

THE BRIDGES OF WIVETON

By John Wright

With an origin going back well into the 1300s the present bridge is almost the oldest building in Wiveton – as well as being one of the oldest bridges in Norfolk - and some account of its history is long overdue. It is not just the structure that deserves comment, for the bridge provides a constant element in the changing landscape of the Glaven valley and therefore helps in the interpretation of documentary and other evidence. Moreover, there used to be another bridge on the other side of the valley, over a separate arm of the Glaven, until it was demolished in the 1700s. This article therefore has three parts: the present bridge, the nature of the valley in which it sits, and then the history of the two bridges up till the time of the Enclosure which finally excluded tidal water from the Glaven valley. It should be noted that the article is based largely on documents in the Norfolk Record Office: little fieldwork has yet been carried out.

THE PRESENT BRIDGE

Wiveton Bridge spans the River Glaven and carries a minor road from Wiveton across to the eastern side of the valley where it continues uphill as Bridgefoot Lane (Fig.1). The bridge dates from the medieval period and has been designated an Ancient Monument.

The structure

The bridge consists of a single stone arch formed by five parallel ribs, with an infilling between them of red brick, partly rendered, which appears to be of late medieval date. Above this arch rise the parapets, the division marked by a moulded string course which also divides two different types of stone. The width of the bridge at the crown is 13 ft 9 in (11ft 9 in between the parapets). At this point the parapets stand some 7 ft above the top of the arch and 3 ft 6 in above the surface of the roadway. The span of the arch is about 32 ft.

The ends of the bridge splay outwards at each corner. The ends of these splays were originally marked by moulded stone shafts, of which only two now survive. One is on the north-east corner where the splay wall consists of stone blocks at the base, set on the river bank. Above this are courses of early post-medieval brick, then more recent brick topped by a course of blue engineering bricks. The south-east corner is of similar build but the moulded shaft has been replaced by a buttress of flint and brick, probably during the nineteenth century. The retaining wall of the road bank here contains many reused fragments of limestone and early brick. The north-west corner abutment is again formed of stone blocks, but the brickwork above is all of eighteenth and nineteenth century date; this brickwork also replaces the stone shaft at the corner.

The south-west abutment is quite unlike the others. The moulded shaft survives at the corner of the splay wall, but beyond this is a brick recess bridged over by two stone arches, one inside the other, and a third arch of later brick, topped again by engineering bricks. The south

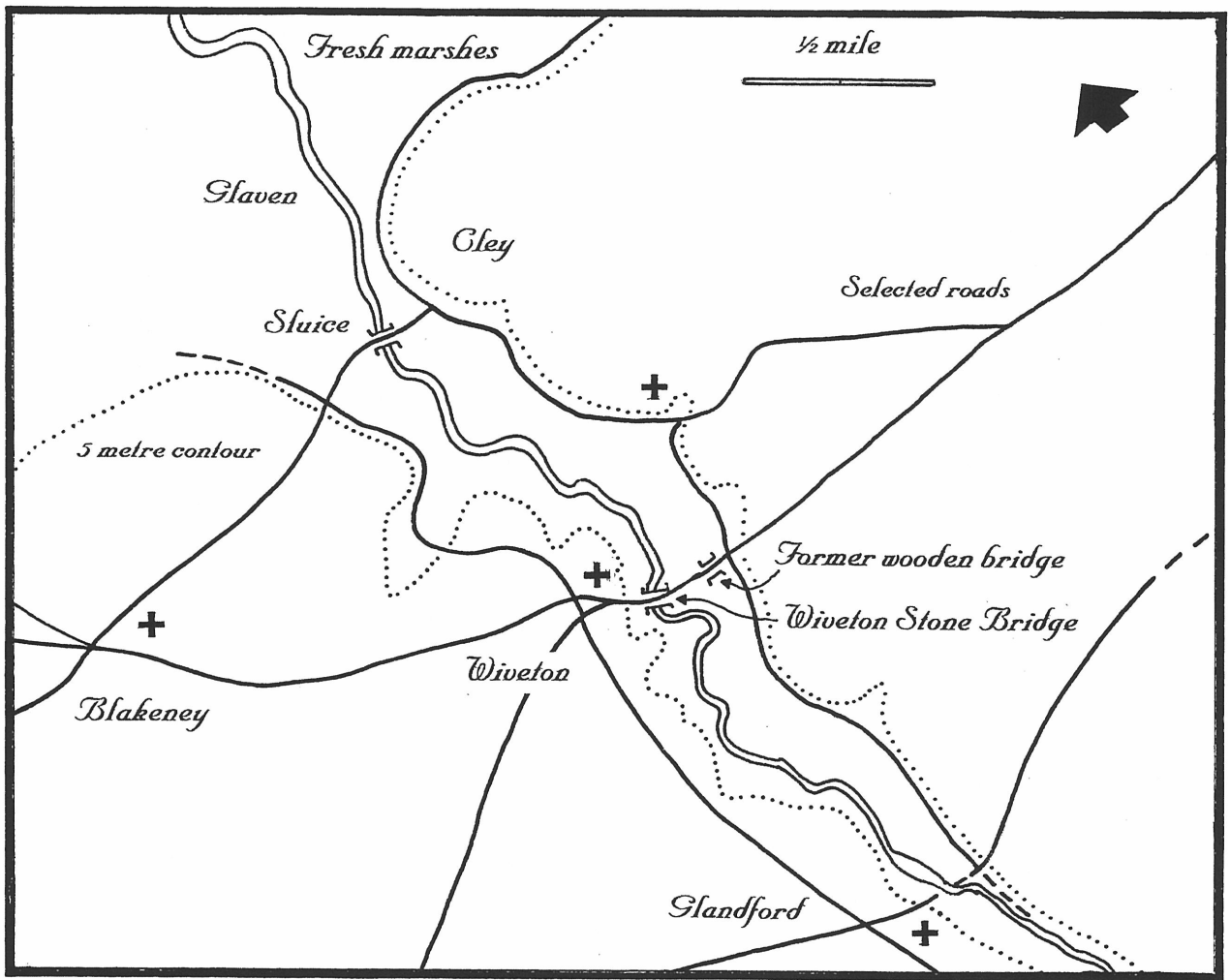


Fig. 1 Location of the Wiveton bridges



Wiveton Bridge and the Church

side of the recess is formed by a 'bastion' in late medieval brickwork, against which the river washes.

A little is known about the interior of the bridge from an examination carried out in 1994 to determine the condition of the structure. A hole was dug into the south side of the crown of the roadway. This revealed 7 cm of tarmac above 14 cm of rammed crushed chalk and flints. Below this was a 14 cm layer of soft brown sand over a second layer of rammed chalk and large flints 28 cm thick. At the base of this were medieval bricks covering both the arch ribs and the brick infill. A bore through this material gave a thickness of 47 cm (and therefore a total thickness of just over 1 metre).

A tie rod, struck by the first attempt at a bore, passes through the crown of the bridge. It is believed locally that there are also cannons (like those still to be seen in Wiveton and Cley) within the structure of the bridge, but there does not appear to be any documentary or photographic evidence for this. An assessment of the carrying capacity of bridges countywide ('Bridge Guard') during the period 1967-9 does not appear to have included Wiveton. Initial enquiries have also failed to produce any detailed plans of the bridge.

