



12th century doorway at Northfield church

photo Birmingham City Council

Along the River Rea Heritage Trail there are other places of interest within easy reach.

Hawkesley Farm Moat

Hawkesley Farm Moat in Munslow Grove, Turves Green, is the site of a medieval moated manor house. (Leave the River Rea Heritage Trail route at Longbridge Station, continue along Longbridge Lane to the junction with Turves Green Road and turn left). There is an interpretation panel on site.

Northfield

Up Church Hill from the Trail is the old village centre of Northfield. St Laurence's church contains the oldest piece of architecture in Birmingham, a 12th-century doorway. Nearby are the village pond, the Great Stone Inn and a nailmakers workshop.

Kings Norton Green

As the trail enters Kings Norton Park the spire on the hill is that of St Nicolas, a fine medieval church. Within its churchyard is the Old Grammar School and nearby on The Green you will see the Saracen's Head. Both of these are 15th-century timber framed buildings. Kings Norton has many places to eat and drink.

Want to know more ?



This leaflet gives an overview of the River Rea Heritage Trail. For more information please contact the **Rea Valley Ranger Service** on: **(0121) 464 0411**

Please reduce the impact on the Environment by using public transport to get to the River Rea Heritage Trail.

To plan your journey by public transport call the **Centro** hotline on **(0121) 200 2700**

Cyclists please be considerate to other users and be prepared to dismount if the route is busy.

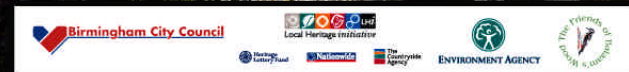
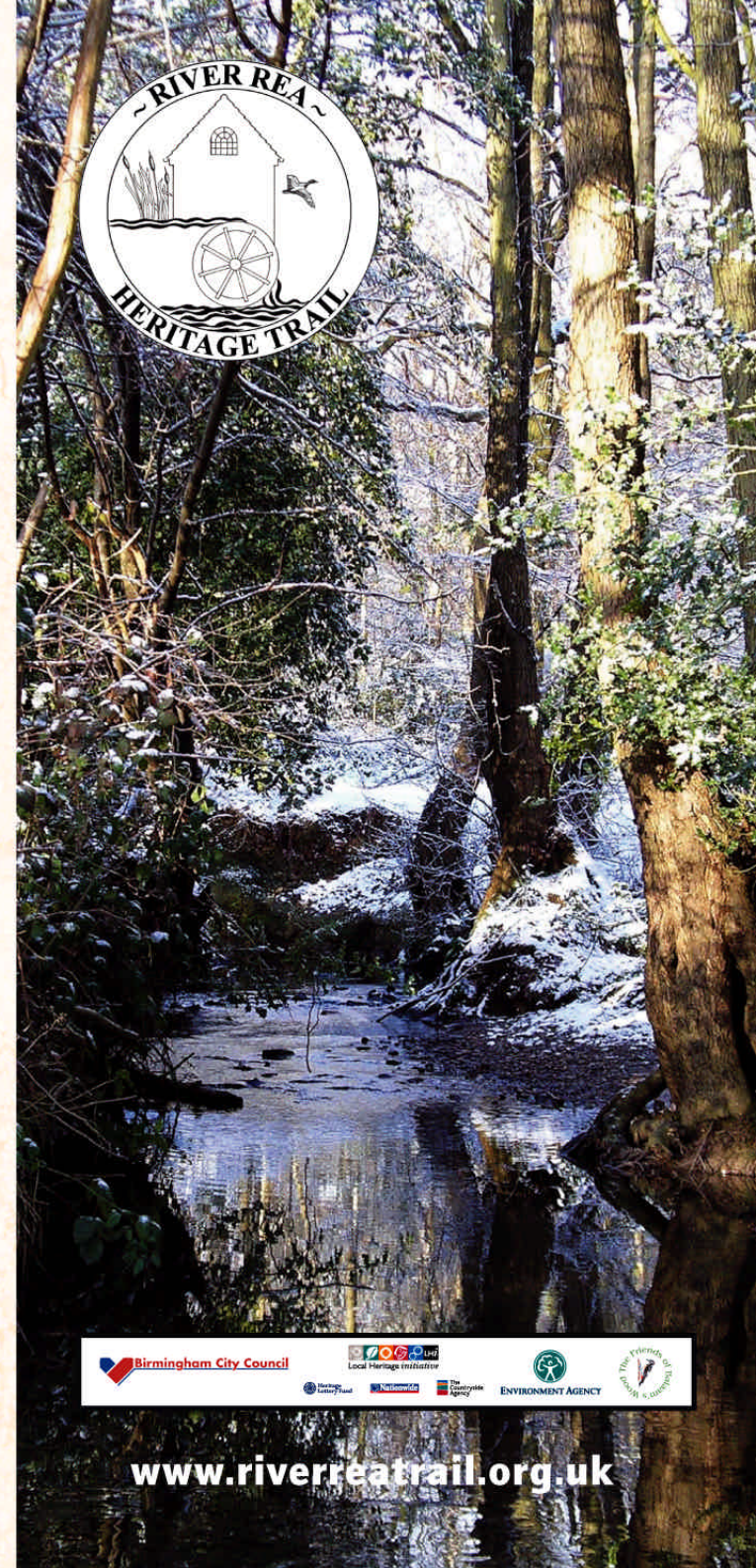
If you wish to report any of the features along the River Rea Heritage Trail that are of immediate concern, please contact the **Ranger Service Control** on **(0121) 454 7810**

