

Local and Essex History March Quiz

Rivers and Canals

- 1 Which of these is not an Essex River-Blackwater, Colne, Crouch, Orwell and Roding?
- 2 Through which town do both the Chelmer and the Can flow?
- 3 Earls, Engaine, Wakes and White... Which river name links these villages?
- 4 The River Pant evolves into which larger River?
- 5 Which river runs through the grounds of Audley End?
- 6 Which river runs through Witham?
- 7 Name the river which meanders through eight villages bearing its name, before heading off towards London and discharging into the river Thames?
- 8 A navigable waterway linking Sudbury in Suffolk with Manningtree in Essex was officially authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1705. What was it called?
- 9 A similar waterway linking Chelmsford with the Blackwater Estuary was opened in 1797. What was that one called.
- 10 Who founded the Thames River Police?

Local and Essex History Quiz March 2026. Lee King

Essex Rivers and Canals

1 The Rivers Blackwater, Colne, Crouch and Roding are all Essex Rivers. The River Orwell is not an Essex River. It flows through Suffolk, from Ipswich to Felixstowe.

2 The Rivers Chelmer and Can flow through the city of **Chelmsford** in Essex, England. The Can flows from the west and joins the Chelmer near the city centre, after which the combined rivers flow eastward, eventually meeting the River Blackwater near the town of Maldon.

3 The River Colne links the villages Earls, Engaine, Wakes, and White—the location is not a single river, but rather the **Colne Valley villages in North Essex, England**. Specifically, these names refer to the historic manors along the River Colne: **Earls Colne**, **Colne Engaine**, **Wakes Colne**, and **White Colne**.

- **Earls Colne:** Known for its history as a Priory.
- **Colne Engaine:** Named after the Engaine family.
- **Wakes Colne:** Named after the Wake family, known for its railway museum.
- **White Colne:** Named for the white-washed buildings.

These villages are frequently grouped together due to their shared name, history, and geographical proximity along the river corridor

4 The river Pant rises near Swards End to the south east of Saffron Walden. It is a predominantly rural catchment and flows in a south easterly direction through Great Sampford and Finchingfield towards Braintree, where it becomes known as the river Blackwater.



5 The River Cam runs through the grounds of Audley End House and Gardens in Essex. The river flows from south to north through the parkland, which was landscaped by Capability Brown in the 18th century, and it is crossed by several ornamental bridges, including one designed by Robert Adam.

6 The river that runs through Witham is the **River Brain**.

- **Flow and Location:** The River Brain, a tributary of the River Blackwater, flows through the Essex town of Witham. It meanders through the town and passes through a 3.3km scenic route known as "River Walk," which connects Chipping Hill to the Whetmead Nature Reserve.

- **Confluence:** In Witham, specifically at the Whetmead Nature Reserve, the River Brain joins the River Blackwater.

.Other Names: North of Braintree, this same river is referred to as Pods Brook.

- **Other Features:** The town of Witham also features the "River Walk" path and has proximity to the River Blackwater and the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation.

7 The **River Roding** is a river that rises at [Molehill Green, Essex](#), England. It then flows south through Essex and London, forming [Barking Creek](#) as it reaches the [River Thames](#).

Course approx. 31 miles in length.

The river leaves Molehill Green and passes through the Rodings (or Roothings) are a group of eight villages and hamlets located in Essex, England, taking their name from the River Roding. They are renowned as the largest group of villages in the country to share a common name.

The eight Roding villages are:

1. **Abbess Roding**
2. **Aythorpe Roding**
3. **Beauchamp Roding** (pronounced "Beecham")
4. **Berners Roding**
5. **High Roding**
6. **Leaden Roding**
7. **Margaret Roding**
8. **White Roding**

Note on Morell Roding: A ninth, **Morell Roding**, was historically part of the group but was absorbed by White Roding and no longer exists as a distinct settlement.

8. Stour Navigational Act.

During the reign of Queen Anne in 1705, an act of Parliament was passed making the River Stower (Stour) navigable from Sudbury, Suffolk to Manningtree, Essex. This was one of the country's earliest statutory rights of navigation. Between 1705 and 1713, work was undertaken to enable passage

for barges, boats, lighters and other vessels. A public right of navigation remains today and is administered by the Environment Agency. However, many of the locks have disappeared and through navigation from Brundon Mill, upstream of Sudbury in Suffolk, to the sea at Brantham in Essex (a distance of approximately 25 miles) is only achievable to lighter craft such as canoes and kayaks.