Current Interpretation

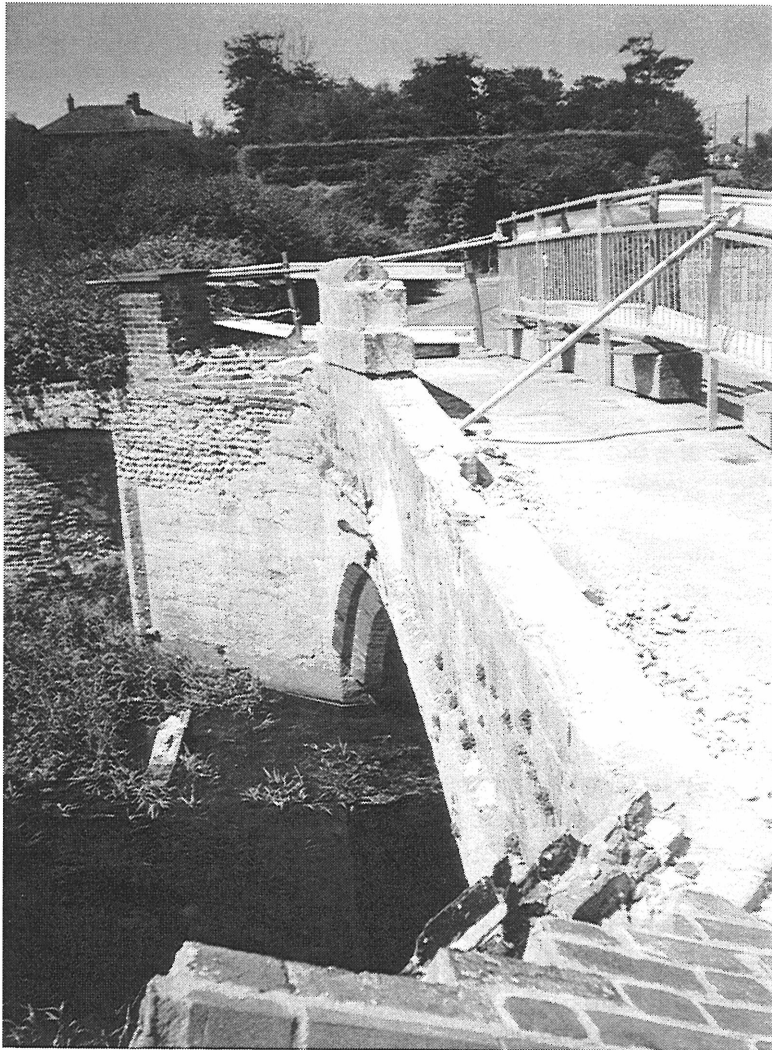
The description above is taken largely from an assessment held in the County Council's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The same note records that the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission believed the bridge abutments to date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the arch a century later. The Council's note, however, suggests that there is no clear evidence for the arch being later than the abutments – they appear to be part of the same structure. The bastion at the south-west corner could mark the site of a chapel believed to have stood on the bridge and which is mentioned in the will of Robert Paston dated 1482. It may be relevant that the roadway is slightly wider at this point.

Recent History

The recent history of Wiveton Bridge is essentially one of continual repair. The bridge is hump-backed, car drivers cannot see approaching vehicles and the road carries relatively heavy traffic. It is therefore a dangerous spot for the unwary.

It is noted in County Council files that in 1950 the bridge was 'dangerous' but that there were no funds to effect repairs. In 1963, according to the then Ministry of Building and Works, an architect's examination concluded that the bridge was in a serious state: the south-west abutment had badly decayed, and the arch springing on the east side had fallen away leaving no support for the ribs which themselves had a bad fracture. The County Council's inspector disagreed with the severity of this assessment and suggested that the architect could not have inspected the underside properly as this could only be done from a boat, the water being 'fairly deep and fast flowing' at this point. Notwithstanding this difference of view, some work must have been carried out immediately because by January 1964 some repairs had been done, and the bridge was later described as 'repaired at considerable expense to restore the elevation to its original condition'. Which was perhaps a pity, because by April the north parapet was mostly in the river – again – as a result of a misguided lorry.

In submitting their estimate for repairs, the contractors (H. Bullen & Son) reported, on the evidence of a stonemason called in for the purpose, that of the 32 ft 6 in parapet, 24 ft had



Wiveton Bridge

**Southern parapet
under repair
in 1998**

**SW corner and
adjoining bastion
(after repair)**



been demolished. The report noted that while the original bridge had been built with Ancaster and Clipsham stone, the parapet was of Portland. The rest of the parapet (to the north-west) would need to be taken down, some 'original stone facing' would need to be rebuilt, and 'additional ashlar from the string course of the arch to the Portland stone ashlar' would be required. The job was completed for a little over the estimate of £805.

The Council's files record further damage and repairs, and many readers will recall the last incident in 1998, when most of the southern parapet was demolished and some stout posts subsequently put in to deflect any more vehicles intent on taking down the parapets.

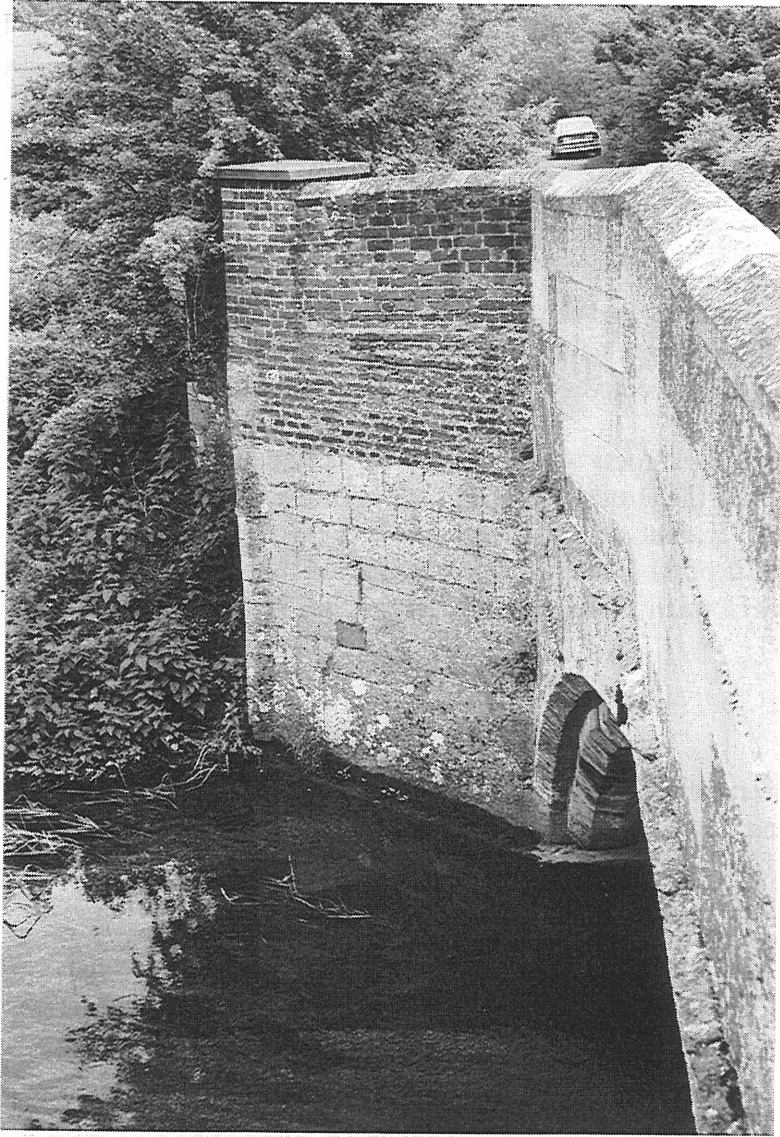
The various repairs to abutments and parapets over the centuries provide a reminder that dating the origins of the bridge from the structure alone needs considerable care. The bridge appears to be in good order at the moment although there needs to be continual maintenance - to judge from plant growth on parts of the structure. It is understood that any such need will be assessed as part of the County Council's Monument Management Programme.

