

NRA Thames 165

*Fact File*

# RIVER MIMRAM



**GUARDIANS OF THE WATER ENVIRONMENT**



**NRA**

*National Rivers Authority  
Thames Region*

# Fact File - RIVER MIMRAM

## FACTS IN BRIEF

- The River Mimram is a chalk stream rising near Kings Walden, Hertfordshire although a dry valley extends further north west towards Luton.
- The perennial source is at Whitwell watercress beds and the river flows in a south easterly direction to join the River Lee in Hertford, 1km west of Hertford Castle.
- From its source to its confluence with the Lee it is about 23km long.
- The fall in the river between Kings Walden and its confluence with the Lee is approximately 60m.
- The average rainfall in the Mimram catchment is 650mm.
- The Mimram catchment covers an area of 145 square km.
- The average flow in the Mimram is 11,500 cubic metres per day.
- Grazing of one sort or another has always been a major factor in the management of most of Hertfordshire's habitats. The nature of the grazing pasture depends on how it was first produced and also on the kind of soil it grows on. There is no natural grassland in Hertfordshire and any rough grazings are generally produced by long-term grazing of original woodland coupled with felling. The reclamation of river valley marshland and natural swamp into its present state of damp grassland is another process, partly carried out by felling and grazing, and also by mowing, drainage, sedge cutting and other activities.
- The rich meadows near Tewin by the Mimram are derived from long-term grazing, usually by cattle, or mowing coupled with periodic flooding and subsequent enrichment of the turf with silt.
- Historically the Mimram valley was famous for being used by Jean-François Gravelet to practise a stunt he was planning to undertake in America. The 35-year-old Frenchman won world fame when he carried out his plan successfully, walking a tightrope across Niagara Falls blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying a man on his back, under the stage name Charles Blondin.

## THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

Established on 1st September 1989, the NRA is an independent public body charged with safeguarding and improving the natural water environment. It is responsible for flood defence, regulating the quality of rivers and groundwaters, balancing the needs of various water users, protecting and improving fish stocks and promoting water-based recreation of all kinds. The NRA is committed to improving wildlife habitats and conserving the natural environment in all its undertakes.

## WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES

From	To	Length Km	Objective
<b>MIMRAM</b>			
Source	Digswell	15.9	1A - Good
Digswell	Lee	7.1	1B - Good

## PLANNING LIAISON

The NRA works with local planning authorities to protect the Mimram catchment from undesirable development.

## TRIBUTARIES

The Cole Green Tributary rises to the east of Welwyn Garden City and flows east before joining the Mimram just to the south west of Hertford.

## WATER QUALITY

The Mimram is one of the most natural rivers in Hertfordshire being least affected by abstraction and discharges. It is fed by chalk springs and flows mostly through agricultural areas. Consequently the quality is very good from its source to the confluence with the River Lee at Hertford. The high quality of the water means it is capable of supporting numerous fish and a trout farm near Welwyn Garden City.

There are four regularly sampled monitoring points on the Mimram.



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## BIOLOGY

In addition to chemical sampling, the rivers are regularly sampled by biologists from the NRA. This sampling shows that this river is of a very high biological quality. A diverse population of invertebrate fauna is found throughout, including many species of pollution-sensitive mayfly and caddis fly larvae. Particularly important are finds of crayfish and stoneflies in the upper reaches of the river.

## FISH IN THE MIMRAM

The upper reaches of the Mimram support mainly minor species such as bullhead, stone loach, minnow, stickleback and gudgeon. As the river progresses, the number of trout increase and on the river near Welwyn Garden City there is a trout farm.

