

## **The Country of the Magic River**

Mary Tourtel was a resident of the Canterbury area. She was also the creator of the Rupert Bear stories in the Daily Express. In some of her stories she referred to a Magic River. It is said she was describing the River Nailbourne, a chalk stream which flows through the Elham Valley and eventually joins the Little Stour. The River only flows after very wet winters. Hence it appears to disappear during dry periods. This is a short ride, using an orchard route, out to Patricbourne. There you can if you wish take a short diversion and visit Howletts Wildlife Park at Bekebourne. From there return to Patricbourne and follow the River Nailbourne through the village of Bridge to Bishopsbourne. On your return route to Canterbury you can if you wish visit Higham Park House and Garden, an English Palladian style country house once occupied by Count Zborowski the creator of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

1. From the station bear left and pass through a new housing estate bearing right all the time until you reach North Lane, cross and go straight ahead into the Causeway. Turn left into St. Radigunds Street, cross iver the Stour River passing the Millers arms on your right and continue following this road until it meets Northgate. Turn left, pass Broad Street, on your right and turn right into the next alleyway on your right. Follow this road as it twists and turns until you reach Military Road.
2. At staggered pedestrian crossings go straight ahead into North Holmes Road. and at T junction by the side of the local prison turn left and in a very short while turn right into Spring Lane signposted Cycle Route 16/17 towards Dover. By the Chaucer School turn right into Pilgrims Way. At the end of the housing estate the route enters a private road and Cycle Track 16. Follow this route carefully through the orchards. (Straight in at the crossroads, and just after passing under high tension electric power cable fork left and climb a short incline.)
3. In a while join a lane on a sharp bend and go straight ahead passing Hode Farm and its oasthouses. Descend a hill and beware there is a T junction at the bottom. In a very short distance there is a mini roundabout.
4. You can make a detour to Howletts Zoo Park; turn left at the roundabout, signposted Bekebourne and Littlebourne. Follow this road until you come to Howletts Zoo on your left.

(4.4 miles/ 7.3 kilometers)

5. Otherwise continue straight ahead and pass through the village of Patricbourne. The Ford on your left is the River Nailbourne. Leave Patricbourne and continue on to the village of Bridge. At T junction by the side of the Red Lion Public House, turn left and very shortly afterwards turn right into a parkland road.

(6.5 miles/ 11 kilometers)

6. Ride through Bourne Park and see the Nailbourne, if it is flowing in the fields on your right. At T junction turn right and descend short slope into village of Bishopsbourne. By Church turn left, see Blacksmiths Shop on your left, if open and Mermaid Inn on your right. Continue to end of village and go on straight ahead into narrow road signposted to the cricket ground. There are one or two spots on this road where you can have a picnic.

(7.5 miles/ 12.5 kilometers)

7. After visiting Bishopsbourne return to Church and turn right signposted Bridge and Canterbury. If your ride is on a Sunday to Thursday Higham Park House and Garden is open.
8. If you wish to visit it, climb to the top of hill and turn left and left again, following signs to Bridge. DO NOT GO UP SLIP ROAD TO A2. Continue along the road and at brow of hill turn right into Private Drive to Higham House. The property has lain derelict for several years and the new owners are restoring it back to its former glory. After visiting the house continue along road towards Bridge and descend into village. At Red Lion Public House turn right signposted Patrixbourne and Cycle rote 17.
9. If you do not wish to visit the House and Gardens, turn right by Bishopsbourne Church signposted Bridge and Canterbury and just as you start to climb hill turn left into unsigned lane and follow outward journey back to the Red Lion Public House in Bridge, turn right signposted Patrixbourne and Cycle rote 17.
10. At mini roundabout at the end of Patrixbourne village veer left and almost immediately fork right into Hode land and up the hill to Hode Farm. On left hand bend go straight ahead into private road through orchards. Enter Canterbury through a housing estate, Pilgrims Way. Bear right over railway bridge where road becomes Pilgrims Road. By Chaucer School turn left into Spring Lane. At T junction turn left into St. Martins Hill and almost immediately right into special Cycle lane in North Homes Road.
11. Follow special track along North Homes Road and continue straight ahead into Cycle path. At junction with busy Military Road cross road to central island, turn left and cross again. Enter alleyway and follow to Northgate.
12. At junction with road turn left and take the second turning on the right into St. Radigunds Street. Pass Millers Arms, pass over river bridge and turn right into the Causeway. At next junction go straight ahead into Station Road West and follow track through new housing estate veering left all the time until you come to Canterbury West Railway Station.

(12.5 miles/ 21 kilometers)