THE GLAVEN VALLEY

Before looking at the earlier history of Wiveton bridge it would be as well to make some comments about the river it spans. The Glaven is a short river, barely 12 miles from its source to Cley sluice, beyond which it becomes a tidal estuary, the lower reaches forming Blakeney Harbour. Before the Cley embankment carrying the coast road obstructed the flow, tides could reach up as far as Glandford Mill, some 1½ miles further upstream. In this lower part of the river's course the flood plain is well-defined by high ground either side, widening from about 160 yards at Glandford, to c.330 at Wiveton Bridge and c.400 at Cley sluice.

The floodplain is now drained agricultural land and includes arable as well as pasture. At the time of Domesday, however, the valley would have been open to the full force of the tides, for Blakeney Point was far shorter than now and there were probably no bridges or causeways - just a passage over the ford that gave Glandford its name. Such a river would have provided good opportunities for fishing and coastal trading. The River Burn, some 14 miles to the west, was used in this way for there was a substantial Saxon settlement on the west bank near the present day Burnham Market. Whilst there is no archaeological evidence for a similar presence in the Glaven valley at this time, there are documents to demonstrate maritime activities during the 1100s, and by the 1300s Wiveton, Cley and Blakeney are centres of national as well as local importance. In consequence their tax assessments were among the highest in the county. In the taxation of 1334 (leaving aside the fenland parishes of west Norfolk) Wiveton was classed with the market towns - of the villages only Worstead had to find more - and Blakeney and Cley also had high figures.¹

The rise of these villages to commercial prominence can hardly have occurred without making use of the river for trading and fishing. But how exactly were these activities carried out? Where were the quays or landing places? Where were the ships built? What depth of water was there at high tide? At present very little is known for certain, although some suggestions can be made. At Cley, for instance, the church overlooks a small triangular inlet off the main valley and it seems likely that here was the earliest landing place for Cley boats. There are parallels elsewhere along the coast, notably at Burnham Market which lies at the head of a small side valley of the Burn. Wells church lies at the head of a former inlet still low enough to have been flooded by the surge of 1953, and the same is true at Morston.



Wiveton Bridge

Splay at NE corner

Splay at SE corner



At Wiveton, however, things are a little different, for although a side valley exists it lies some ½ mile north of the church and bridge, which now form the focus of the road pattern. Yet the present village extends northwards from the church towards and beyond the coast road, just as Cley does. This may not be just a modern feature, for there are the remains of a substantial medieval building near the coast road, and Wiveton Hall (well to seaward of the coast road) could well be on the site of a much older building. If the village did once spread down towards the Hall then the side valley, now known as The Anchorage, would have been its centre. But was there an earlier landing place near the church? And what was the function of the field on the northern side of the church long supposed to have been a quayside for ships coming up the Glaven?

Moving into the Tudor period, the documents tell of some 40 ships trading out of Blakeney Harbour, a number that hardly changed throughout the 1500s. Some of these ships were large, up to 100 tons, while many of those of 50 tons or more regularly made the annual voyage to the fishing grounds off Iceland. Others traded around the North Sea and through the Channel to France and Spain, principally to bring back salt for the fishing industry. Shipping lists of this period make it clear that the owners lived in Wiveton, Cley and Blakeney – but does this mean that ‘Wiveton’ ships came up the Glaven to moor in the village, either at a quayside berth or out in the river?²

These questions arise because such documentary evidence as exists for the 1500s seems to suggest that the Glaven in the vicinity of Wiveton may not have looked so different from today – except that the agricultural land we now see was then salt marsh. The river itself could not have been much wider or deeper, so access for ships would have been determined by the tidal range. This glimpse of the Glaven valley does not seem entirely consistent with the traditional view of Wiveton as a port with large trading vessels coming upriver to tie up close to the church.

These comments and questions are part of the background to any consideration of the history of Wiveton Bridge. It is not just a question of what kind of landscape the bridge fitted into, but what the presence of the bridge can tell us about the history of the valley.

THE TWO BRIDGES

Origins

On 1 June 1380 a writ was issued to the Sheriff of Norfolk to enquire into the state of ‘two ancient bridges in Wiveton and Cley’ which had become so dilapidated that they could hardly be used. Who built them and who was responsible for maintaining them? At an inquiry held at Holt on 14 July a jury of 18 local men reached conclusions that were registered at Westminster just a few days later.³

Firstly they agreed that ‘a stone bridge in Wiveton’ and ‘a wooden bridge in Cley and Wiveton’ which spanned ‘certain brooks’ had not been there before 1291 – only ‘a path by which men crossed at their own peril after the ebb of the sea’. They also said that this was not the king’s highway for that crossed the Glaven at Glandford, two miles upstream.

The two bridges had been built 'in the same path' by William Storm in memory of his father Hugh – and with Hugh's money. William's son Thomas still lived in Blakeney. No others had contributed towards the construction of the bridges and so no one was now responsible for their upkeep. It would hardly matter if they were not repaired because 'the highway is so near'. Nevertheless, the stone bridge could be repaired for 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) and the wooden bridge for 40s (£2).

This entry in the rolls is informative on several counts. Firstly, the information it gives about the Storms allows one to speculate about the date of the bridges. The Storms were major landholders in the area, and had given land to the Carmelite Friary in Blakeney, for instance. Nevertheless, Hugh's wealth suggests that he did not die young, and the same may be true of William who felt able to spare some of his inheritance. Thomas was probably not a young man either. This combination suggests a date in the 1340s for the building of the bridges, or else during one of the decades either side, time enough for deterioration of the bridges to set in. The suggested cost of repairs would not have been prohibitive for the relatively wealthy communities of Wiveton and Cley, even without assistance from Blakeney.

Secondly, the entry affords a glimpse at the state of the river valley at that time. The Glaven already flowed in two channels, passable at low water but not when the tide was in, suggesting that at spring tides, at least, the whole valley floor was covered. To what depth is a separate issue that would warrant a detailed study. If the present bridge is the original one, or stands on the same spot, how does it relate to the former land surface – can there have been much deposition in the valley during the past 650 years? It is likely that when the stone bridge was built it had a very low parapet, or even none at all; did the spring tides sweep over the whole bridge, or were they channelled through the arch(es)? Either way, the constant tidal flows would have hastened the deterioration of the bridge, especially if no maintenance had been carried out.

