

Along the Cotswold Canal
Recording of the poem 'Time Passed'
by Jenny Bircher,
read by Aeryn Morgan.

Poem:	Time Passed
	Note: this is an edited version of the original poem by Jenny Bircher.
Narrator	<p>Time Passed</p> <p>Time passed A millennia ago, I was formed as water when the great ice flows carved a valley between the towering hills My waters meander, join and divide as I tumble to the waiting sea.</p> <p>Time passed And then great stone mills With long stone fingers pointing to the sky, Grew along my banksu Using my waters to turn their solid wooden wheels. The hungry mills needed more and more fuel to fire their mighty bellies But my uncertain path could not provide the still waters to carry their heavy boats.</p> <p>Time passed And men from across the sea Came and began to dig a great, straight channel by my side Their picks and shovels ringing as they toiled along my banks. The channel could not climb the hill So they carved great steps into the valley side as it rose uphill.</p> <p>Time passed And long, narrow boats, pulled by tired horses, Trudged along the towing path Between me and my new companion. My watery friend could not dance and run like me But only slowly glide from lock to lock Waiting for the boats. Life was hard for the men, women and children who lived in small places on the laden boats.</p> <p>Time passed New smells and sounds raged through my golden valley Dirty steam and smoke belched through the air And the clank of metal wheels and iron rails echoed through the hills Racing faster than my companion Faster even than me. Things changed slowly Fewer boats were dragged by the horses Along the black ribbon path, between myself and the channel</p>

The lock gates began to rot
And nature claimed its way
As the reeds and brambles grew in profusion.

Time passed
No-one used my friend any more
Only children played along the silted banks
And men angled for scarce fish in the diminishing water.
People with no thought allowed factories and garages to be built
Over the dry water bed
and the Nutshell bridges slowly started to crumble.

Time passes and there is now a new feeling along our towpath!
Slowly, just here and there,
A lock gate, a refurbished bridge
Or a stretch of water, cleaned and renewed.
Perhaps one day boats will carry people
To visit our golden valley
To see the great stone mills and kingfishers
As they dart along our leafy banks.