

YCCART 2024/Y3

Crossing the water: Congresbury Yeo: the other bridges (Wrighton to the sea)

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General Editor: Vince Russett



The bridge at the Park, Congresbury 2006

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Abstract

YCCCART recently published a history and archaeology of the Congresbury Bridge (YCCCART 2018), an important transport link between the north and south sides of the Congresbury Yeo for many centuries. But the Congresbury Yeo is a (locally) large river, which requires multiple crossing points. The bridges across the Yeo maintained connections between both sides, and were many and varied. The current report covers the 12.8km of the Yeo from the Wrington border to the sea wall at Yeomouth.

Acknowledgements

VR would like to thank Jane Bell, the late Keith Gardner, Jane Lilly, Stephen Rippon and Chris Short for occasional discussion of aspects of the river and its crossings, which have informed this paper.

Introduction

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is a Community Archaeology team working across northern Somerset.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

'We build too many walls, and not enough bridges' - Sir Isaac Newton

Site location

The Congresbury Yeo is the largest river within North Somerset, although its ultimate origin lies in the parish of Compton Martin in B&NES. Whether this is accepted as the water source at Rag Spring on Mendip, or perhaps more formally as Compton village pond (the old mill pond of the village) is a moot point.

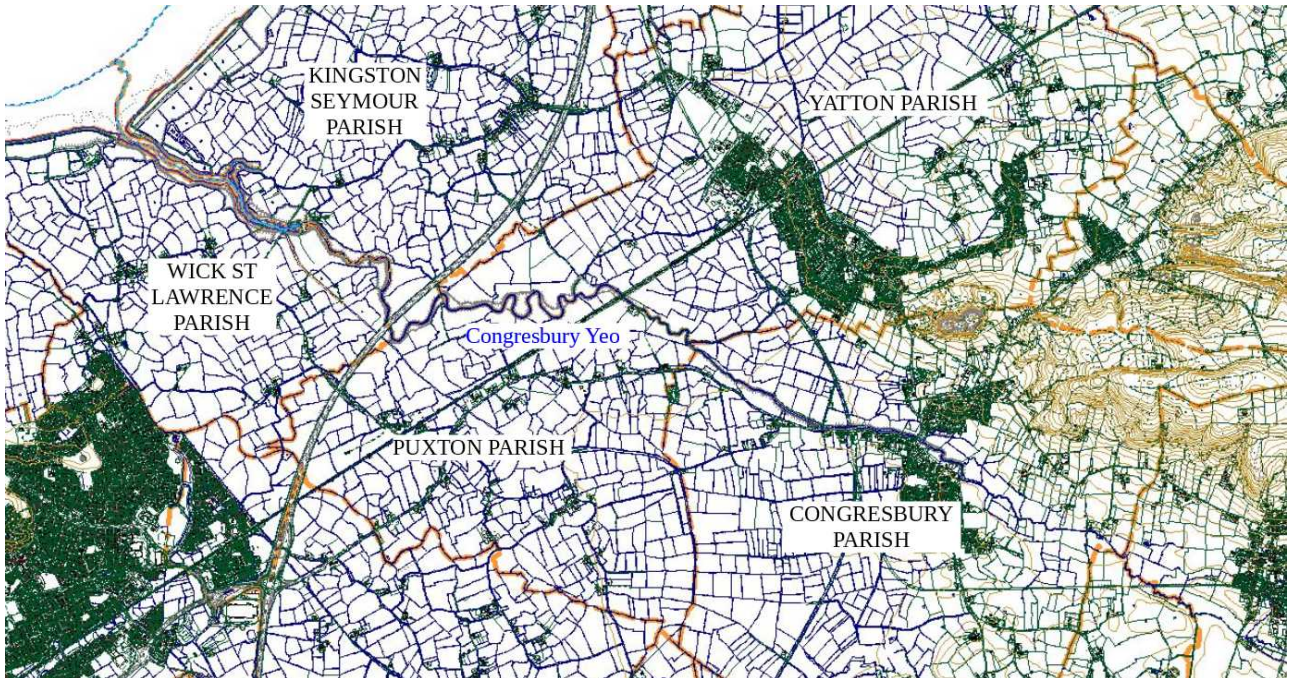


Fig 1: Congresbury Yeo in the Northmarsh of Somerset

It is one of the few features likely to have survived the post-Roman alluviation of the Northmarsh relatively intact: unlike the Siger in Brent (Brown and Brunning 2014), or the Axe in Lympham (R. Pearson, pers comm) for example, lidar does not show any significant abandoned meanders, other than the obvious straightening of the river at the end of Wemberham Lane in Yatton, which cuts off a field known (presumably jocularly, as it is surrounded by a 'moat') Castle Three Acres (Yatton Tithe). A short section in Congresbury village and immediately to the west was straightened slightly in the 20th century.

Rippon (2006) has suggested that the Yeo once ran to the north of the group of fields at Wemberham in Yatton, to account for its Domesday disposition, but this idea is not borne out by lidar, or by the Yatton / Kingston Seymour parish boundary and its relationship to the Little River (YCCART 2023). The meanders in the river to the south of the Wemberham fields appear natural for a river in such a flat alluvial plain, their presence being perhaps acknowledged by the local field name 'Rambles' (Yatton Tithe).

Land use and geology

The vast majority of the line of the Congresbury Yeo runs through the Tidal Flat Deposits of the Northmarsh: the area between the Wrington boundary and Congresbury Bridge.

The river itself is a vital drainage route for much of the Northmarsh: the Congresbury Yeo also remained navigable as far as the mill weir at West Mill in Congresbury village well into the 19th century; local stories about coal being sold around the village cross were confirmed by finds made in the evaluation in 2016 (YCCART 2016).

The lands around the river are largely pastoral, with very little development.

The river is accompanied for the line between the Wrington boundary and the M5 by public footpaths, official or permissive, but the lower section as far as the sea is not.

Note for Listings of Bridges 3 and 5 (errata)

There is some confusion in the Historic England Listings for the bow bridges 3 and 5 in the report.

All three bridges (3, 4 and 5) seem to have the correct NGRs (as can be seen by comparing them with those in the headlines for each, which were independently derived from OS data using QGIS).

However, the text descriptions in the cases of 3 and 5 seem to have been exchanged: for example, bridge 3 in reality has no parapet (at all): HEs text says that it does. While bridge 5 does have a very small one-stone parapet, HEs description, which also calls it Collins Bridge, the rightful name of Bridge 3, says that it does not. While the text description of a Listed Structures does not have the same legal import as the rest of the Listing, this confusion does not help the conservation of these structures and could easily be legally challenged.

In this paper, the descriptions have been left in place, so that the text represents the legal statement from Historic England: this disparity will be pointed out to Historic England, but the statement is firmly made here that this report represents the true situation on the ground in Congresbury, and may be used in the event of legal challenge to the Listings.