Thirdly, the text confirms that the bridges lay on the same track and one can suppose that this track was on, or close to, the line of the existing road which uses Wiveton Bridge. It also seems to say that the stone bridge stood in Wiveton, while the wooden bridge was in both Cley and Wiveton. This suggests that the boundary between the two parishes was then along the river itself rather than along the valley edge as at present.

Finance

In 1215 Magna Carta had accepted that it was the responsibility of individuals rather than the state to build and maintain bridges, although no one was compelled to build new ones. The Statute of Winchester in 1285 confirmed that each lord of the manor was responsible for the upkeep of the king's highway and, presumably, any bridges that might already be on it. For this reason there are few mentions of bridges in state records.⁴ In any case the Wiveton bridges were not part of the king's highway and, once built, would need to have been maintained by the lord of the manor, wealthy individuals or the community as a whole. Monastic houses were also frequently involved in bridge building and repair. Did the Friary in Blakeney assist with the upkeep of the Wiveton bridges?

Additional revenue to maintain bridges might come from a variety of sources. One such was the erection of a chapel with a chaplain to say masses in return for alms which were then used to maintain the bridge.

In 1530/1 Henry VIII passed an Act relating to the repair of bridges which required Justices of the Peace (JPs) to raise a county rate for the repair of those bridges not the responsibility of any authority or individual. Following this Act, the county began to take responsibility for specific bridges administered by JPs meeting in Quarter Sessions with funding from local taxes. The Acts of Dissolution in 1536 and 1539 broke up the monastic estates and passed them to private owners, although monastic responsibilities for maintaining bridges passed not to the new owners but to the JPs. The suppression of chantry chapels in 1545 completed the removal of any ecclesiastic responsibility for bridges.

Wills

Between the 1340s and the Dissolution lies a 200 year period for which there is little documentary evidence relating to the Wiveton bridges. What little exists (although more might yet be turned up) is in the form of wills which record the bequest of money for their repair.⁵ The first one is that of Robert Paston who, in 1482, willed 6d to the repair of the chapel of the Holy Trinity on the bridge. The Latin wording is *super pontem* which implies that a chapel was actually on the bridge rather than beside it which might have been the case. If so, then it is tempting to see the southwest 'bastion' as being the site of the chapel.

The next is the will of William Wilkins of Cley, dated 1491, who left 20d for the repair of the 'brygge of Weveton'. In 1509 John Symondes, also of Cley, left 6s 8d to the 'Holy Trinity upon Wysten Bridge'. There can be little doubt that 'Wysten' means Wiveton, but the variation in spelling here is useful because in 1512 Agnes Symondes of Cley willed 6s 8d to 'the repair of Whitstone Bridge'. This too must surely be a reference to Wiveton Bridge, but the identity might not be so clear if the words are seen out of context. In 1519 James Steel of Wiveton left 3s 4d to 'the reparation of the caunsy betwyn the brigges of Weveton'. This confirms that both bridges were still in existence and that there was a made causeway between them.

While these wills prove that the bridges were being maintained, it is not clear who was then taking the major responsibility for the work – for the occasional 6s 8d would not go very far to keeping both bridges in good order in a tidal environment. Perhaps the chapel did provide enough alms to do the job. After the Dissolution, however, the burden would have fallen either on the wealthy men of Wiveton and Cley, or else on the county rate. For the bridge to be a county responsibility the JPs would need to be persuaded either that the chapel had been the source of funding or else that the road was now part of the king's highway. Unfortunately few records of the Quarter Sessions have survived from the 1500s.

Wills, however, continue and in 1558, some 20 years after the Dissolution, Richard Smith of Wiveton willed 20s to 'the great bridge in the marsh which John Kyng made'. Presumably this is not so much a reference to a new bridge as to the rebuilding of the old one – the eastern bridge on the Cley side of the valley. The King family were prominent in the area during the 1500s as landowners and merchants, and no doubt John King could well afford to pay for the rebuilding himself without recompense from the community. The identification of the 'great bridge' as the former wooden one seems to be confirmed by yet another will only three years later. In 1560 William King of Wiveton, merchant, willed £2 towards the reparation of Wiveton bridge 'in the marsh' and a further £1 towards 'Wiveton bridge of the two arches'. But is the 'great bridge' still wooden, or has it been replaced in stone? In a will of 1577 (as yet unchecked) John Quarles of London is said to have left £50 for the repair of Wiveton Bridge – a considerable sum compared with other bequests.

