

# DODHAM BROOK

## WHAT IS DODHAM BROOK?

It is the longest watercourse that winds through the North Western and Southern areas of Yeovil and Dodham Brook has, through the last few hundred years been known under many names such as Hendford Stream and Frogg Mill Stream. Currently, the YRCT refer to the Western reaches of this stream as Preston Brook, as this ge-ographical location is the current focus of the Trust's activity.



In this map of 1898, the course of Dodham Brook is shown in blue.

Dodham Brook rises in the northern outskirts of Yeovil towards the top of Larkhill Road, flowing southwesterly alongside the footpath north of Guinevere Close then passing by Tintagel Road and Thorne Gardens. The brook is joined by a small stream heading south alongside Lawrence Way, the combined flow running parallel to Lawrence Way passing Brook Close before passing through a shallow culvert and emerging past the electrical sub-station to continue on between Abbots Way on the east side, and variously, Shelley Close and White Mead to the west.

Passing through the grounds of Preston Academy (where the YRCT hope to establish a SuDS) the brook then flows behind Stratford Lane/ Bartletts Place to Preston Road where it is culverted to emerge next to the Bell Public House car park adjacent to Bell Chase. (Maintenance work in this area is currently being undertaken by the YRCT)

It then meanders through Tithe Court before being culverted again under Water-combe Lane to then run alongside Century Park eastward past the Westland Confer-ence and Entertainment Centre it is then joined by a stream flowing southward from between Oaklands School and St Andrews Road.

The combined stream then flows on beside Cookson Path/Seaton Road to the South and Dodham Crescent to the North, when reaching West Street it is joined by another stream from the North which flows between Grove Avenue and Carisbrook Gardens. Now, containing significantly more water, the brook flows in a southeasterly direction, passing under Westland Road before running between the back gardens of Seaton Road and Beer Street.

At West Hendford the brook is again culverted, before passing behind the western side of Horsey Lane and under Lysander Way and Hendford Hill. (At this location, until the late nineteenth century, a bridge with toll gates across it known as Hendford Bridge carried Hendford over the brook). It continues flowing to the east, passing along the northern edge of Goldenstones leisure pool and the meadow to its east. At this point the water emanating from Ninesprings joins the brook which now begins to flow in a north-easterly direction before passing under Newton Road via a culvert. Shortly thereafter it joins the River Yeo.

