

## **Turner's British Bridges**

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Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) was one of Britain's most famous landscape painters, beginning his career as an architectural draughtsman. His 1794 painting of the old Welsh Bridge in Shrewsbury, made when he was 19, is a magnificent record of a fascinating structure that was to be demolished only a year later. For the next half century his paintings of bridges provide a contemporary record of an essential part of the country's infrastructure, but also illustrate Turner's development as an artist, and the way he dealt with the effect of light on colouring. He was immensely prolific, producing over 500 oil paintings, 2000 watercolours and 30,000 sketches, drawings etc.

This paper will cover a selection of about 100 of Turner's finished paintings, in both oil and watercolour, of bridges in England, Scotland and Wales. It will not include any of his pencil sketches nor any of the several dozen bridge paintings he made in continental Europe. A number of small bridges, such as towpath bridges and footbridges, which only make a minor appearance in a corner of a picture and about which almost nothing is known, will also be excluded.

The paper will therefore have about 80 separate bridge entries, covering all the main pictures by Turner of British bridges. Each entry will give an outline summary of the history and structure of that bridge and will be illustrated by images of Turner's painting(s) of the bridge with a brief description of each painting's salient points.

Appendixes will give full details of the pictures (title, date, medium, size and location) and link the pictures to the geographic locations of the bridges. Thus it will be possible to start with a picture title and find the corresponding bridge, or start with a geographic location and find the relevant Turner picture(s).

Theme: Poetics of the Bridge