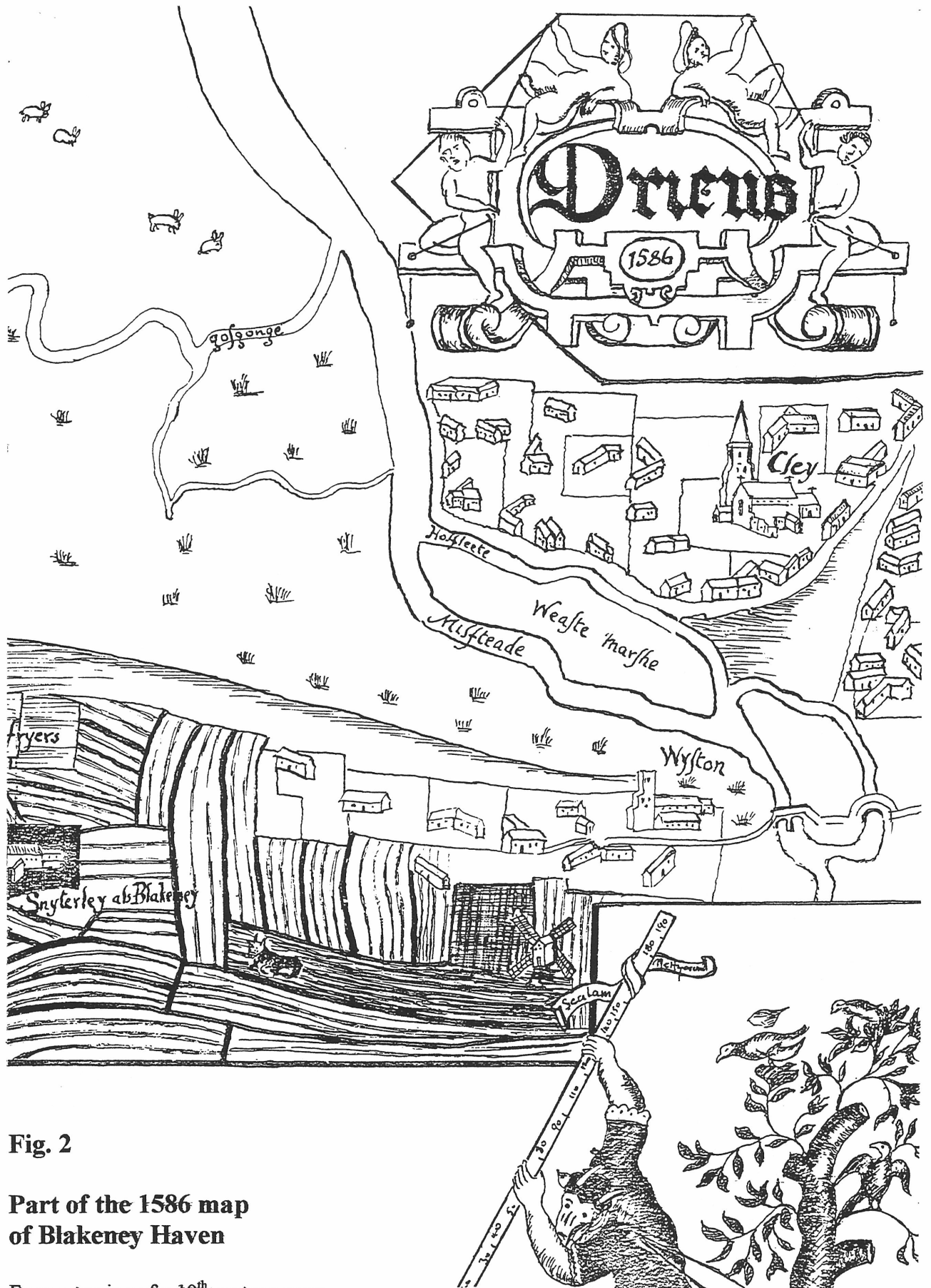


Fig. 2

Part of the 1586 map
of Blakeney Haven

From a tracing of a 19th century copy

The 1586 map

Some 26 years after William King's will comes the first pictorial representation of the two bridges: the 1586 map of Blakeney Haven (Fig.2).⁶ On this map Wiveton Bridge is quite clearly drawn with two arches while the bridge on the Cley side is drawn with only one yet appears to be bigger. It would be perverse not to equate these respectively with 'Wiveton Bridge of the two arches' and 'the great bridge in the marsh'. The map shows the Glaven separating into two streams at a point only just upstream of the bridges, although the accuracy of the map might not be so good here at the periphery as it is in the Harbour (the area relevant to the lawsuit for which it was drawn). It might be supposed that a crossing a little way upstream over the single channel would have been more convenient than a crossing over two, but two streams, being shallower, would have been less of an obstacle than one deeper channel. This might imply that the original crossing was made here *because* this point was the upstream, and therefore shallower, end of the two channels.

The map shows two areas of marshland between the two streams which rejoin at Cley. The northern one, known as West Marsh (which it is if viewed from Cley rather than Wiveton) was the subject of a dispute between Cley and Wiveton in c.1580. One witness, Robert Dowell of Cley, and formerly of Wiveton, deposed that about 50 years previously the people of Wiveton put their sheep on the West Marsh and that the Cley men 'put them off so fast as Wiveton men did put them on'. Whereupon the Cley men searched the records and found an indenture to the effect that the inhabitants of Wiveton should enter the common towards Cley 'to the main channel and further not'.⁷

This seems to confirm what the map suggests: that the stream flowing nearest to Wiveton was the main channel (even though it had the name Millstead which might suggest a subsidiary channel). This main channel, now the only channel, still forms a substantial part of the boundary between Wiveton and Cley. The West marsh extended down to the (former) inlet at Cley church at which point there was a cross channel to the south of which lay the South Marsh (again named from the Cley point of view). In this vicinity the present parish boundary leaves the main river and crosses to the Cley side of the valley, putting the South marsh and its continuation upstream wholly in Wiveton parish. This in turn means that both bridges would now lie in Wiveton parish – although, as suggested above, the early boundary may well have been along the centre of the old eastern channel. This view is strengthened by the will of Richard Raylie, a prominent Cley merchant, who in 1588 bequeathed 10s to the 'repairs of bridges chargeable to the town of Cley'.

The 1580 document has more to say about the creeks and parish boundary but it is not easy to interpret. In any case, the relevance to the bridges is mainly that if sheep were pastured regularly on West Marsh it implies that this area was already 'high' salt marsh covered only by spring tides. While this tells against the view of Wiveton as a port of some consequence in the Tudor period, it should be remembered that in the early 1900s Blakeney quay was then, as now, almost dry at low water yet could still be lined with sailing coasters of up to 80 tons and some 60 feet in length – not dissimilar to the vessels of the 1500s.

The 1600s

Information about the Wiveton bridges in the seventeenth century comes mainly from the records of Quarter Sessions, but there are other documents of interest. Two concern Richard Okleby, who appears to be a stonemason by profession.⁸ The first, dated June 1616, is a brief

agreement between him and Mr Braddock on the terms for working on Wiveton Bridge. Okleby and two apprentices are to be allowed 3s 6d per day 'till the bridge at Wiveton be finished', and a further 12d per day for 'our labour'. This may mean that Okleby can hire daily labourers, perhaps supplied by Braddock acting on behalf of the parish. Okleby promises to work there until the work is finished.

The second agreement, dated January 1617, is between Okleby and his apprentice Thomas Boulton who agrees to stay with Okleby until Michaelmas, although this is not necessarily an estimate of the time it might take to finish work on the bridge. Okleby agrees to supply Thomas with 'one suit for working days and another for holy days' and he also agrees to provide him with 'a hamer, a squire, a plumrule and a trowell', described as 'the tools of his craft'.

Okleby and his apprentices appear to have been working on Wiveton bridge as only one bridge was mentioned in the agreement. This ties in with comments in the will of John Raylie of Cley drawn up in March 1628. John says that his uncle Richard Raylie bequeathed 10s to the reparation of Cley bridge 'when the same should be repaired' (a provision already noted above) but 'because the work have not beene undertaken I give 20s when the bridge shall be rectified'. A period of 40 years separates the two wills, so if it is true that no work was carried out in that time then the 'great bridge in the marsh' must have been in a poor state by 1628. If this was still a wooden bridge then Richard Okelby, as a stonemason, was probably not the right person to work on it. In any case the residents of Cley might not have given him the job – if he was the Richard Okelby who was reported to the Archdeacon in 1605 'for that he did violently and maliciously cast stones at the parishioners in the churchyard of Cley and with the same did hit a widow named Wittleson'.⁹

Some ten years after Richard Raylie's will came the affair of 'Calthorpe's bank'. In the 1620s Christopher Calthorpe, as lord of the manor, had enclosed the salt marshes in Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley lying north of the Friary Hills, quite possibly the area which is today defined by the semi-circular bank running round from Blakeney towards Cley. An indenture of 26 January 1626 refers to 'sundrie bancks and marshe walles which be now made and done' in the area south of the 'mayne cricke'. This document, with 30 seals attached, leases marshland to as many inhabitants of Wiveton.¹⁰

There seems to have been no dispute about this enclosure, but in the 1630s Calthorpe went a step too far in throwing a bank across the Glaven in the vicinity of the present coast road. This gave rise to a dispute that eventually went to the Privy Council who ordered the bank to be removed. The evidence prepared for the case gives much information about the state of the ports at this time, and Jonathan Hooton devotes a whole chapter to it in his book *The Glaven Ports*.¹¹ It is sufficient to note here that the petitioners made much of the rapid deposition that was taking place in Cley, to seaward of the new bank, for 'want of the ebbtide which formerly overflowed the aforesaid 80 rodds of ground in breadth and 1 myle in length'. One would expect the petitioners to use figures that made the best possible case so these dimensions might be suspect. In practice, however, with 80 rods representing 440 yards, they cannot be accused of anything more than 'rounding up'. One mile upstream from Cley would take the tide to a point half way between Wiveton Bridge and Glandford. Nevertheless, taking the evidence as a whole the implication seems to be that before the bank was built smaller ships, at least, could still be brought up to Wiveton on a good tide. The causeway between the two bridges would then be flooded but to what depth is uncertain; neap tides might well have been confined to the two channels.