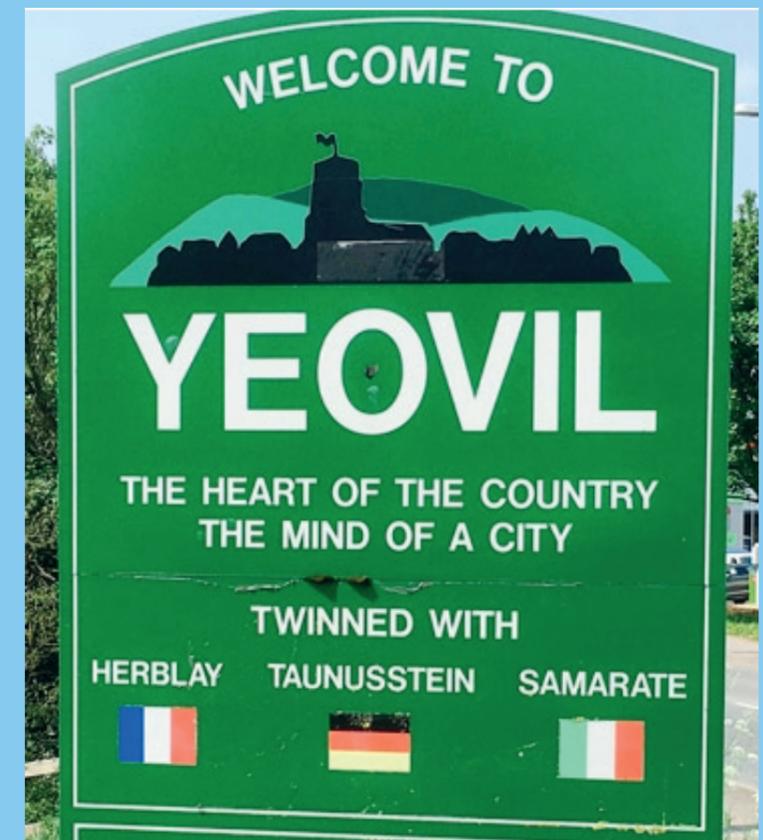
## THE HISTORY OF DODHAM BROOK

Dodham was an area of land at the bottom of Stars Lane, adjacent to Dodham Brook but on the southern slopes of Summerhouse Hill. Whether the brook took its name from the place or vice versa is not known. Plague outbreaks in the 16th century saw the development of 'Upper Doddam', an isolation hospital set up by the churchward-ens in 1587 "to house poor people visited with the plague".

Although a contemporary map of 1806 shows no buildings, the 1841 census lists Do-dham and suggests it was a small enclave of poor housing that was exclusively lived in by glovers and their families. This housing, known as Dodham Cottages, Dodham Row or Newton Buildings, was on the north bank of the brook, shown on a map of 1831 even though maps show Dodham as being on the steep south bank. Watts' map of Yeovil of 1806 showed Stars Lane running all the way from South Street to Dodham Brook. At this point a small footbridge, Dodham Bridge, crossed the brook allowing access to Summerhouse Hill.

By the time of the 1811 Ordnance Survey map, a new road had been constructed across the fields and ran from Newton Road to Dodham, called Dodham Lane and also known as Coach Lane. The northern part of Dodham Lane later became today's South Western Terrace. Although Bidder's map of 1843 does not show any buildings in the area south of the brook, there were glove factories to the immediate north of the brook in the area that is today the access road by Foundry House that leads to the Yeo Leisure Park car park.

Just to the south of Dodham Lane, was a bridge called Cake Bridge where Dodham Brook passed under Newton Road. In 1845, in the London Gazette, it was reported in the great railway debate that the proposed railway line into Yeovil would "termi-nate at or near Cake Bridge or Newton Bridge". When the Yeovil Town Station was built in 1860, Cake Bridge was demolished, Dodham Brook was diverted into a culvert under the road and the present Newton Road bridge was built for the railway. Today, no evidence of Cake Bridge exists.



At the same time most of Dodham Lane disappeared under the new Yeovil Town station - indeed the only part to survive was the section that became South Western Ter-race, named after the London and South West Railway Company. A right of way from Newton Road to Station Road was created and a new right of way was also created from Station Road to Stars Lane which later became Gas House Lane. Do-dham Bridge was demolished when the railway came and a new, longer pedestrian bridge, also called Dodham Bridge, was erected across the railway.

A letter was also read from Mr. H. S. Watts, of Hendford, complaining of the horrid stenches arising from the brook at the bottom of the hill, which had been converted into an open sewer. A general discussion on the defects of the present system of drainage followed. Mr. Alderman Raymond said his attention was called to the same brook a short time since, when the stench at the residence of Mr. Louis Bide was most abominable. Mr. Marden said the water was frequently so bad that he could scarce remain in his mill. Mr. Goodo thought it was a wonder how people could exist near the ditch. Mr. Hill said the matter was a most serious one, and deserved the most serious attention of the Council.

The above newspaper cutting from the Western Gazette's edition of 7 August 1868 refers to Dodham Brook close to the location of today's Goldenstones. Louis Bide lived in Brunswick House (by the entrance to the Goldenstones' car park).



Flooding was common in the 1960s when the River Yeo would swell and the extra volume of water would back-up Dodham Brook to cause flooding as seen in this photograph of the 1960s taken at the bottom of Stars Lane. The second Dodham Bridge is seen in the background. The problem of flooding was overcome by a flood allevia-tion scheme of the 1980s.

# DODHAM TODAY



By the Westland Conference Centre



Alongside Addlewell Lane



Bell Chase

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Yeovil Rivers Community Trust would like to thank Bob Osborn for his permission to use information from his excellent website the “A to Z of Yeovil’s History”