Crossings locations

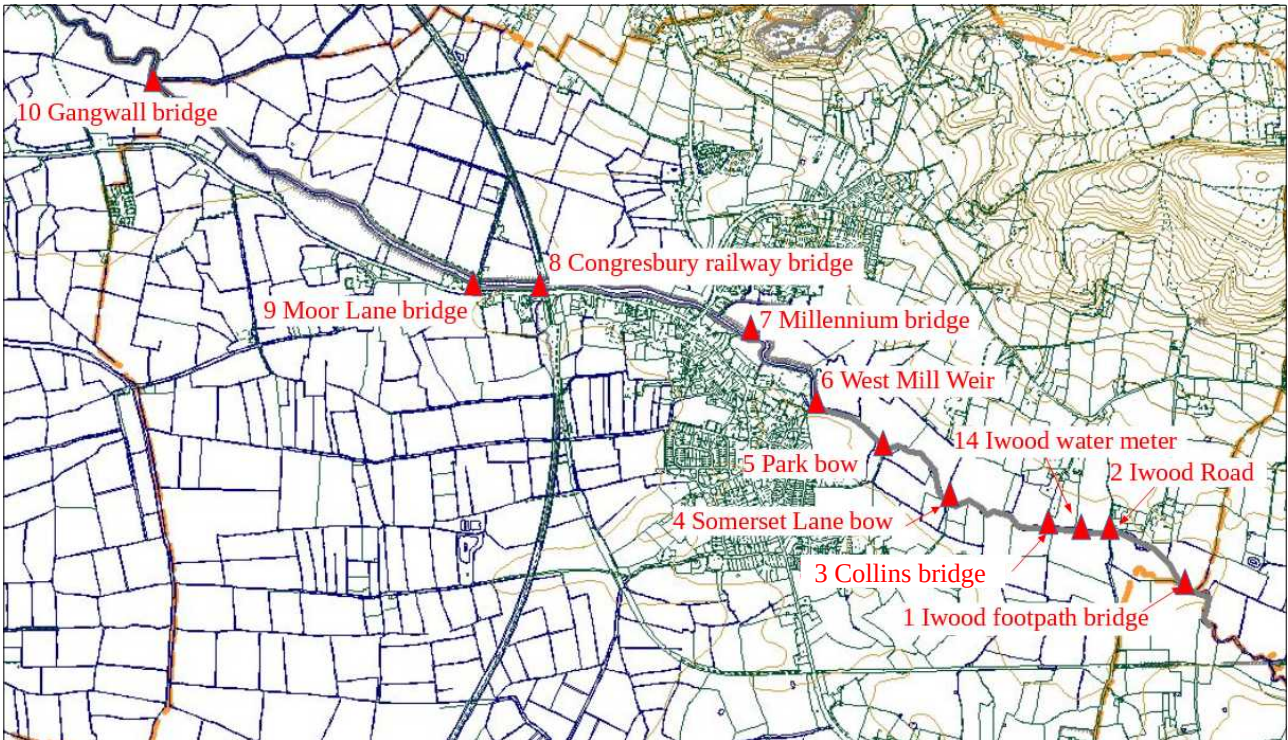


Fig 2: Crossings, Wrigton to Gangwall

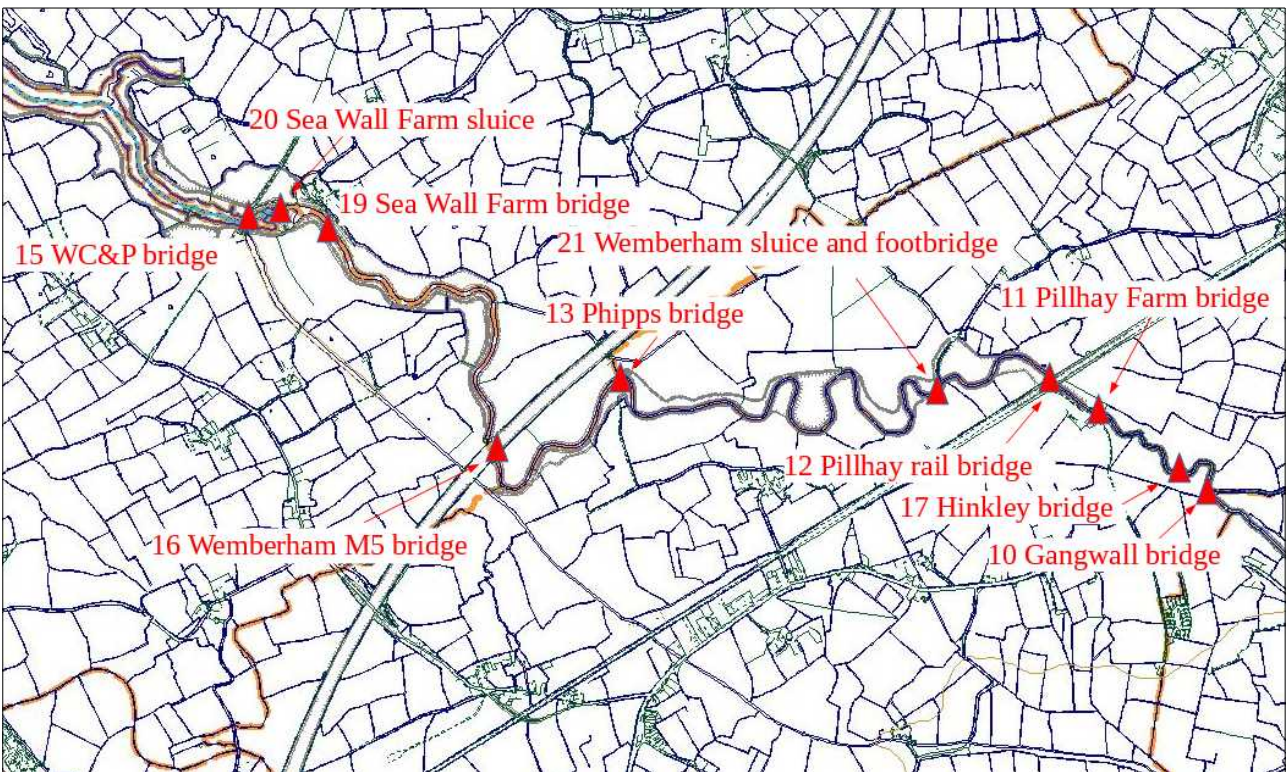


Fig 3: Crossings, Gangwall to the sea

The crossings

1 Iwood footpath bridge ST45546287

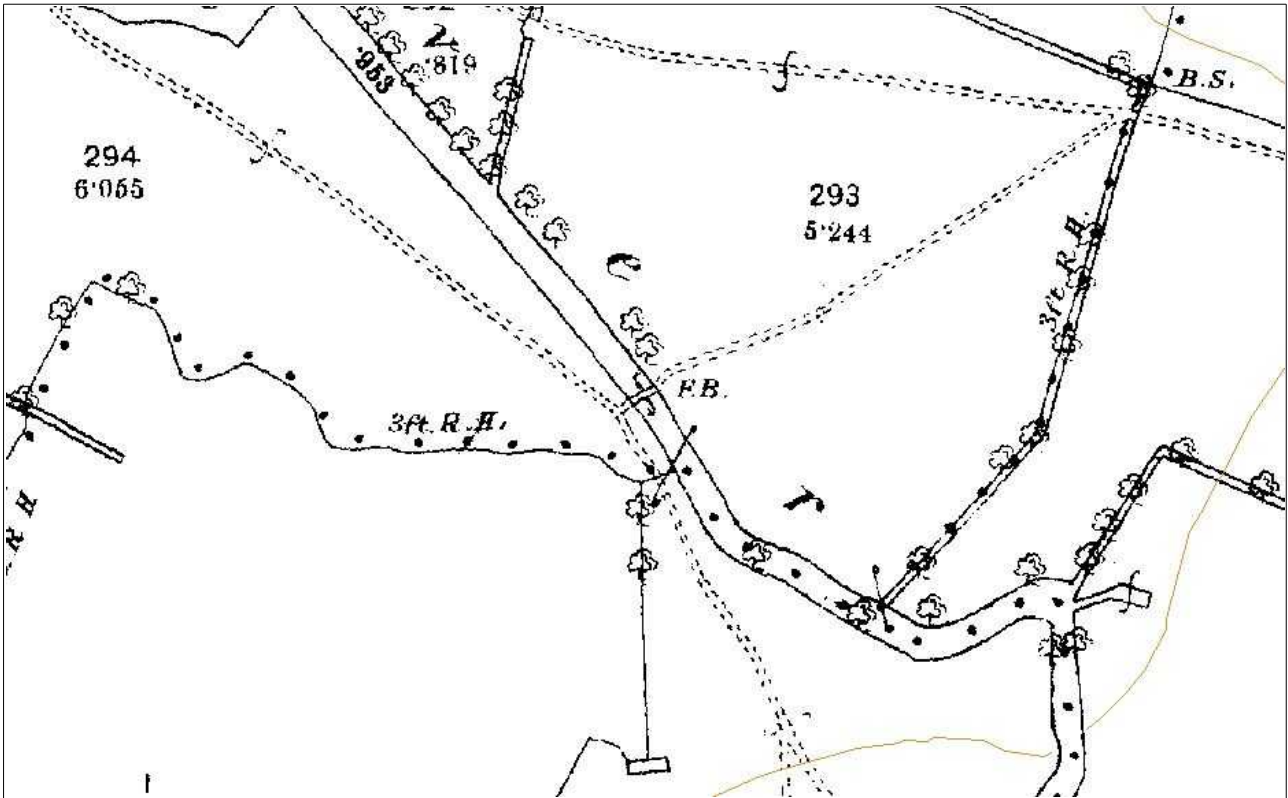


Fig 4: Iwood footpath bridge, 1885 (OS 1st edition)



Fig 5: Iwood footpath bridge, 2018

Clearly the current crossing structure is very recent: usually such crossings are spanned by single (or if lucky, several parallel) planks. The footpath runs from Wrington to Iwood, with side paths to West Hay and the Churchill Road.