From 1624/5 the records of Quarter Sessions provide information about both bridges.¹² In that year the JPs acknowledged that Wiveton was a County Bridge and as it was 'in decay' they ordered a speedy repair. Presumably this was done but in 1650 a sum of £45 was awarded from County money to Mr Britiffe to effect immediate repairs. The following year they viewed his accounts and awarded a further £7 10s. In 1654, only three years later, the bridge was again in disrepair and Mr Britiffe was ordered to 'make it good or show cause to the contrary at the next Session'. Presumably he did make it good for the next entry is for 1671 when a Committee was appointed to examine the bridge and make recommendations for yet more repairs.

At the same time work was also being carried out on the second bridge. It is not mentioned in 1634 but in 1651 it was presented as being in great decay and that it ought to be repaired by the County. In 1652 an order was made for £60 to be raised for repairs. In 1671 more repairs were needed and £100 was levied on the County 'for the repair of this and Wiveton bridges', followed in 1673 by an order for a further £16 10s.

It is worth noting that the *Old Bridge Book* which records these decisions keeps the records of the two bridges separate up to 1671 and that the original heading for 'Cley Bridge' (ie the one in the marsh) has 'Wiveton alias' inserted before the word Cley. This may suggest some uncertainty about the name or ownership of the bridge. The records also imply that before 1634 the two bridges had not been adopted as County bridges and therefore would not have had the advantage of county funding. This, in turn, seems to tell against the suggestion that Wiveton bridge had any significant ecclesiastical funding before the Dissolution.

Hitherto there has been no indication in the whole history of the bridges of the nature of any of the repairs which have been carried out. For 1671, however, considerable detail can be found in the account for repairing both bridges following the levy of £116 10s. This account is worth recording in full for despite the detail given, much interpretation remains to be done on the materials, building techniques and costings, and the people named need to be identified.¹³

By way of example, *windles* is probably a windlass, the deals and poles were for building the scaffolding rather than repairing the bridges, and oyster shells would have been used to help bind the mortar. The lead could have been for pouring into depressions cut into adjacent stone blocks where it would have solidified to form ties. *Bartlemews*, however, have yet to be identified – the word has not been found in any dictionary or reference. *Tarris* (various spellings) is a volcanic rock used especially in mortar which will often be underwater, as in the case of cisterns - or bridge piers. One dictionary defines it as 'a rock allied in composition to pozzolana consisting largely of comminuted pumice or other volcanic substance'. It is found along the Rhine between Cologne and Mainz and was formerly imported from Holland for making mortar or hydraulic cement. The dictionary entry also says: 'rare or obsolete 1612'. Not in Norfolk, however, as *tarris* was still being imported into Blakeney during the 1700s.¹⁴ The *tarris* had to be beaten into a powder, and kept dry in the process, hence the need to hire a barn.

Of more immediate interest is the evidence indicating the scale of the work being done. The existence of two bridges and a linking causeway complicates matters, but most of the work was probably on Wiveton bridge for there is no evidence that 'Cley' bridge ever had any substantial amount of brickwork, and no timbers for it appear in this account. Some of the 60

pd for 60 load of Marle fetching	03 00 00
pd for a pale wheele barrow and ladder Breaking	00 02 06
pd for fetching tarois & lead from Holt	00 03 00
pd for 13 bushells & ½ of tarris at 7 ^s per Bushells	04 14 06
pd the Norwich Carrier for bringing the tarris and the Masons Tooles	01 00 00
pd to Old Edge for his Journy to veiw the Bridge	00 06 00
pd to Severall Workemen for fetching the old Stone & Brick out of the River	02 02 00
pd young Edge for comeing to veiw the Bridge	00 05 00
pd Robert Brigstocke for comeing to veiw the Bridge and his assistante in buying the free Stone	00 14 00
pd for covenants and Bonds Drawings 5 ^s for 3 sives for the Tarris 4s	00 09 00
pd for Straw to cover the Bridge 3 ^s & to the workemen for covering it with Strawe & Clay 10 ^s 4 ^d	00 13 04
pd Robt Brigstocke the free Stone Mason for his worke about the two bridges as per Receipt	45 00 00
pd for the Use of a Barne for Beatinge the Tarris in	00 03 04
pd for o ^{ur} Journy to Norwich & Elsewhere and expenses	02 00 00
pd for 60 loads of Marle	00 03 04
paid to M ^r Rolfe for writinge the sev ^{er} all warr ^{ts} & rates for raiseing the money and for receiveing it of the sev ^{er} all Cheife Constables of the County and paying the same & for keeping accompts and for making and ingrossing hereof	03 00 00
	<u>111 09 05</u>
<i>It 5^{li} more to M^r Brigstocke for doeinge more than his first Agreem^t 5^{li} as M^r Burton affirmed in Co^{urt} upon his deliv^{er}ing this Acc^t.</i>	
Soe rest due to the Accomptants	01 09 05
<i>Signed:</i>	
	Robt Burton
	John Braddocke
	Tho. Youngman

Note: The italicised text appears to be in the hand of John Braddocke.

Note: The signatures *might* be described as follows:

Burton	mildly artistic (ie with flourishes)
Braddocke	firm and businesslike
Youngman	neat but frail