9 The navigable waterway that opened in 1797 to link Chelmsford to the Blackwater estuary is the **Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation**. It is a 13.75-mile canalized navigation with 13 locks that runs from Springfield Basin in Chelmsford to the sea lock at Heybridge Basin.

Key details about the navigation:

- **Purpose:** It was designed to transport goods like coal, timber, and grain, connecting the inland town of Chelmsford to the coast, bypassing Maldon.
- **Construction:** The project was authorized by Parliament in 1793 and completed in 1797.

- **Engineer:** The project was overseen by engineer John Rennie.

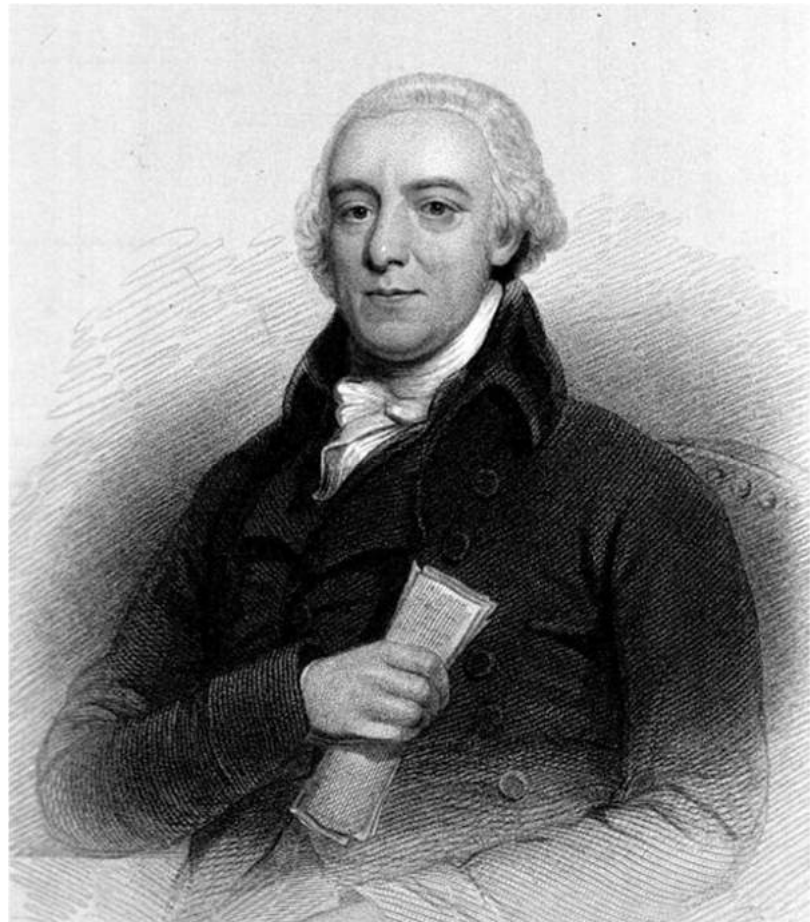
- **Route:** The navigation runs parallel to, and sometimes merges with, the natural river channel before ending at the tidal Heybridge Basin.

10. Patrick Colquhoun (14 March 1745 – 25 April 1820) was a Scottish merchant, statistician, magistrate, and founder of the first regular preventive police force in England, the Thames River Police. He also served as Lord Provost of Glasgow 1782 to 1784.

By the end of the eighteenth century, merchants from the British Empire's colonies were losing an estimated £500,000 worth of stolen cargo annually from the Pool of London on the River Thames. In 1796

Colquhoun's published *A treatise on*

the police of metropolis and two years later, in collaboration with Justice of the Peace and master mariner John Harriott and utilitarian philosopher Jeremy



Bentham, he wrote a letter to the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants proposing "the Establishment of a marine Police Office for the prevention of River Plunder". The West India Planters Committees and the West India Merchants agreed to fund a one-year trial and on 2 July 1798, after receiving government permission, the Thames River Police began operating with Colquhoun as Superintending Magistrate and Harriott the Resident Magistrate.