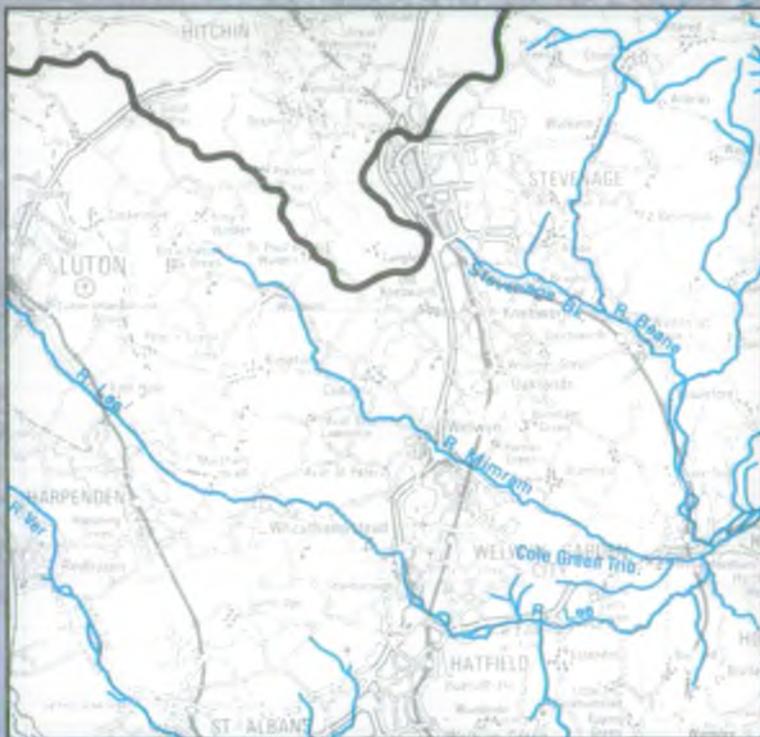
At the confluence with the Lee at Hertford, the population is dominated by cyprinid species such as roach, perch, pike and carp. The occasional barbel and chub have been captured.

For further information on fish in the River Mimram contact Fisheries, NRA Thames Region, Aspen House, Crossbrook Street, Waltham Cross, Herts. EN8 8HE.

## DISCHARGES

The following are the major discharges into the Mimram. The figures given are the maximum amount permitted to be discharged.

Discharge	Cubic Metres per Day	Type of Effluent
Whitwell STW	114	Sewage effluent
Kimpton STW	913.5	Sewage effluent
Tewin Mill Fish Farm	1420	Fish Farm effluent
Welwyn Garden City, rainfall dependent, Urban run-off (includes some industrial cooling water)		



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## WATER RESOURCES

The River Mimram derives its flow from springs and seepages rising from the chalk hills of Hertfordshire. More than half of the rainfall is lost through evaporation and the growth of plants. The remainder provides the resources of water which in this catchment amounts to 74 Ml/d (million litres per day) on average. This water must be shared between the flow of the river to support the natural environment and the community's need for water supplies to homes, industry and agriculture.

In order to ensure that there is sufficient information on river flows, the NRA carries out regular measurements and has a number of fixed gauging stations. The flow of the Mimram is measured at two such sites, at Whitwell and at Panshanger Park between Welwyn and Hertford.

## ABSTRACTIONS

Water can only be abstracted from rivers or groundwater under licence granted by the NRA. In the Mimram catchment groundwater is the main source of supply and the total amount licensed to be abstracted is about 34 Ml/d. Most of this is pumped by the local water supply company to meet the demand for mains water.

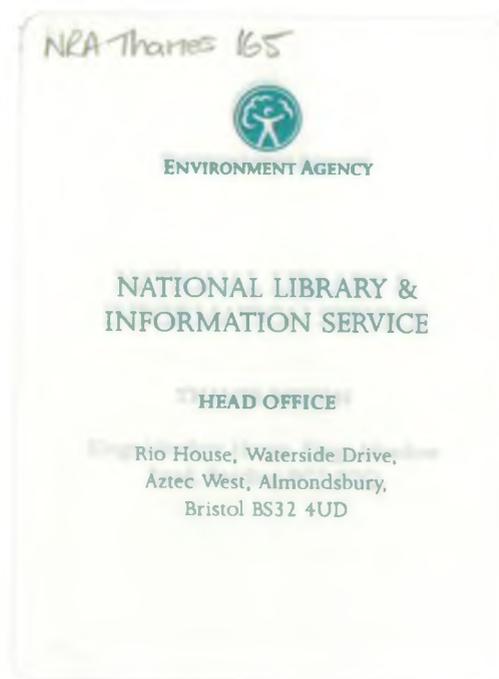
All abstraction licences specify the maximum amount of water which may be taken and they are regularly checked by the NRA's Licence Inspectors.

## FLOOD DEFENCE

Reducing the risk of flooding from the Mimram on a day-to-day basis forms part of the NRA Thames Region's work. The NRA's flood control room at Waltham Cross keeps a round the clock check on weather conditions and river levels. Staff interpret the information and give the local emergency services early warning of possible floods.

A flood defence team is based at Ware to carry out regular river maintenance work. This includes dredging, weedcutting, and removal of blockages. This team is mobilized during flood emergencies to keep rivers clear of obstructions so that flood waters can be conveyed away as quickly as possible. They also provide assistance to environmental quality staff in cleaning up after pollution incidents.

The NRA is committed to protecting and improving the natural river environment and wherever possible our flood defence work includes features of environmental conservation and enhancement.



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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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