still occurs on Ham Hill – **fact or fiction**?.....**FACT**

7. a) When did it take 140 days to harvest 20 acres of wheat?.....**1850**

   b) How many days did it take in 1930?.....**55**

8. The Aller Dragon used to poison crops – **fact or fiction**?.....**FOLKLORE!**

9. The sun controls the tides – **fact or fiction**? .....**FICTION - MOON**

10. What height above sea level are the Levels and the Moors?.....**10 - 20 FEET**

11. How long was a Parrett barge, and what load could it carry?.....**60 FT/20 TONS**

12. Who founded a trading company in Langport?.....**STUCKEY & BAGEHOT**

13. What does Langport mean?.....**LONG MARKET PLACE**

14. Saxons were in Langport in the 10th century – **fact or fiction**?.....**FICTION - 9TH**

15. a) When did the railway arrive?.....**1853**

    b) What happened to the river trade as a result?.....**TERMINAL DECLINE**

16. Name 6 trades or professions in Langport during 1840.....**SEE PAGE ?**

17. There were 3 boat builders in 1840 – **fact or fiction**?.....**FICTION - 1**

18. Name 8 goods carried along the river.....**BRICKS, BEER, CIDER, FISH, DRAINPIPES,**

**CARROTS, WITHIES, PEAS, APPLES, COKE & COAL, DUNG, TIMBER, HIDES & TILES**

19.Cups and saucers were built at Bridgwater – **fact or fiction**?.....

.....**FICTION - BRICKS & TILES**