The crossing and the footpath it supports is not recorded before 1885, but it seems likely to have been in existence before this. It is certainly not recorded on the Tithe Map for Congresbury, but this is not very reliable evidence of its absence, since small crossings were seldom, if ever, recorded.

The river is bridged within the garden of Iwood manor, but this is a private garden crossing. The Roman road forming the northern end of Iwood Lane must have crossed the river, but 11th century engineering for Iwood Mill may have moved the river course north.

2 Iwood Road bridge ST45306305

This bridge carries Iwood Lane, which connects the Wrington-Congresbury road in the north to the Congresbury to Churchill road at Willings cross in the south.



Fig 6: Iwood road bridge from the west, 2016

The bridge consists of a double arch, the north lined with black engineering brick, and the south by normal red; the body of the bridge of uncoursed Carboniferous limestone rubble, in black mortar, topped on each side by a parapet with stones set on edge. The current version looks very much late 19th century, or even early 20th: local recollections that it replaced a ford at the site may be confused recollections of this construction.

The crossing is certainly depicted on both the Congresbury Inclosure map of 1816 (Fig 8) and Day and Masters Somerset map of 1782 (Fig 7).



Figs 7 & 8: The crossing 1782 (left) and 1816 (right)

Evidence for the Roman road forming the northern section of Iwood Lane is fairly secure, and YCCCART is currently working on the line. It would not have crossed the river at the site of Iwood Bridge, though, since its line was found in the grounds of the Manor and points at a crossing further east. In addition, the line of the river was clearly moved sometime between the Wrington charter of 904 AD and 1086, when the mill is recorded in Domesday: it seems likely to have been during the ownership of Dudoc and the bishopric in the early 11th century, from a visible palaeochannel in the field immediately south of the Manor.

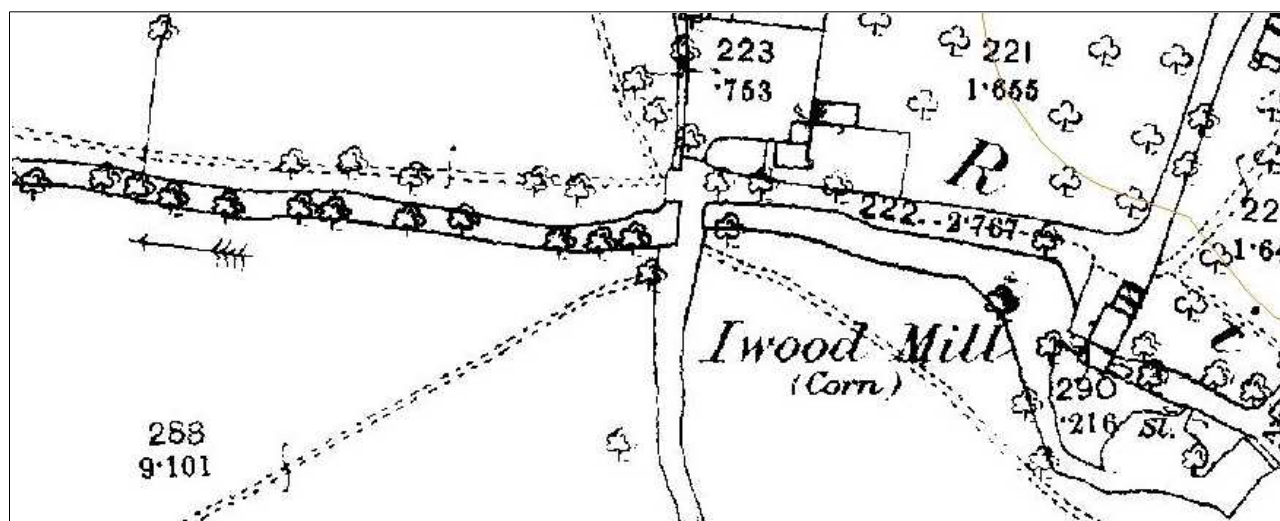


Fig 9: Iwood crossing and mill, 1885 (OS Epoch 1)

3 Collins bridge ST45066307

This is one of three parapetless bow bridges over the Yeo between Iwood and West Mill at Congresbury.



Fig 10: Iwood bow bridge, east elevation 2014



Fig 11: Iwood bow bridge, west elevation 2006

This bridge was Listed Grade II, along with numbers 4 and 5 below. The Listing is as follows (but see important note on page 5 above re confusion in the text description):

Various parishes, Photographic and documentary study, Crossings on Congresbury Yeo, 2024, Y3, v1

CONGRESBURY

1816/0/10038 Bow Bridge over River Yeo 26-OCT-07

GV II Bridge spanning the River Yeo to the south east of Congresbury. Possibly late-C18 or early-C19. Local stone cut and squared. It has a single span arch of approximately 5.5m consisting of a single row of voussoirs on either side with a very low, single-coursed stone parapet.

HISTORY: This bridge is situated on a footpath that crosses the River Yeo. It is one of three small-scale bridges located in close proximity to each other which span the river to the east and south east of the village. Bow Bridge is shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map and was probably constructed in the late-C18 or early-C19.

*REASON FOR DESIGNATION DECISION: Bow Bridge to the south east of Congresbury is designated at Grade II, for the following principal reasons: * It is a substantially intact late-C18 or early-C19 bridge over the River Yeo * It possesses strong group value with other bridges of a similar date and style.*

SOURCES: Congresbury Parish Council, 'The Congresbury Character Statement' (1998) <http://congresbury.xwiki.com/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Plan1996>.

One of the dating problems for this crossing is that, like the footbridge at Iwood, it does not appear on the Congresbury Tithe Map.

It does appear, however, on the 1816 Inclosure map (Fig 12) but is unfortunately outside of the area depicted on the de Wilstar maps of Congresbury of 1736-9.



Fig 12: The bridge seen on the 1816 Inclosure map (at the top right of the field labelled B. Thayer)

The clear implication of the Historic England Listing description is that the three bow bridges at Iwood, Somerset Lane and the Park (see below) are contemporary.

Their construction details do seem similar, with a central arch spanning an area between two solid stone abutments: the top of the archstones is usually visible in the surface of the bridge. They all have later 'cheek' walls protecting against the widening of the river.

The bridge at Somerset Lane (below) is called 'New Bridge' on the de Wilstar maps, perhaps implying either no predecessor, or new construction in 1736-9, although 'New' as a placename can be very misleading (new by comparison with what?).

4 Bow bridge at Somerset Lane ST44696315



Fig 13: Somerset Lane bridge, east elevation 2006

This bridge is also Listed at Grade II by Historic England:

CONGRESBURY

1816/0/10028 Bridge over River Yeo 16-JAN-03

II

Bridge across the River Yeo at Congresbury. c.1800. Dressed Pennant stone, rubble infill. A single span arch approx. 3 m. wide, with a span of approx. 4 m., consisting of a single row of voussoirs on either side. There is no parapet: whether one existed, and has been knocked into the river, is unclear. To the east side is a slightly projecting keystone.