Please call the **Environment Agency Pollution Hotline** if you have any concerns about the quality of water along the River Rea on: **0800 80 70 60**

Many thanks to all those whose logos are on the leaflet cover, plus the following for their support:

Worcestershire County Council
British Waterways
The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve
The Rea Valley Conservation Group
Rea Valley Residents (FLAG)
Harry Reeves
George Demidowicz

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www.riverreatrail.org.uk



photo Sue Cooper

The River Rea travels through the many diverse communities of south and south west Birmingham, communities that grew from the banks of this river. Numerous mills were dotted along this river, using its power as a tool for early industry.

The river corridor remains largely undeveloped leaving an almost unbroken open space over 7 miles long. This provides exceptional opportunities for recreation.

You may join the trail at any point between the source at the Waseley Hills Country Park and Cannon Hill Park. This leaflet and the information boards along the route will give you an insight into Birmingham's industrial and environmental heritage.

The **Rea Valley Cycle Route** also follows the River Rea, so be aware your route at times is shared with cyclists. In extremely wet conditions the Rea rises quickly, care should always be taken by the river especially with children.

Public refreshment and toilet facilities are located at the Waseley Hills Country Park and Cannon Hill Park, both served with excellent Visitor Centres.

Along its course the River Rea passes through many areas of open grassland, woodland and wetland, such as Balaam's Wood, Kings Norton Park and Wychall Reservoir.

The Rea is home to many species of flora and fauna, providing a "green corridor" from Birmingham City centre to the urban fringes. Along its banks you can find native tree species such as Willow, Oak and Alder, standing over ground flora such as Butterbur and Ragged Robin. While walking along the banks, the distinctive kingfisher can be regularly seen flying fast and low over the water. The Grey Wagtail may be seen perched on a midstream rock, and the characteristic "plop" sound of the water vole entering the water to flee from sight can be heard.

Other wildlife to look out for includes mammals such as, Muntjac deer, Fox, Bats, Badger, and Grey Squirrel. Frogs, Toads, and Smooth Newts all provide a tasty meal for Grass Snakes along the river. For the keen bird watcher in woodland areas you may see Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and Treecreepers.