With an initial investment of £4,200, the new force began with about 50 men charged with policing 33,000 workers in the river trades, of whom Colquhoun claimed 11,000 were known criminals and "on the game". The river police received a hostile reception by riverfront workers not wishing to lose their supplementary income. A mob of 2000 attempted to burn down the police office with the police inside. The skirmish that followed resulted in the first line of duty death for the new force with the killing of Gabriel Franks.

Nevertheless, Colquhoun reported to his backers that his force was a success after its first year, and his men had "established their worth by saving £122,000 worth of cargo and by the rescuing of several lives". Word of this success spread quickly, and the government passed the Marine Police Bill on 28 July 1800, transforming it from a private to public police agency.

Lee King.

Rivers and Canals

1. Which of these is not an Essex River-Blackwater, Colne, Crouch, Orwell and Roding?

The River Orwell is primarily located in Suffolk, not Essex. It runs from Ipswich to Felixstowe, where it joins the River Stour to flow into the North Sea.

2. Through which town do both the Chelmer and the Can flow?

The River Can is a small river flowing through the centre of **Chelmsford**. It is a major tributary of the River Chelmer, joining it east of the city centre to flow toward the Blackwater Estuary. The River Chelmer is roughly 40 miles long, rising near Thaxted. It is a major component of the 13.75-mile Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, a scenic waterway popular for boating, walking, and fishing that was completed in 1797, featuring 12 locks.

3. Earls, Engaine, Wakes and White... Which river name links these villages?

The River Colne

4. The River Pant evolves into which larger River?

The River Pant is a rural river in Essex that rises near Saffron Walden and flows southeast through villages like Finchingfield before becoming the **River Blackwater** at Braintree.

5. Which river runs through the grounds of Audley End?

The River Cam (sometimes referred to as the Granta) flows south to north through the parkland of Audley End House, near Saffron Walden. It was famously landscaped in the 18th century by Capability Brown, who widened it to create a picturesque, lake-like appearance and added ornamental bridges.



6. Which river runs through Witham?

There is a nice waterside walk along **the River Brain** through Witham. The route runs for just under 2 miles on flat footpaths from Chipping Hill to the Whetmead Nature Reserve

7. Name the river which meanders through eight villages bearing its name, before heading off towards London and discharging into the river Thames?

The Rodings are a group of eight villages in the upper part of **the River Roding**, the largest group in the country to bear a common name.



Abbess Roding



Aythorpe Roding



Beauchamp Roding



Berners Roding



High Roding



Leaden Roding



Margaret Roding



White Roding

Apparently there was also a Morell Roding but the hamlet was absorbed by White Roding.

8 A navigable waterway linking Sudbury in Suffolk with Manningtree in Essex was officially authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1705. What was it called?

The River Stour forms the boundary between the counties of Suffolk and Essex, eventually flowing in the Stour estuary near Manningtree. In 1705, an act of parliament established its lower reaches as a commercial waterway to be known as **The Stour Navigation waterway**, between the town of Sudbury (half way along its length) and Cattawade, near Manningtree.

Since the decline of commercial activity early in the last century, most of the lock structures have disappeared and the majority of the river has reverted to a more natural environment. It has shallower water which is best appreciated in craft with a smaller draft and runs through Great Cornard, Henny Street, Bures (Bures Hamlet in Essex / Bures St Mary in Suffolk), Wormingford, Nayland, Horkesley, Boxted, Langham, Stratford St Mary, Dedham, and Flatford.

9. A similar waterway linking Chelmsford with the Blackwater Estuary was opened in 1797. What was that one called.

The Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation runs through a largely unspoilt part of rural Essex with a footpath along its full length. The waterway passes highlights such as the lock at Paper Mill and All Saints Church in Ulting, joining the sea at Heybridge.

The navigation is a very broad one and the pound locks (of which there are 11 and one sea lock) take vessels measuring 60 feet long, 16 feet of beam and only a two foot draught, making the Chelmer and Blackwater the shallowest navigation in the country.

The bridges and locks were designed by John Rennie, and except for Chapman's Bridge, Heybridge, they are all constructed of red bricks which were made from brickearth excavated at Hoe Mill and Sawpit Field, Boreham.

