

At the source of the River Dender

Erbaut is crossed by several streams: from the direction of Herchies, there is the Ruisseau des Richards, the Eastern Dender (referred to locally as the Petite Dendre) and the Ruisseau du Prés à Camps, while from the direction of Jurbise, there is the Ruisseau du Jurbise, also known as the Anguillette. Together, they form the sources of the Eastern Dender.

These tributaries once powered mills in Erbaut, in the area between Erbaut and Herchies, and in Jurbise. There are many ponds dotted along their banks.

Erbaut also has seven water collection points for distribution. Three are located along the Avenue du Château and four can be found near the centre of the village. There is also a well located on the edge of the town of Lens.

In total, over two million cubic metres of water is collected in Erbaut and almost one and a half million between Erbaut and Lens. Water is drawn from depths ranging from 20 to 31 metres. It is used to supply the neighbouring towns, as well as Ath and Enghien.

Watercress Farming

Watercress farming in Erbaut is a family affair, and there is one family in particular on the scene: the Lievens. The first of them, Bernard, came from Flanders and settled in Erbaut in 1927.

Taking advantage of the quality of the water from the River Dender's tributaries, he created farming ponds. Since then, four generations have successfully run the business, which is still operational today. Members of the Maréchal family from Erbaut have also worked as watercress farmers, joining forces with the Lievens.



Harvesting watercress, circa 1939 (Photo: Dominique Cogels)

What is a river? Let's look at the water network

Like forests, rivers are a complex and diverse habitat. They are a living environment in constant evolution. Rivers and streams are home to a wide variety of animals and plants, from the smallest to the largest! From fish to frogs, birds to weeds, insects to irises and alder, these habitats allow a multitude of living beings to reproduce, eat, drink, grow and quite simply to live!

Rivers shape our landscape, carving out valleys and crossing villages. The source of the Eastern Dender is found near Erbaut and passes through Lens before joining the Western Dender in Ath. Together, they form a single river: the Dender. It then joins the River Scheldt in Dendermonde (Flanders). The three Denders and their multiple tributaries form the Dender watershed.



The Dender watershed (Source: Contrat Rivière Dendre)