HISTORY: this bridge is understood to pre-date a map of 1835. It lies on the route of a drover's road and is an unusual survival on account of its unmetalled surface and the presence of an associated track that has similarly escaped strengthening or upgrading. .



Fig 14: Somerset Lane bridge, west elevation 2014

The bridge is on the line of Somerset Lane, a track connecting Venus Street in Congresbury with Urchinwood. The track is extremely overgrown at its southern end, but visible as a clear earthwork towards Urchinwood Manor.



Fig 15: The bridge shown on the deWilstar map of 1736-9, labelled 'New Bridge'

The Yeo is seemingly too deep for a previous ford at this site: there is no obvious traces of (for example) pre-existing earthwork ramps leading down to the river.

There may have been a wooden predecessor, if Somerset Lane is ancient.

The field to the north-west of the bridge is named 'Bridge Plot' on the 1809 copy of the de Wilstar maps, reflecting the importance of the structure. Its presence and naming on the 1736-9 map shows it probably dated to the early 18th century (unless, of course, it is a replacement for an earlier, in which case, Historic England's dating is possible).

5 Bow bridge at the Park ST44446337



Fig 16: Bow bridge at the Park, east elevation, 2007



Fig 17: Bow bridge at the Park, west elevation, 2014

This is the third bridge on the river Listed by Historic England (but see important note on page 5 above re confusion in the text description):

CONGRESBURY

1816/0/10039 Collins Bridge over River Yeo 26-OCT-07 (inaccurate: this name applies to bridge 3, not 5)

GV II Bridge spanning the River Yeo to the east of Congresbury. Probably late-C18 or early-C19. Local stone cut and squared. It has a single span arch of approximately 7m consisting of a single row of voussoirs on either side. There is no parapet: whether one existed is unclear.

HISTORY: This bridge is situated on a footpath that crosses the River Yeo. It is one of three small-scale bridges located in close proximity to each other which span the river to the east and south east of the village. Collins Bridge is shown on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map and was probably constructed in the late-C18 or early-C19.

*REASON FOR DESIGNATION DECISION: Collins Bridge to the east of Congresbury is designated at Grade II, for the following principal reasons: * It is a substantially intact late-C18 or early-C19 bridge over the River Yeo * It possesses strong group value with other bridges of a similar date and style. * It is an unusual survival on account of its unmetalled surface and the presence of an associated track that has similarly escaped strengthening or upgrading.*

SOURCES: Congresbury Parish Council, 'The Congresbury Character Statement' (1998) <http://congresbury.xwiki.com/xwiki/bin/view/Main/Plan1996>

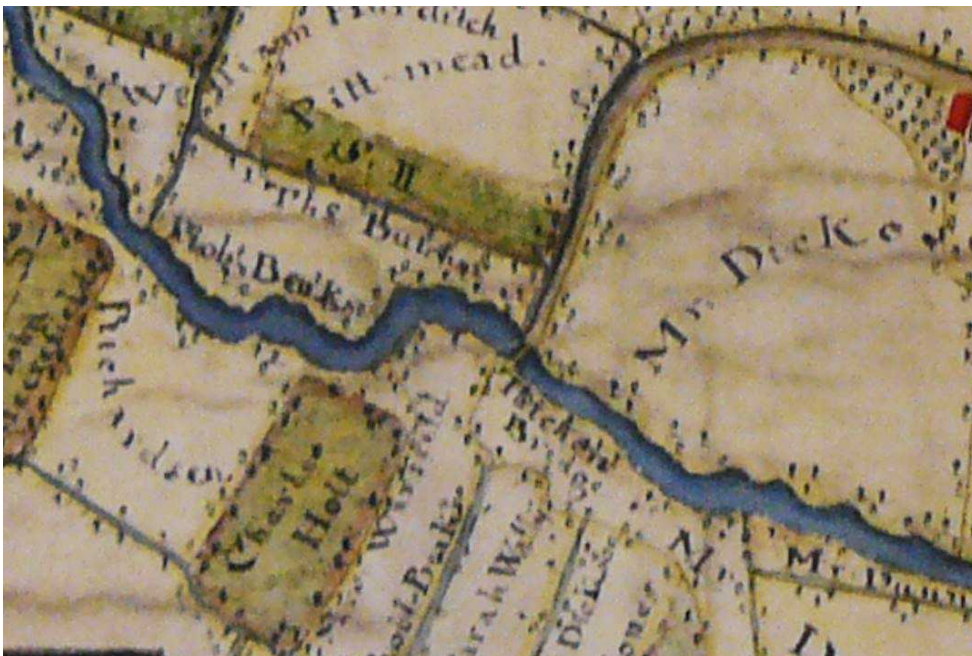


Fig 18: Bridge 5 on the 1736-9 de Wilstar map

It should be noted that the name of the bridge given here is 'Tatchers Bridge': presumably a present or recent user or owner was responsible for the name in each case.

The bridge was approached by a lane around the Park.

This lane is no longer extant.

The height of the arch on the three Listed bridges is clearly different, Bridge 4 being distinctly higher in the arch than 3 or 5: while they may well be contemporary, some subtle differences exist.

6 West Mill weir ST44196352

This is probably one of the oldest crossings of the river, although Congresbury Bridge's earliest origins have not been fully available, and the crossing there may be as old.

West Mill is at least as old as Domesday (1086 CE), and judging by the river engineering required to power it, may have been earlier still, possibly produced, along with Iwood Mill (above) in the early 11th century.



Fig 19: Weir and river crossing at West Mill, 2018

There would have been a weir of some kind at the beginning of the mill, since it was necessary to divert river water to provide flow to power the mill wheels. Depending on the nature of the weir, it may have been passable even then, as many were, especially those reconstructed in stone.

The weir was largely rebuilt in the 1970s, replacing a much older, much repaired and patched weir, recorded in 20th century photographs.



Fig 20: West Mill weir in 1963 (courtesy of Congresbury Local History Society)



Fig 21: West Mill weir from downstream, 1920s (courtesy of Congresbury Local History Society).

This weir formed the limit to navigation for seagoing vessels from its construction. In the 18th century, Dunn's Mill at this site was a pioneering 'iron slitting' site, its water powered conversion of iron precursor bars to become nails, a foretaste of the Industrial Revolution. Iron was transported up the Congresbury Yeo to the site from as far away as Sweden and Russia.



Fig 22: West Mill weir from the de Wilstar map of 1736-9

7 The Millennium bridge ST43886382

This new pedestrian bridge was a product of the millennium celebrations (hence the name), and is described elsewhere.

The area around Congresbury Bridge was, of course, radically altered in the replacement of the bridge in 1924, with the river course being altered away from the back of the Ship and Castle pub: the Millennium Bridge is at the end of the unaltered course, which from this point formerly ran through what is now the pub car park (YCCART 2018)



Fig 23: The Millennium bridge, 2017

The next bridge along the Yeo is the Congresbury Bridge (YCCART 2018) which dates in its original form (the modern bridge is a 20th century replacement) back to at least the mid-16th century.

8 Congresbury railway bridge ST43156400

This crossing came into existence and use with this section of the Cheddar Valley Line in August 1869 (Mitchell & Smith 1997). The line closed in 1964, and both road and river bridges were removed fairly soon afterwards.