Essex Waterways Ltd took over the management of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in 2005, after the original Company of Proprietors of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Ltd went into Administration following financial difficulties in 2003



10. Who founded the Thames River Police?

The Thames River Police (originally the Marine Police Establishment) was founded in **1798** by magistrate Patrick Colquhoun and Mariner John Harriott. It was established to combat rampant theft on the River Thames and is recognized as the world's oldest continuously serving police force.

The Thames Police Office initiated by Harriott and Colquhoun was eventually absorbed into London's Metropolitan Police in 1839 and became known as Thames Division. For over two hundred years the division's launches and officers have been at the forefront in saving lives and protecting property on the Thames. Today, the River Thames and indeed all of London's waterways are policed by the Marine Police Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service. In order to effectively deal with the problems of policing London's River in the twenty first century, the tasks undertaken by today's officers must differ greatly from the work carried out by their eighteenth century predecessors. Today, fast patrol launches, some of them capable of more than forty knots have replaced the original rowing galleys and officers are more likely to be involved in "Counter Terrorism" patrols than in attempting to prevent river pirates looting the river's shipping.

There is a small museum located at Wapping police station, which for more than two centuries has been the headquarters of the River Police. The museum is housed in the old carpenters workshop and is administered by the Thames Police Association.



The Thames River Police in action in the early 1960's.

Mavis Regan

*Acknowledgements: Visit Essex, Stour Navigation/Anglian Waterways, Inland Waterways, Thames Police Museum
Wikipedia and Google AI!*

Local and Essex History March Quiz -Denise Phipps

Rivers and Canals

1. The River Orwell is the river that is not an Essex River.

The Orwell was named after George Orwell which is an estuary and a river in Suffolk. The river above Ipswich is known as the River Gipping but as the river reaches Stoke bridge the river changes its name to Orwell.

The Orwell is dredge once a year using a survey vessel, this boat contains a sensor which allows it to measure the depth of the water is flowing through the estuary. They try to maintain a dept of 5-6 meters when the tide is out so at high tide the river is maintained at 3-4 metres.

Info Wikipedia

2. The Chelmer and the Can flow through the city of Chelmsford.

The river Can was bridged in 1100 AD by the Bishop Maurice of London to restore a former Roman Road and the expansion of Chelmsford grow, the Can enters Chelmsford from the West and joins the Chelmer in the East

Info grokipedia.com

3. The villages Earls, Engaine, Wakes and the White are linked by the River Colne. These villages are collectively known as Colne Villages.

Earls Colne is a pretty village and was named after the Earl of Oxford.

Colne Engaine is larger than Earls Colne is approximately ten miles northwest of Colchester.

Wakes Colne is a tranquil village and is situated 8 miles west of Colchester. This village was named after Thomas Wake.

White Colne dates back to the Domesday Book of 1086. They have found evidence of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic settlement in the area.

This village was crowned Essex village of the year in 2025 and they were awarded a plaque and a framed certificate along with a cheque for the sum of £500.00 pounds.

Info Wikipedia

4. The River Pant is a rural river which flows near Saffron Walden southeast to Braintree where it becomes known as the River Blackwater.

The River Pant offers coarse and game fishing and has species of chub and wild brown trout common and mirror carp.

Info essexrivershub.org.uk

5. The locals refer to the river as the River Granta which runs through the grounds of Audley End but is also as The River Cam

Info greatbritishgardens.co.uk>essex>

6. The River Brain is a tributary of the River Blackwater and lent its name from the town of Braintree. The River Brain flows through Witham, this river has provided a variety of of different habitats like the Kingfisher, Damselfly, fish, flowers like the Southern Marsh Orchid.

Info essexriverhub.org.uk

7. The eight villages that the River Colne flows through before reaching the capital are London Colney, Colney Heath, Colney Street, Colnbrook, Earls Colne, Colne Engaine, Wakes Colne, White Colne.

Info Wikipedia

8. On the 16th February 1706 in the reign of Queen Anne an act of Parliament was passed on the River Stower (Stour) which means stirring or moving to make the river navigable between Sudbury to Manningtree, you would have been able to see barges boats and lighters moving along the river.

On September 12th 1968 the Stour Trust was formed to protect and restore and maintain the navigation of the river

Info riverstourtrust.org

9. On 3rd June 1797 the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation was formed and runs 13.75 miles from Springfield Basin in Chelmsford to the sea lock at Heybridge Basin it has thirteen locks and drops 75-77 feet over the course.