Painted Lady

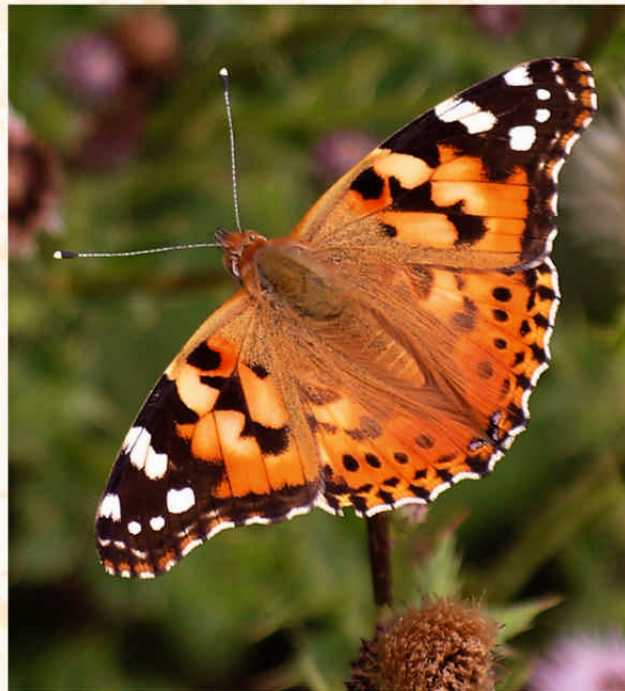


photo Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Stone wall around edge of moat, Gannow Green

The history of the Rea is not just about the river, it is also the story of the people whose lives have shaped the river and its surroundings over centuries.

The story begins in the Bronze Age, over 3000 years ago. Burnt mounds which have been found along the river's tributaries used the water for steam bathing.

The most prominent remains are those from the last 800 years. The water was used to surround the many medieval moated sites along the Rea. Amongst these was the manor house at Gannow Green. The water was also held back by dams to create fishponds.

Ancient woodlands that were once coppiced and ploughed land remained as ridge and furrow show how man worked the land along the river banks to provide life's essentials.

From the 13th Century the river was a source of power driving the waterwheels of the many mills that lined the Rea. The way the river was altered to feed these water-mills can still be seen today in the remains of mill pools, head and tail races.

The Rea encompasses recent history too, world famous factories such as Kalamazoo and the Austin Motor Company grew up alongside the river.

From its origins to the present day the city and its people have shared a fascinating history with the River Rea.



On Waseley Hills in Worcestershire a little river rises,
It isn't much to look at, but it's so full of surprises,
To many folk it's not well known, which seems to be a pity
For on its banks near Deritend began our Second City.

The river is of course THE REA which flows into Brum's heart,
Since Saxon times to present day its played a vital part.

" Ode To A Secret River" Harry Reeves



Kings Norton Junction

This is where the Stratford Upon Avon Canal meets with the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. Here you can find one of the last Guillotine Locks in the Midlands as well as the old swing bridge (Originally located down on the Kennet and Avon Canal). These may both soon be restored. The old Toll House in this picturesque setting is again a wonderful reminder of the tranquillity of a bygone age.



Wychall Reservoir

Wychall reservoir was built in the early 1800's by the Worcester Canal Company as a compensation reservoir. This was because of complaints by mill owners that the canals were taking water from the River Rea. Today it is a haven for wildlife, as you walk past you may see Teal, Mallard or Moorhens.

The River Rea is a Tributary of the River Tame, which it joins at Spaghetti Junction. It is land formed in the ice age, and the underlying rocks, Mercia mudstone and sandstone that influence its shape and course.

In its first mile it drops about 70 metres otherwise it is essentially a small river with a gentle slope. It is dynamic, which means it is always slowly changing its shape.

The Rea would once have meandered freely, riffles and small pools would have been prominent features. The river at Cannon Hill Park shows how man through industrialisation and urbanisation has altered this.

Rainfall brings the river to life, a small flow can become turbulent very quickly. Water from nearby hard surfaces joins the river and its banks occasionally burst, water spills out onto adjacent land called the floodplain.

The river is an important geographical feature in a city mostly known for its canals, providing a home for wildlife and pleasure for local people. The Rea is a constant and central part of Birmingham's past, present and future.