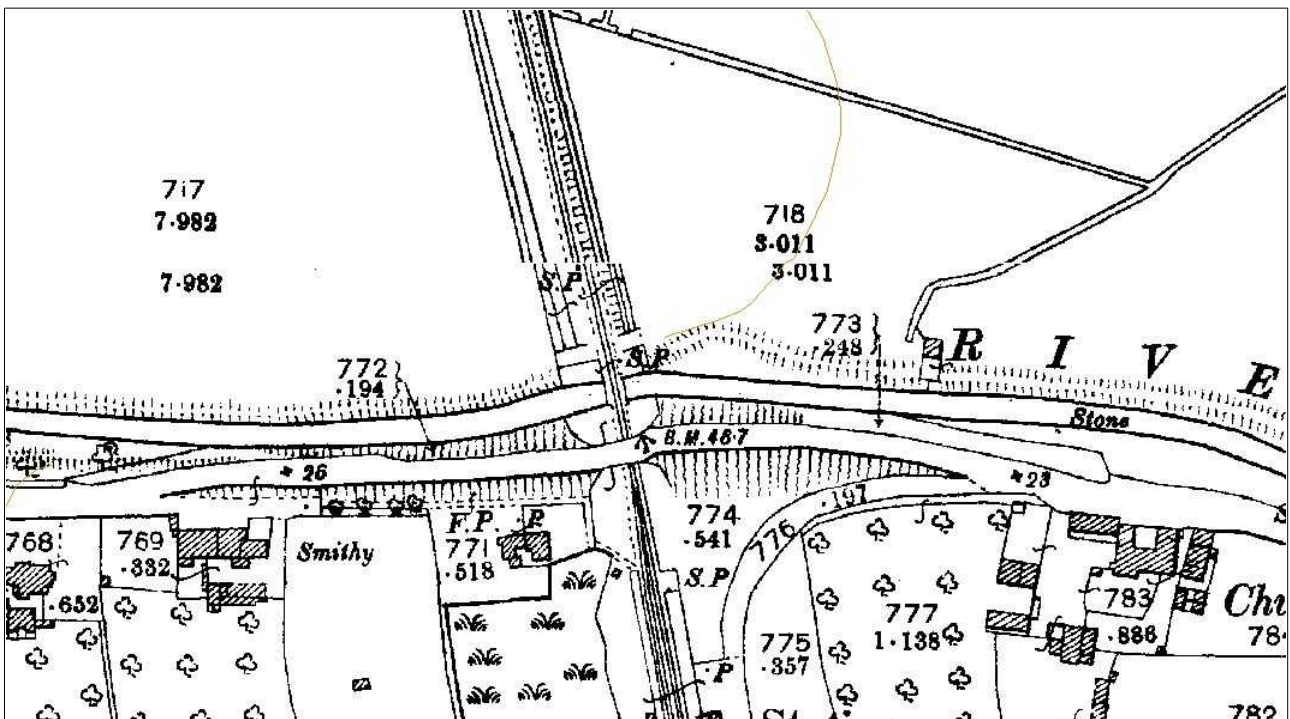


Fig 24: Road bridge and river crossing layout at Congresbury station, 1903 OS

Like most railway bridges, it was probably used informally by locals walking between the Prince of Wales and Smallway...



Fig 25: Mid-1960s photograph showing the river crossing already removed, while the road bridge awaits removal.

9 Moor Lane bridge ST42906400

The current structure at this site is modern, probably late 20th century.

A bridge obviously must have existed to service the new accommodation tracks after the Inclosure of 1816. None occurs on the 1736-9 de Wilstar map of Congresbury.



Fig 26: Moor bridge from 1816 Inclosure plan of Congresbury and Puxton.

This is (slightly confusingly) another New Bridge.

It is shown on the map as a broad short feature, which was presumably its original plan.

The bridge today is used by commercial traffic serving a yard off Moor Lane, which may account for its upgrading.



Fig 27: Moor Lane bridge 2022 (Google Earth Street View)

10 Gangwall (Pillhay) bridge ST 41656478



Fig 28: Gangwall pedestrian bridge on footpath at the junction of Gangwall and the Yeo, 2017

The present bridge is a wooden plank-built structure with wooden fenced sides, resting on coursed stone abutments on either side of the river.

Although the bridge is never depicted as large on maps (e.g. Fig 29 below), there must have been a more substantial structure at one point, serving the footpath leading from Yatton, down the bank of Gangwall, across the bridge and on to the farms at Hewish. The structure was maintained for centuries by the manor owners, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, a

selection of the costs below:

Date	Pd	Site	Contractor	£ s d	Work involved
1639	p	Gangditch Bge	Wallis John	0 02 00	2 posts & a stay for Gangditch Bridg
1641	p	[Pill Bridge]	Wallis John	0 03 04	repairs for Pill Bridge & a plank upon the Brids?
1642	p	Pill Bridge	Wallis John	0 03 08	repairs & a great plank to lay on the bridge
1657	p	Pill Bridge		2 10 00	repairs; trees hauling & laying
1663	p	Pill Bridge		0 05 00	repair & setting up a lone?
1685	p	Pill Bridge		0 05 00	for a new ---?
1687	p	Pill Bridge		0 04 06	repairs & setting up a post and a lone?
1688	p			0 04 06	repairs at Pilbridge
1693	p			0 01 07	loan Gangers Bridge & Speeke
1693	p	Pill Bridge		0 02 00	loan & plate & nails
1716	p	Pillhay brdge		4 04 05	bridge work
1723	p	Pillhay Bridge		0 01 00	repairs (setting the bridge upright)
1734	p			36 05 06	yeo work plus keeching and Pillhay Brdge repair

[A 'stay' is a bracing strut; 'plate' refers to wood, not metal; 'keeching' is clearing vegetation from waterways; 'lone' in this context is not understood: it is obviously a structural feature of some kind.]

There does not seem to be any trace at or near the site of a previous structure, but the river has been widened, thrown and keeched on many occasions, and it is quite possible that these works have destroyed any such structures.

There are stone structures in the south bank of the river close to this site, but they are all connected to the construction and operation of Rennie's syphon (YCCART 2017). As mentioned above, the bridge has never been depicted on maps as large (Fig 29 below), but it is clear that QEH regarded the bridge as important enough (like Phipps Bridge below) to maintain over decades (accounts post-1734 are not currently available).



Fig 29: Pillhay bridge from the 1821 Yatton map (SHC D/P/yat/13/1/3)

The position of this crossing at the end of Gangwall and close to the parish boundary is surely significant.

The upkeep and protection of the bank was recognised as a manorial duty in the 17th century: 'Anyone driving goods upon Gangwall would be liable to a 20s fine' (Barracough 1991:29; YCCART 2017). This was a considerable sum, although it is understandable that graziers might wish to move sheep and cattle along these relatively dry paths, and this would have required a significant river crossing structure.

11 Pillhay Farm bridge ST41216508

Today's Pillhay Farm bridge is relatively recent in origin.

The initial footbridge was at approximately ST31476498 (see Fig 30 below). It may have been recently new, although it figures on the Yatton 1821 (but again, not on the Tithe Map of 1840). The crossing goes on figuring on OS maps (where referred to as a FB - footbridge) until 1930: it was missing by 1946, when RAF air photographs show a vehicular bridge has been built close to the farm. (Fig 30).

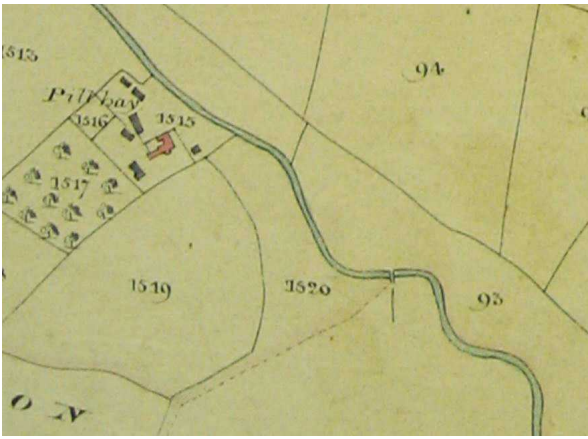


Fig 30: First Pillhay farm bridge 1821 (left); current in 1946 (right)



Fig 31: Pillhay Farm bridge (left) and Fig 32: Pillhay railway bridge, 2021

12 Railway bridge at Pillhay ST41086519

A bridge for this railway was constructed c 1840, when the Bristol and Exeter Railway was under construction, in the area, and was depicted, possibly actually in the course of construction, on the Yatton Tithe Map (Fig 33 below).

It has been reconstructed at least once since then (see Fig 30 above), and now boasts flat-arched bolted panel sides with metal side-rails: the 1840 map seems to show the support in place for a double-arched structure.