It was designed by John Rennie and managed by engineer Richard Coates, the purpose was to transport Coal, timber, grain.

The navigation was run by the Company of the proprietors of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Ltd which went into administration in 2003.

In November 2005 the Essex Waterways Ltd run the day-to-day operations as a subsidiary of the Inland Waterways Association.

Info ice.org.uk

10. In 1798 a magistrate known as Patrick Colquhoun and John Harriott a Master Mariner instrumental in demonstrating the volume of theft and loss of tax putting forward an argument for legislation to support a professional river police.

The Marine Police was established in Wapping for ships docked in the Port of London to stop the theft of cargo of sugar and rum as they were very valuable.

In 1800 an act was passed Depredation of the Thames Act by the Government which gave them funding and publicity and was renamed Thames River Police.

1839 the force then merged with the Metropolitan Police Service and became Thames Division and to present day operates as the Metropolitan River Police Marine Policing unit and is recognised as the world oldest continuously serving police force, they police 47 miles of the River Thames between Dartford and Hampton Court.

Info Thames police museum.org.uk

By Denise Phipps.

**1. Which of these is not an Essex River:
Blackwater, Colne, Crouch, Orwell and Roding?**

The **River Orwell** is in Suffolk. It starts between Harwich and Felixstowe. The River Stour defines the border between Essex and Suffolk going directly west and the Orwell goes from the same point northwest into Suffolk going through Ipswich.

Beyond Ipswich it morphs into the River Gipping (never heard of that!)

Our u3a cruised the Orwell in July 2022.



2. Through which town do both the Chelmer and the Can flow?

That would be **Chelmsford**, where the **Can** merges as a tributary to the Chelmer in the centre of town. The Chelmer then goes through to Maldon and becomes the Blackwater.

The river **Can** originates around High Easter. The source of the **Chelmer** is in the parish of Debden in north-west Essex.

3. **Earls, Engaine, Wakes and White...** **Which River name links these villages?**

The **River Colne**. The names of the villages reflects that – Earls Colne, Colne Engaine, Wakes Colne and White Colne. These are all situated to the north-west of Colchester between Colchester and Halsted.

Wakes Colne is the location of the East Anglian Railway Museum.

The River Colne runs from its origin near the village of Cornish Hall End (northeast of Steeple Bumpstead) through to flowing into the North Sea via a tidal estuary between Mersea Island and Brightlingsea/Colne Point.

There are also River Colnes in Hertfordshire and Yorkshire – quite separate from our Essex Colne.



The River Colne at Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve,
the first reserve purchased by the Essex Wildlife Trust in 1961.

4. The River Pant evolves into which larger River?

The River Pant originates in Northwest Essex, England, near the village of Swards End, just east of Saffron Walden.

It rises as a small stream, meandering south-easterly through rural landscape before becoming known as the **River Blackwater** at Bocking near Braintree.

The Blackwater also meanders through Essex passing by the Museum of Power. This used to pump water from the Blackwater into the Hanningfield Reservoir but that is now transferred to a more modern pumping station about ½ mile away.



River Pant at Finchingfield.
Also known as the Finchingfield Brook



The Blackwater in full flow
at the Museum of Power.

5. Which river runs through the grounds of Audley End?

Audley End House and gardens is a historic English Heritage property situated near Saffron Walden in north-west Essex. Well worth a visit if haven't been.



The **River CAM** passes through the Audley End grounds.

Its source is south of Debden in Essex, England, and is located in the hilly region to the south of Saffron Walden with several feeder streams.

It then journeys to CAMbridge and onwards until it feeds into the River Great Ouse, a little way short of Ely. The River Great Ouse continues through Ely to Kings Lynn and then feeds into The Wash.

6. Which river runs through Witham?

The **River Brain**.

It is a tributary of the River Blackwater and originates as Pods Brook near the village of Bardfield Saling in North Essex. It flows south through Braintree and continues to Witham, where it merges with the River Blackwater.

A settlement known as *Branchetreu* is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 and this evolved to be called Braintree. It is believed that the river Brain was named later on. So, The River Brain takes its name from Braintree rather than the other way round.