JW Nov 99 Records – Wiveton – Bridge acc

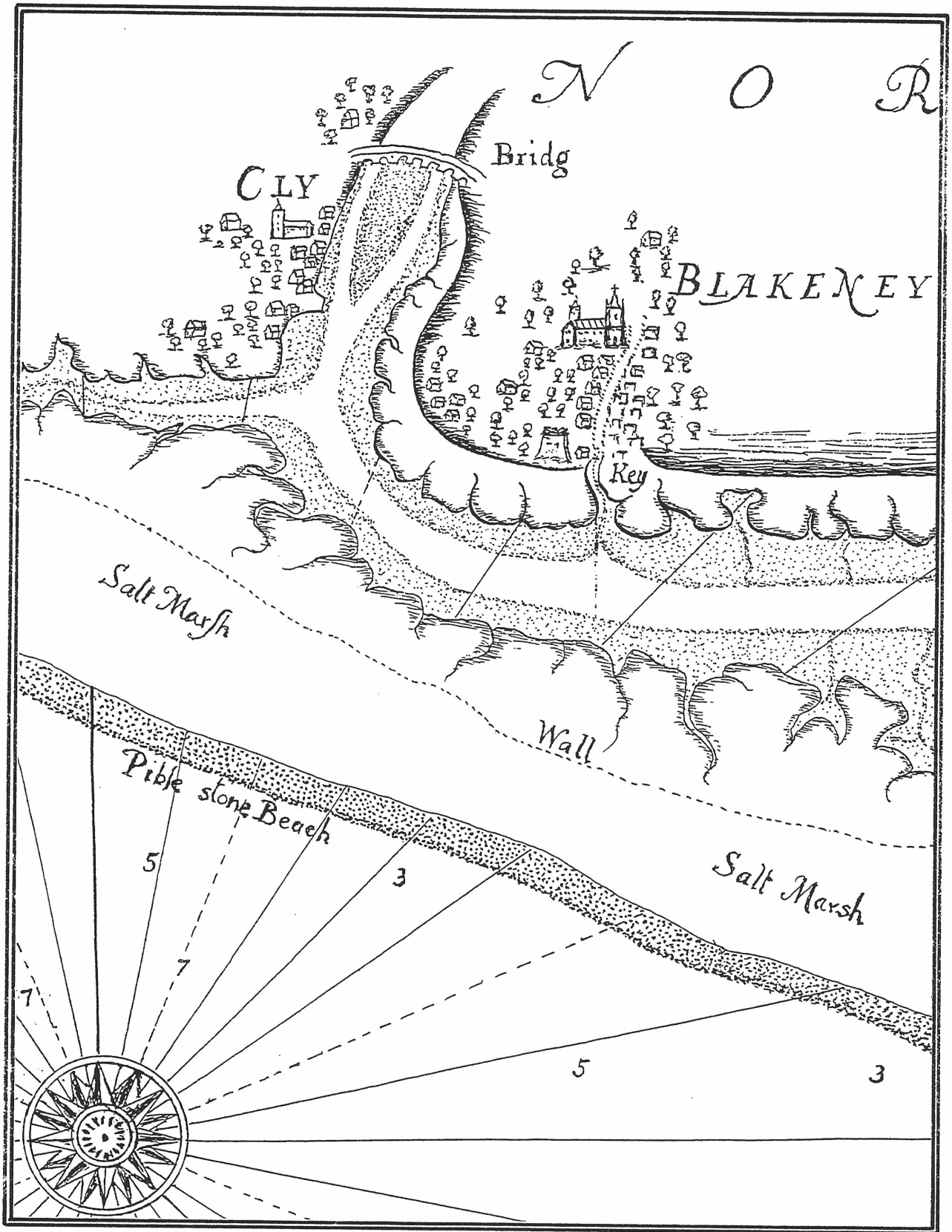


Fig. 3 Part of the 1693 chart of Blakeney Haven

Grenville Collins

loads of marl might have been used on the causeway but some would have been needed on the bridge as well, where some of the lime might have been used to help solidify the fill. The purchase of over 16,000 bricks and upwards of 90 cubic feet of freestone, as well as 800 small tiles, makes it clear that this was a major repair. Unless the work was concentrated on the arch which has since gone, there is a good chance that some of the material is still visible in the present construction. Bricks of this period, for instance, were still rather narrow and uneven in colour compared with the more regular bricks of the 1700s.

By way of comparison, there is a very detailed and much more systematic account for the rebuilding of the single-arched Wroxham Bridge in 1576.¹⁵ Over 30,000 bricks were used for this project as well as some 50 chaldrons of lime and 30 tons of freestone. By comparison, the work at Wiveton required about half the number of bricks and half the amount of lime – and perhaps about a quarter the amount of freestone – which seems to indicate something less than a complete rebuild but a significant renovation nonetheless. Despite the scale of this repair work, both bridges were again ‘in decay’ by May 1688 when a Committee was appointed to view the bridges. They reported in July and £43 was ordered for more repairs to both Wiveton and ‘Wiveton alias Cley’ bridges.

Soon after this, in 1693, Capt. Grenville Collins published the results of seven years work surveying the harbours around the British coast.¹⁶ His chart for Blakeney Haven (Fig. 3) shows the Glaven valley as it might have been seen from seaward. At first sight it looks odd to see the Wiveton bridges drawn as if they formed one continuous bridge stretching right across the valley. It could be intended as a generalised representation of the two bridges and the linking causeway. On the other hand, it might be showing only the wooden bridge because the stone bridge would probably not have been visible from seaward. If the channel on the Wiveton side cannot be seen to issue from the (invisible) stone bridge then from seaward both streams of the Glaven would appear to be coming from the wooden bridge.¹⁷

It may be relevant that the date of 1757 is said to have been cut into the coping of the south-east parapet but this has not been visible for some time.¹⁸

The 1700s

The next century opens with the same routine in Quarter Sessions: in January 1700 a Committee was appointed to view and repair Wiveton Bridge. In July 1701 £12 was paid for repairs, and in April 1702 a further £5 8s 4d. Another Committee was appointed in July 1715, but this time no action is recorded. Perhaps no action was taken because in 1720 it was reported to Quarter Sessions that Wiveton Bridge had been repaired by the County since 1634 and this was followed in 1722 by a further payment of £46 6s 5d. The next entry is in October 1738 when it was agreed that a Committee should ‘view and report whether tis proper to repair or let this Bridge fall’. Presumably the Committee viewed as instructed because in May 1739 it is recorded for Wiveton Bridge: ‘£20 paid for pulling down the bridge and making good the road there’.

Now we have a problem: which of the two bridges was demolished? Was it the ‘great bridge in the marsh or, perhaps, the second arch of Wiveton bridge? Throughout the 1600s the Quarter Sessions records for bridges have been taken from the Old Bridge Book which distinguished between the ‘Wiveton bridge’ and the ‘Wiveton alias Cley’ bridge. The next volume, covering the years 1700 to 1760, makes no such distinction so it is quite possible that the payments made in 1701 and 1702 were for separate bridges. The larger payment made in

1722 was probably for Wiveton bridge in view of what follows, for after the demolition reference the next entry, in 1752, is for the Committee to 'view and report the state of the remaining bridge and what it will cost to repair it'.

This appears to confirm that it was the 'Cley' bridge which had been demolished. In 1753 the Committee were authorised to spend not more than £50 on repairs; in 1754 a payment of £57 8s was made and in 1755 a further £2 3s 6d. This is the last relevant entry in the volume for 1700-60 and no further information has been sought from the records of Quarter Sessions.

This means that it has not been established when half of Wiveton bridge (ie one of the two arches) was demolished, or when the chapel that is presumed to have been on or beside the bridge was taken down.

Eson's Bridge

The 'Wiveton alias Cley' bridge would have been pulled down some time between October 1738, when the proposal was made, and May 1739, when the payment was made. But what did 'making good the road' actually mean? If a solid embankment or causeway was made it implies that no channel then existed at this point. Alternatively, the embankment may have incorporated one or more small (tidal) channels within it, perhaps even in the form of a timber platform on stone piers. But this would have been akin to a new bridge and one gets no sense of this from the records. The likelihood, therefore, is that by this time there was no need for a bridge and that the Glaven flowed in a single channel under Wiveton bridge and no longer in two, as on the 1586 map.

Is it co-incidental, then, that as one bridge was being demolished so another was being built? In January 1799, the Cley parish registers record that three months earlier, at Holt Quarter Sessions, it was presented that the bridge leading from Cley to Wiveton and Blakeney was 'in a very dangerous and ruinous state' and indictments were preferred against the parishes of Cley and Wiveton. At the following Sessions (24 January 1799) Philip Roome deposed that he remembered the bridge being built by subscription in 1739 merely as a private way. Since then it had been repaired by subscription from the parishes of Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney but neither Cley nor Wiveton were obliged to repair it.¹⁹

A further reference to this bridge appeared in a press article in 1897 on the registers of the Customs House at Cley.²⁰ 'Under the date 1739 it is stated that a wooden bridge was thrown across the salt marshes to Wiveton which cost £60 – 70. Patrick Eson "collector of ye customs was the undertaker and took great pains in procuring subscriptions to ye same"'. It is this bridge which became known as Eson's Bridge and which was repaired following the hearing at Quarter Session in 1799 – but by subscription, not by County rate. The location of this bridge is not known beyond all doubt but it was clearly in the vicinity of the present coast road. It seems clear, too, that there was only one bridge – implying that the Glaven was confined to a single channel at Cley as well as at Wiveton.