Immediately adjacent to the west, the Pillhay to Wemberham river bank path follows the old river course (presumably moved during the construction of the railway crossing) at grade, although it is no longer a public right of way. Unlike the earlier canals and later motorways, railways do not seem to have greatly favoured riverside paths.

An earlier map of 1821 shows no pre-existing structure at the site.

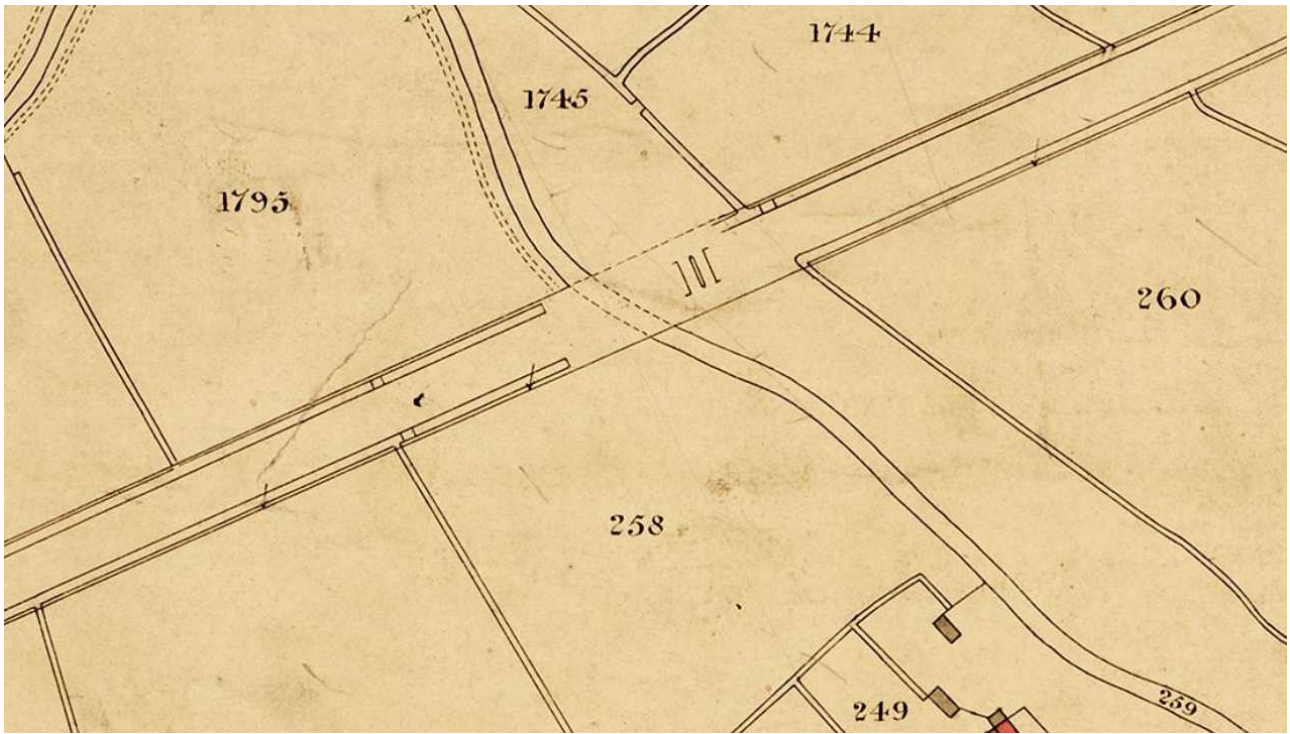


Fig 33: Pillhay Railway bridge on the Yatton Tithe Map of 1840, possibly under construction at the time.

13 Phipp's Bridge ST39436520

This was another bridge maintained by QEH (see 10 Gangwall Bridge above): the crossing is on what must have once been a fairly busy rural road from Hewish to Kingston Seymour, the 'lowest crossing of the Yeo' before modern times (Stuckey 1990).

Really surprisingly, and despite extensive searches, I have not been able to find a photograph of this bridge before demolition: a 1956 sluice occupies the site today.

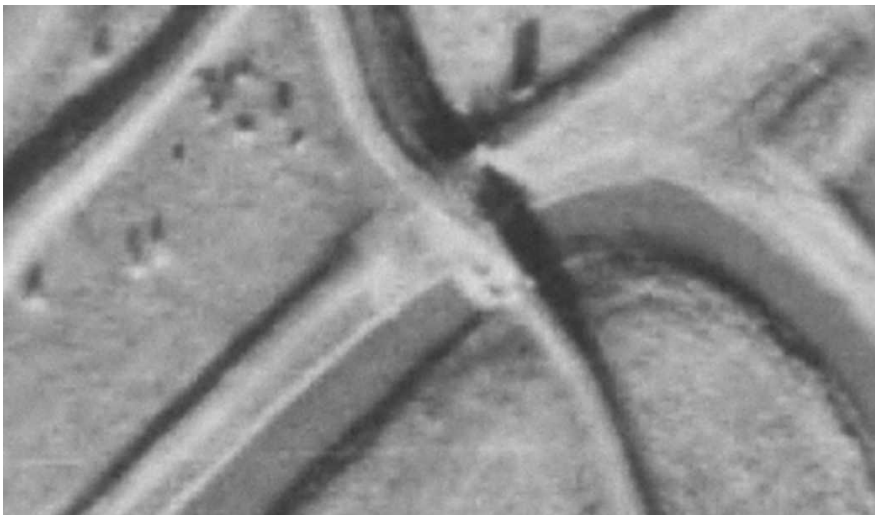


Fig 34: 1946 air photograph of Phipp's Bridge

The 1946 air photograph appears to show a twin-arched structure, possibly with a squared parapet (Fig 34) approached by ramps, indicated by shadow on the photograph: neither is visible at the site today (see below).

The bridge features on maps of 1780 or so: it's name varies dramatically in spelling over the years!