7. Name the river which meanders through eight villages bearing its name, before heading off towards London and discharging into the river Thames?

The **River Roding**.

'The Rodings' are a group of eight, historically nine, distinct villages in West Essex located near the upper reaches of the River Roding. They are famous for being the largest group of villages in England to share a common name, deriving from the Saxon "people of Hroda". The villages are:

- **Abbess Roding**: Named for the Abbess of Barking Abbey.
- **Aythorpe Roding**: Features a historic postmill, often considered the largest in Essex.
- **Beauchamp Roding**: Known for its isolated church.
- **Berners Roding**: A small, rural community with a quiet atmosphere.
- **High Roding**: Known for timber-framed houses and a traditional village setting.
- **Leaden Roding**: Often seen as a central hub among the villages.
- **Margaret Roding**: Features a church with an impressive Norman doorway.
- **White Roding**: Located near the A1060, formerly known for its windmill.
- **Morell Roding**: Historically a small settlement now largely absorbed by White Roding.

Most people's view of the River Roding is probably when going anti-clockwise on the M25 between Brentwood and the M11. Towards the end of that stretch the fields to the left are often flooded. When they are not flooded you can see the River Roding.

The river largely follows the M11 South and then the North Circular Road gaining size around the Barking area. Travellers from Benfleet may pass over the Roding on the A13 just before the North Circular Road junction.

The Roding joins the Thames at the Roding confluence. Travellers may well have seen the large concrete structure south of the A13. This is the Barking Creek barrier in the area known as Creekmouth, where the Roding flows into the Thames.

8. A navigable waterway linking Sudbury in Suffolk with Manningtree in Essex was officially authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1705. What was it called?

This is the **River Stour Navigation**.

The Act of Parliament 1705 authorised the improvement of the River Stour to ease barge traffic for transporting goods like coal, timber, and bricks.

It appears to be an improvement of navigability on the River Stour rather than a specifically built separate 'Navigation' or canal. The route passes through some interesting places including:

- Constable country/Flatford Mill e.g. the 'Haywain' where the building and general look of Constables painting are still evident.
- Dedham and Dedham Vale, where new electricity cables will be buried rather than use giant pylons (unlike our area!).
- Dedham Vale Dark Sky Discovery Centre is a Dark Sky Discovery Site, an officially recognised place where anyone can stargaze.
- Stratford St Mary and the excellent but expensive Talbooth Restaurant.



River Stour at Haywain crossing NOW.
Flatford Mill, Dedham



River Stour from the
Talbooth on Essex side!

9. A similar waterway linking Chelmsford with the Blackwater Estuary was opened in 1797. What was that one called?

The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation.

This canal links Chelmsford with the Blackwater estuary. It was opened on June 3, 1797, and is 13.8 miles long. It was needed to transport goods like coal, grain, and timber due to the tidal nature of the Blackwater and Chelmer rivers and the poor state of existing roads.

Engineered by John Rennie, with Richard Coates as the resident engineer and includes 13 locks (12 operating) and a sea lock at Heybridge Basin.

The 'navigation' runs from an area south-east of Chelmsford called Masons Cross at the confluence of the Blackwater and Chelmer rivers, which go off in different directions. It runs to the north of Maldon coming out onto the Blackwater estuary at Heybridge Basin.



Sea lock to Blackwater Estuary
at Heybridge Basin



Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation

10. Who founded the Thames River Police?

The Thames River Police (originally the Marine Police Institution) was founded in 1798 by magistrate **Patrick Colquhoun** and master mariner **John Harriott**. In 1800 it was renamed as Thames River Police.

Supported by the West India Committee, they established the force to combat rampant theft from ships in the Port of London.

It is considered the oldest continuously serving police force in the world.

It merged with the Metropolitan police in 1839 (under Sir Robert Peel). Its HQ was (and remains) in Wapping High Street on the North side of the Thames – since 2001 under the title of Marine Policing Unit. This also apparently incorporates a Thames River Police Museum.

Their area of responsibility covers from Hampton Court in the west to Dartford Creek in the east.

River Thames and Tower Bridge - Yesterday and Today:



Postcard of official opening of Tower Bridge 30 June 1894 by HRH Edward, Prince of Wales.



Tower Bridge and river scene NOW.