

Rivers called *Nido*, Nith, Nidd, etc

The place name [Nido](#), on *iter* 12 of the Antonine Itinerary, has long been identified with the river Neath, near Swansea in south Wales. Most likely it was not the Roman fort in the town of Neath but the marching camp on a hill overlooking the river upstream a bit, where it meanders across a valley floor around Clyne above Aberdulais, which is subject to a slight [flood](#) warning and where the river Dulais flows in.

[Novitia](#) of the Ravenna Cosmography and/or Ptolemy's [Noouluu](#) are generally suggested to be the river [Nith](#) in SW Scotland. Formed by confluence of Cluden Water with the upper Nith, it meanders through Dumfries and exits into Solway Firth through a long estuary fringed by lots of marshes.

The river [Nidd](#) in Yorkshire meanders wildly across flat ground into the river Ouse, west of York, near the famous battlefield of Marston Moor.

The river [Neet](#) (formerly Neth) or Strat in Cornwall is formed by a confluence at Stratton village, in a valley that is vulnerable to [flooding](#).

The Venerable Bede mentioned *Niduari* people, location unknown, but probably in the east.

The [Nied](#) river in Lorraine, France, and Saarland, Germany, is a left tributary of the Saar, formed from two streams, *Nied allemande* and *Nied française*, which join at [Condé-Northen](#), which has a history of [flooding](#).

The [Nèthe](#) or Nete forms by confluence at [Lier](#)/Lierre in N Belgium. Flood-vulnerable but hydrology messed up by canals.

[Neda](#) in Galicia (NW Spain) is a village where the Rio Belel debouches across a small delta into the gulf of Ferrol, with a record of [flooding](#).

The [Néda](#) river in Greece is said to be named from the nymph [Neda](#), but Google Maps shows it as meandering wildly across a lake bed that shows as dry.

The [Nyda](#) river in Yamal-Nenets autonomous region of northern Russia forms by fusion of the rivers Left Nyda and Right Nyda.

The [Nida](#) in Poland formed from two smaller rivers, White Nida & Black Nida, which merge in the village of Brzegi (near Checiny). Its valley bottom is flat and wet, with peat, oxbow lakes, meadows and pastures.

The [Nethe](#) river in Germany flows into Weser at Boffzen, flood vulnerable.

The [Nidda](#) river flows through the Roman town [Nida](#) NW of Frankfurt am Main; lots of [flooding](#)

The [Nidder](#) is a tributary of the Nidda.

The common feature of all these rivers (at the presumptive point where they were named) is to be low down and swampy. Most but not all form from several rivers descending from higher ground; meander; and have recognized flood danger. The obvious linguistic parallel is German *nieder* 'low', whose many cognates include English nether, but it has no recognized cognates outside the Germanic languages, unless one invokes Sanskrit words such as *nidhi* 'treasure (often buried or low down)'. Maybe the Neath in Wales was named by Germanic Roman soldiers and Nith in Scotland by English or Norse incomers.

Clearly wrong, but widely repeated, is Ekwall's (1928) view that "It can hardly be doubted that the common river-name stem *Nid-* is Celtic ... Very likely we may derive the name from the root *nei-* 'to be brilliant' Related to Latin *niteo* and Irish [níam](#)". Possibly related are Greek [νίζω](#) 'to wash', English neat, French *nettoyer* 'to clean', and others mentioned by [Diefenbach](#) (1851:104). Germanic [nix](#) (water sprite), Irish [nigid](#) 'washes', and Sanskrit [nenekti](#) 'to wash clean' are said to derive from [*neiqw-](#) 'to wash', whereas Naiads were water nymphs, said to derive from [yau](#) 'to flow'.

Pokorny's PIE root **neid-* 'to flow, to stream' (on p761), is unhelpful, amounting only to a list of river names. And the idea that nest is etymologically a sit-down place is debatable, too.

Best guess: *Nieder* and the river names may have an Indo-European root that has not yet been recognized, or they may come from a Uralic language.

Last edited by Anthony Durham 2 September 2024. A discussion document, made available on www.romaneranames.uk to invite comments and suggestions for improvement.