The Enclosure map of 1824 shows the eastern arm of the Glaven reduced to little more than a drain but still with a natural course north of the site of the second Wiveton bridge. The boundary between Wiveton and Cley is now shown along the road by the valley edge rather than along the former river channel.

So what of the co-incidence of dates for the demolition of 'Wiveton alias Cley' bridge and the erection of Eson's Bridge at Cley? There is no indication that the one had to be built *because* the other was demolished. The proposed demolition of the second Wiveton bridge may have concentrated ongoing debate about the need for a bridge at Cley – and surely there must have been some – to the point where prompt action was taken. A third possibility is that the opportunity was taken to salvage some materials from the Wiveton/Cley bridge in order to use them at Cley. The recycling of timber is by no means uncommon, but there must have been some risk in using wood from a redundant and possibly derelict bridge in order to build another. Or perhaps it *was* just co-incidence?

In 1803 Mary Hardy wrote in her diary that she could not get to Cley 'over the marshes the tide being very high'.²¹ In 1816 came the drowning of five people returning from a Methodist meeting in Cley when their boat overturned; 'there was no road then leading from Blakeney into Cley, and persons wishing to reach there had to cross by boat'.²² It seems unlikely that Eson's bridge had been demolished so soon after repair in 1799, more likely that there was no access to it when the tide was in. In which case Eson's bridge would have remained in use until the construction of the embankments and sluice in the 1820s finally prevented tides from flowing up to Wiveton and beyond.

FURTHER WORK

This article has concentrated on the history of the two bridges at Wiveton in so far as it can be deduced from available documents. It is necessarily an outline because more work can be done. In the first place, more documents may come to light if further searches are made in the Record Office and elsewhere. There are many more wills to be read, for example. More particularly, no detailed appraisal has yet been made of the structure. Is the account given at the beginning a complete record or could more be deduced by further study? Did the Chapel stand on the base of the surviving bastion? And was this then in the centre of the bridge, with an arch either side?

And what of the 'Wiveton alias Cley' bridge – are any remains of this still to be seen? At least this question can be answered positively for alongside the road leading eastwards from Wiveton bridge, in the ditch on the northern side, can be seen flintwork which is highly likely to be part of the old 'Wiveton alias Cley' bridge. This structure can be seen to extend back into the field and preliminary investigations have suggested that there is yet more flintwork below the field surface. If further study were possible then some conclusions might be reached at least about the shape of the structure – and whether there is anything else here in addition to the bridge.

Finally, there has been frequent reference in this article to the extent of tidal flooding in the Glaven valley. A detailed study of the relative heights of the river, the valley floor, the bridge and the flat areas of both the churchyard and the field immediately to the north might well help in deducing how Wiveton operated as a port in centuries past.

In the Glaven Valley, as elsewhere, placenames can survive for centuries. Wiveton Bridge has long been known to residents as 'Wiveton Stone Bridge', a term which strictly speaking became redundant when the wooden bridge was demolished in 1739. Wiveton Bridge is also known as 'Nowhere' but the origin of this name remains obscure.

NOTES

- 1 Robin Glasscock, Ed., *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, O.U.P., 1975.
- 2 A. Hassell Smith and G. Baker, Eds, *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey*, Vol II 1578-1585, Norfolk Record Society Vol XLIX, 1983, p.145.
The shipping list printed here is for 1580 and includes 13 ships of Wiveton, 6 of them of 80 tons and over.
- 3 *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, Vol IV 1377-1388, HMSO 1957.
- 4 Martin Cook, *Medieval Bridges*, Shire Publications, 1998.
Angela Simcoe and Peter McKeague, *Bridges of Bedfordshire*, Bedfordshire County Council, 1977.
These two books are useful references generally and have been used particularly for the section on finance.
- 5 Wills. Those referred to in this article have been seen (or noted) in the Norfolk Record Office and are as follows:

1482	Robert Paston	Wiveton	Nch A/D	Fuller 29
1491	William Wilkins	Wiveton	Nch A/D	Roper 200
1509	John Symondes	Cley	PCC	(MC/106/5 p.185)
1512	Agnes Symondes	Cley	PCC	(MC/106/5 p.189)
1519	James Steell	Wiveton	NCC	Gyls 179-180
1558	Richard Smith	Wiveton	NCC	Veysye 252
1560	William King	Wiveton	NCC	Bircham 225
1577	John Quarles	London	PCC	
1588	Richard Raylie	Cley	PCC	(MC/106/5 p.148)
1628	John Raylie	Cley	PCC	(MC/106/5 p.156)
- 6 The 1586 map of Blakeney Haven has been the subject of articles in *The Glaven Historian* Nos 1 and 2. The original is lost but copies made in the 1800s have survived and were used by Godfrey Sayers to produce a further copy (which can be purchased as a print).
- 7 Norfolk Record Office (NRO) MS 19880 (a file of miscellaneous papers relating to Wiveton).
- 8 NRO MC 1872/5 (the original Agreements of 1616 and 1617).
- 9 NRO MC/106/5 p.51 (church records quoted by Kenneth Allen).
- 10 Hampshire Record Office Calthorpe Papers 26.M.62 T2/249.
- 11 J.J.Hooton, *The Glaven Ports*, Blakeney History Group, 1996. P.122-128.

- 12 The Quarter Sessions records are in the NRO. To trace bridge references two indexes can be used rather than the original records, some of which no longer exist:
NRO C/Sea/1/1 (labelled 'Copy of Old Bridge Book').
NRO C/Sea/1/2 ('Orders relating to County Bridges from the year 1700 inclusive').
- 13 NRO NCR 22a (4).
- 14 NRO MC/106/17 Blakeney Port Books transcribed by K. Allen from the originals in the PRO, London. Those for 1725/6 record 8½ barrels of tarras arriving from Rotterdam in 5 separate shipments.
- 15 Percy Millican, 'The Rebuilding of Wroxham Bridge in 1576: A Transcript of the Account Book', *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol XXVI, NNAS.
- 16 G.Collins, *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot*, 1693.
- 17 Interpretation proposed by Peter Carnell.
- 18 Basil Cozens-Hardy, 'The Glaven Valley', *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol XXXIII Part IV, NNAS 1965, p.507.
- 19 NRO PD 270/3 & 4 Cley Parish Registers (quoted by K. Allen in MC/106/5 p.5).
- 20 Eastern Daily Press article. Dated 'November 1897' according to K. Allen but actually 11 December.
- 21 Basil Cozens-Hardy, 'The Glaven Valley', *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol XXXIII Part IV, NNAS 1965, p.507.
- 22 Mary Ferroussat, Ed., *Blakeney Methodist Church 1812-1997*, Blakeney History Group 1997.