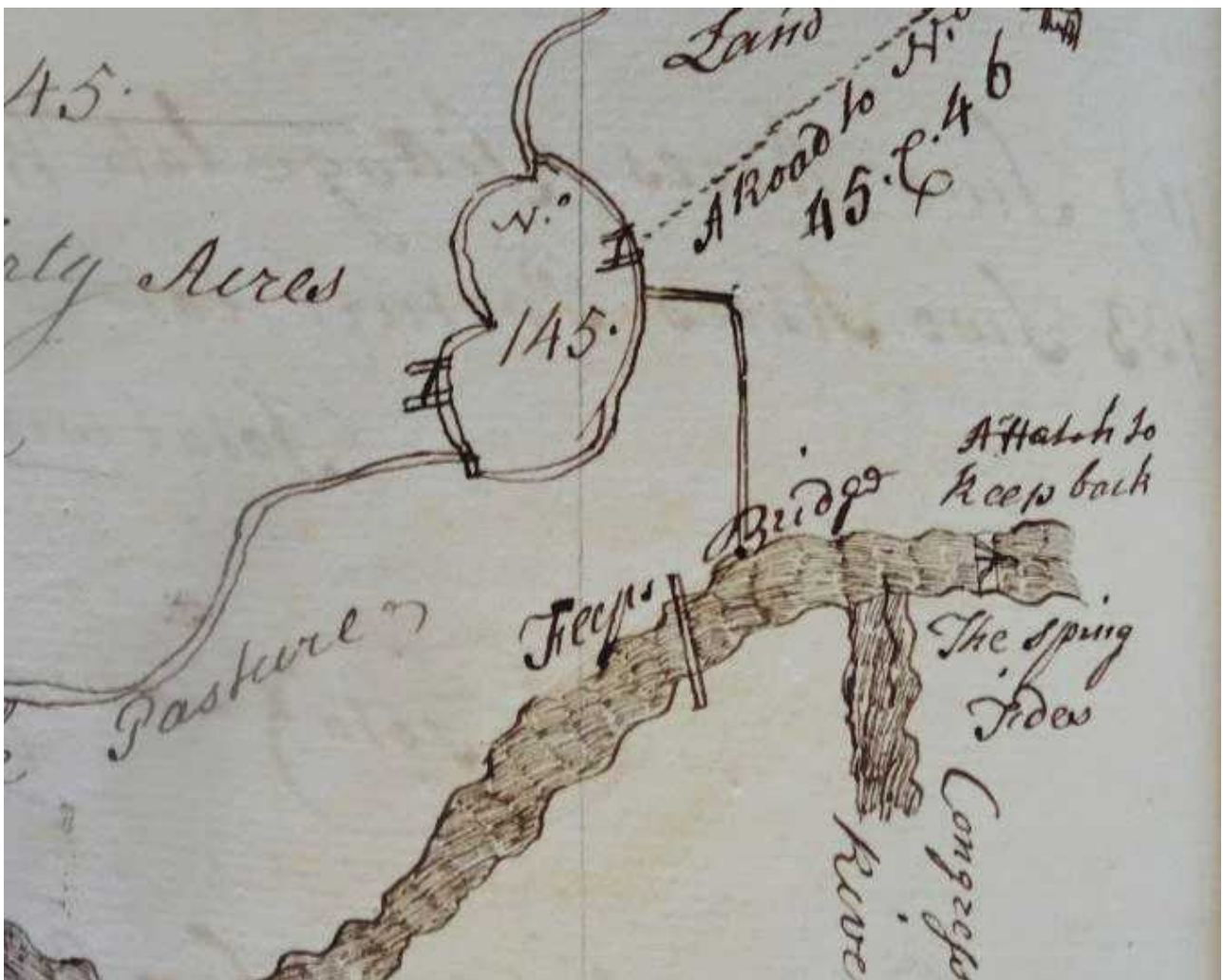


Fig 35: 'Feep's Bridge' 1780 (SHC DD\PT/H452/42)

The bridge is one of the best candidates for an early (?medieval) crossing of the river, and the sluice at the site still carries a public footpath.

The structure was maintained for centuries by the manor owners, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, a selection of the costs below:

Date	Pd	Site	Contractor	£ s d	Work involved
1629	p	Phipps Bridge		0 08 00	Repairs, spikes, nails, timber & wages
1637	p	Phipps Bridge		0 07 00	Repairs nails and hauling stones for repairs
1637	p	Phipps Bridge		0 10 02	Repairs, timber & 'stuff'
1642	p	Phipps Bridge	Wallis John	0 03 04	Repairs with planks and nails
1684	p	Fips Bridge		0 05 00	Repairs

1684	p	Phipps Bridge	0 16 00	Bolts, speeks, plates and nails
1709		Phipps Bridge	11 12 03	Repairs
1723		Phipps Bridge	0 05 00	Repairs including 9 foot of planks and nails
1731		Phipps Bridge	9 07 04	Repairs

The figures above are revealing: clearly there was a stone component in the bridge in 1637, presumably abutments at least. Works in 1709 and 1731 must, by their amounts, have been fairly major repairs or even rebuildings.

The 1821 maps of Yatton and Kingston Seymour both show the bridge: a cottage to its north, removed by works for the M5, was known as Phipp's Bridge Cottage.



Fig 36: Phipp's Bridge from 1821 Kingston Seymour map (with thanks to Jane Bell)

At some time after 1946, a sluice was built at the site: although it completely removed any obvious visible trace of the former bridge, at least the name survives (Fig 39).

The 1946 air photograph shows that the structure of the bridge did not much overtop the banks of the river, so the lack of remaining structure is not entirely surprising, although some stonework in the river below the sluice may be some remains of the bridge (Fig 37), most easily seen at low water level in the summer.



Fig 37: Possible remains of earlier structures in the river below Phipp's Sluice



Fig 38: Phipp's Sluice 2017



Fig 39: It is quite rare for archaeological sites to bear convenient dating evidence!

14 Water metering station at Iwood ST45186305



Fig 40: Water metering structure at Iwood from east and YCCART team

A water meter at Iwood (which can be consulted on-line to check current water levels - riverlevels.uk/congresbury-yeo-congresbury-iwood).

This dates from some time in the third quarter of the 20th century, being absent in 1946, but there in 1973. It contains a pedestrian bridge over the river, but it is private and the gates to it locked.

15 Weston Clevedon and Portishead Railway crossing ST38026850

This bridge was specifically created for the WC&P railway, and is shown in use below (Fig 41).



Fig 41: Weston, Clevedon and Portishead bridge in use c1930 (Mitchell & Smith 2003)

This section of the railway opened in December 1897, and closed to all traffic in May 1940. The railway was never a fiscal success, and its effect on the landscape was slight, although quite long sections acted as field boundaries until comparatively recently.

The double-line track crossed the river on a cast-iron girder bridge, supported on the north bank by timber baulk abutment, and over the river by pairs of cast-iron braced stanchions, some of which remain in the river today.

It seems extraordinary that at a time in WW2 when all metals were being recovered for the war effort, that some of the stanchions were never recovered.

At the time, this was the lowest crossing of the river, and was undoubtedly used informally as footbridge. It was close to the remarkable cast concrete jetty of 1912, used for a short period for importing coal for the trains direct on a WC&P-owned boat.

A wreck of the jetty survives today (Fig 42): when visiting in c 2000, I was told by a local farmer that during construction, the company had stored some of the pre-cast sections in his farmyard, and that there were two still there!



Fig 42: 1912 jetty at Wick St Lawrence, 1998



Fig 43: Bridge stanchions, 1998

Although they have partly fallen over since 1998, the stanchions still mark the line of the railway today (Fig 44 below).

An unfortunate accident happened in 1934, when a heavy locomotive, named *Hesperus* (oh, the irony!) was too heavy for the line to the jetty, which partially collapsed under it. The Wreck of the *Hesperus* was a local story for a long time after, adding to the slightly comical fond regard in which the line was locally held.



Fig 44: The bridge stanchions at Tutshill Ear, October 2023

Fig 16: M5 bridge at Pillhay Farm ST38976493

This bridge, a typical cast concrete motorway river crossing, was constructed between 1970 and 1972. There is no passageway or footpath through it.

