by Derek Morrison



The old Severn Crossing

I’m the bridge of two rivers
The Severn and Wye
I’m seen from a distance
My two towers in the sky.
I’m the bridge of two countries
England and Wales
Offering a gateway
To many new trails.
I’m the bridge of two pathways

For feet and pedaled wheel
Most know only of one
From England right they peel.



Old Severn Bridge, cycle and walkway

I’m the bridge with two views
Not enjoyed from the M48
But you who can stop
Please do contemplate.



Animated panorama from the Old Severn Bridge viewed down the estuary towards the new Severn Crossing, Severn Beach, and Avonmouth.



A moment of reflection on the old Severn Crossing viewed up the estuary towards Berkeley. The decommissioned Oldbury Nuclear Power Station is visible in the distance.

I’m the bridge of bygone fission
Easily visible as you ride
Oldbury Nuclear Station
Lying just beneath one side.



Oldbury Nuclear Power Station (decommissioned 2012)

I’m the bridge of destinations
For pedalers to explore
Chepstow as a first stop
Right through Wales’ door.
I’m the bridge to border country
Wales and England you can weave
A glorious descent of Wye Valley
Comes before Brockweir heave.



Descending the Wye Valley on the A466 towards Tintern.



Tintern Abbey



Brockweir Bridge crossing from Wales to England near Tintern



Brockweir Village Shop & Cafe at about a third of the way up a steep long hill



Old Wye Bridge, Chepstow Attribution: Andy Dolman [CC-BY-SA 2.0]

I’m the bridge of many moods
I can be sunny, calm and serene
But given my position
My fogs and winds are mean.
I’m the bridge with two gates
One in England, one in Wales
Don’t get trapped on the ‘wrong’ side
Because they can be shut in gales.



Old Severn Crossing automatic gate

I’m the bridge with listed status
Whose cables were feeling pain
So now my younger sibling
Relieves me of some strain.
I’m the bridge of two bridges
The Severn and the Wye
But most think we’re one
So invisible is our tie.



An animated panorama viewed from the Old Severn Bridge up the estuary towards the decommissioned Oldbury nuclear power station.

[To listen to this verse select below]

http://www.cyberstanza.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/TheBridge_v2.mp3

Commentary

I'm always impressed by feats of structural engineering but what I've always known as the 'old' Severn Bridge (opened 1966) is particularly important to anyone cycling in my part of the country. That's because its cycle/pedestrian pathways offer a spectacular and easily accessible gateway to destinations in Wales. As my final verse points out, however, it is not

actually one bridge at all but two connected entities, but with differing structures, i.e. the Severn Bridge and the Wye Bridge. The differing geometries are plain to see if one lifts one's eyes from either the carriageway or the views to the side.

And yes, the pedestrian/cycle gates will be closed in high winds so keeping an eye on the weather forecast is perhaps wise; although I would question the sanity of anyone out in winds high enough to close the crossing.

There are actually two lanes over the bridges but most people stick to the river side rather than the Bristol Channel side – mainly I suspect because access to the former is easier and more visible.

The 'new' Severn Bridge opened in 1996 and now carries the M4 – the original M4 section over the 'old' bridge was renamed the M48.

Oldbury Nuclear Power Station may well have been decommissioned in 2012 but the site is still identified as a possible location for a new future reactor.

Feats of modern engineering both 'old' and 'new' bridges may well be but, if undertaking an England/Wales borders ride, for contrast, it's also worth returning back to Chepstow via the Old Wye Bridge; it's situated on the immediate outskirts of said town and opened in 1816.