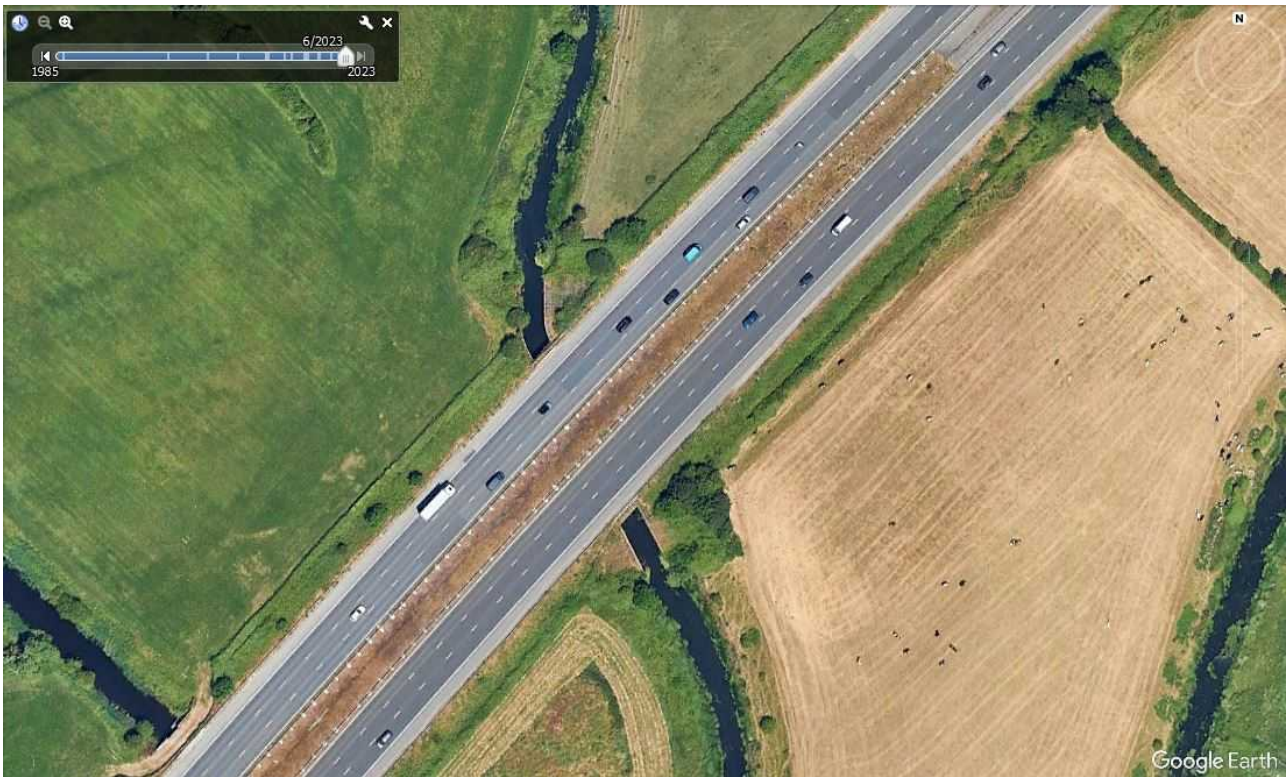


Fig 45: M5 river crossing at Wemberham, 2023



Fig 46: M5 river crossing from NW, 2020 (Google Earth)

17 Hinkley C Project bridge at Pillhay ST41556484

At the time of writing, a large number of temporary bridges are being used on the Hinkley C connection project, which is erecting new 400kV lines on new T-pylons, among other areas from Sandford cross-country to Nailsea.

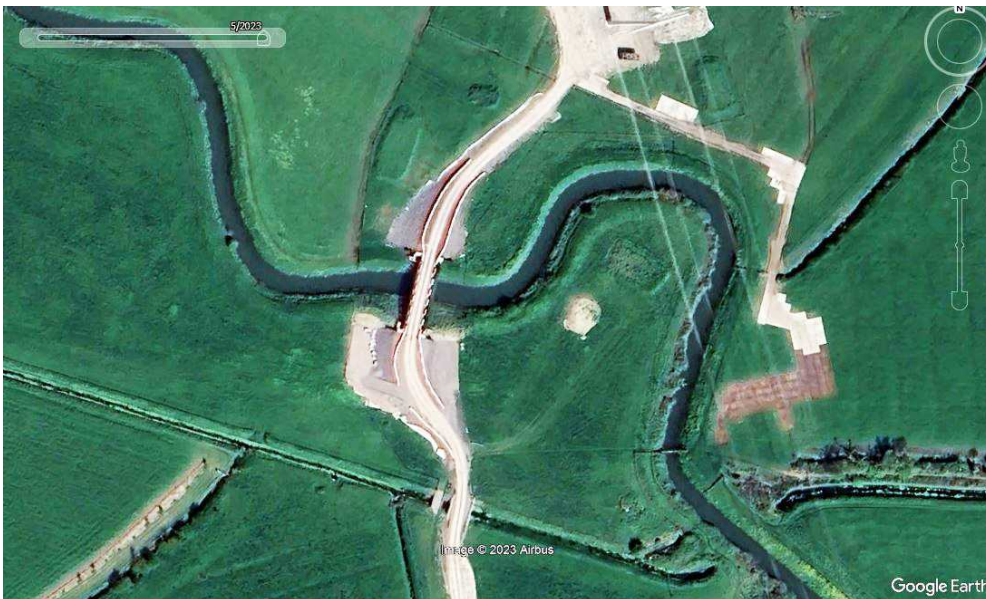


Fig 47: Hinkley construction bridge at Pillhay, May 2023, crossing Congresbury Yeo and New Rhyne.

Gangwall can be seen at the lower right corner of this air photograph.

A crossing at Iwood Manor was originally assigned number 18 for this study, but this turns out to be a garden feature in the landscaping of the remains of Iwood Mill, and subsequently the number was reassigned to the Roman crossing of the Yeo at Iwood. This is not shown in Figure 2, as its actual location is not absolutely certain.

18 ?Roman river crossing at Iwood ST454629c [in area of Iwood Mill]

There is initial mention of a potential Roman river crossing at Iwood in the discussion of Iwood Lane bridge (above).

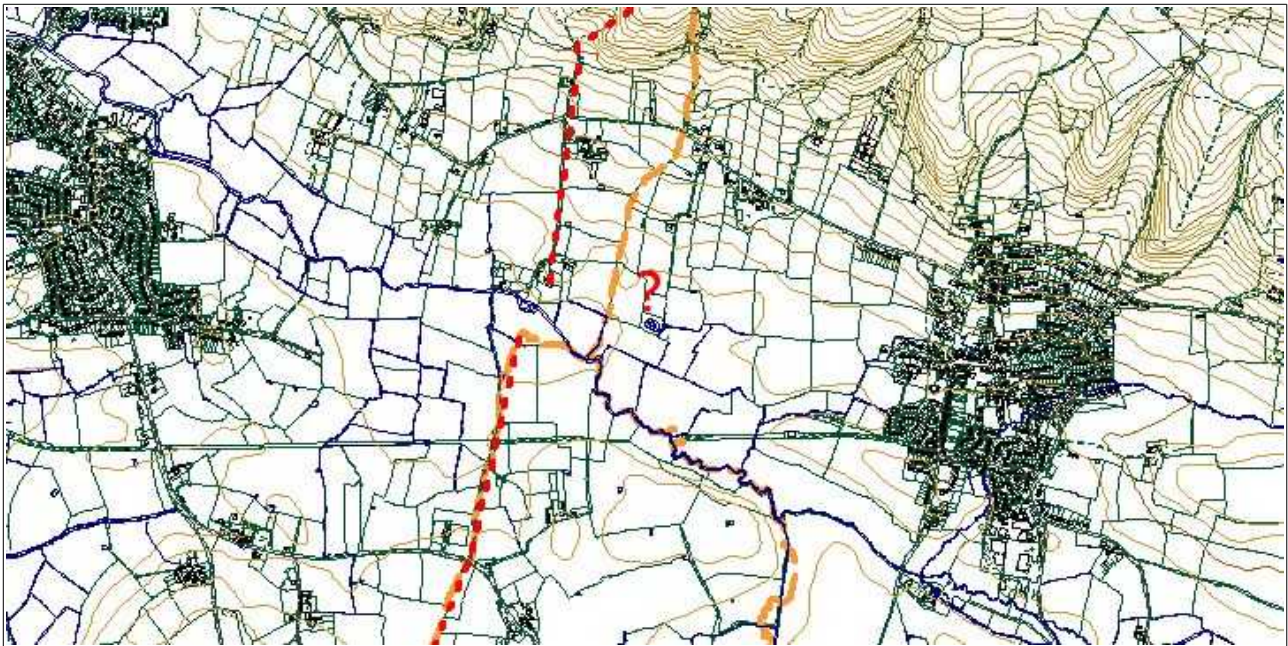


Fig 48: Putative Roman road at Iwood

The Roman road suggested at Iwood is based on the very straight parish boundaries between Congresbury and Churchill south of the Congresbury Yeo, and on the straight Iwood Lane, north of Iwood Manor. Further possible lines above in Kings Wood are currently under investigation by YCCCART.

A section of road lying on the line of Iwood Lane was found in the grounds of Iwood manor in 2012 (YCCCART 2012): the section between there and Iwood Lane south of the river is not clear.

The situation is further confused by the post-Roman realignment of the river to power Iwood Mill, which I have argued is most likely to have happened under the ownership of Congresbury (and presumably Iwood) by the bishopric in the 11th century CE, as the mill was already working and recorded in Domesday 1086 CE.

A palaeochannel to the south of the river represents the former course of the river before this diversion, possibly confirmed by the fact that the parish boundary of Congresbury and Churchill (once part of Banwell) follows it for a distance, when it turns abruptly south to follow another line, presumably that of the former Roman road.

It seems highly likely that this was the site of the Roman road crossing (see Fig 49 below).

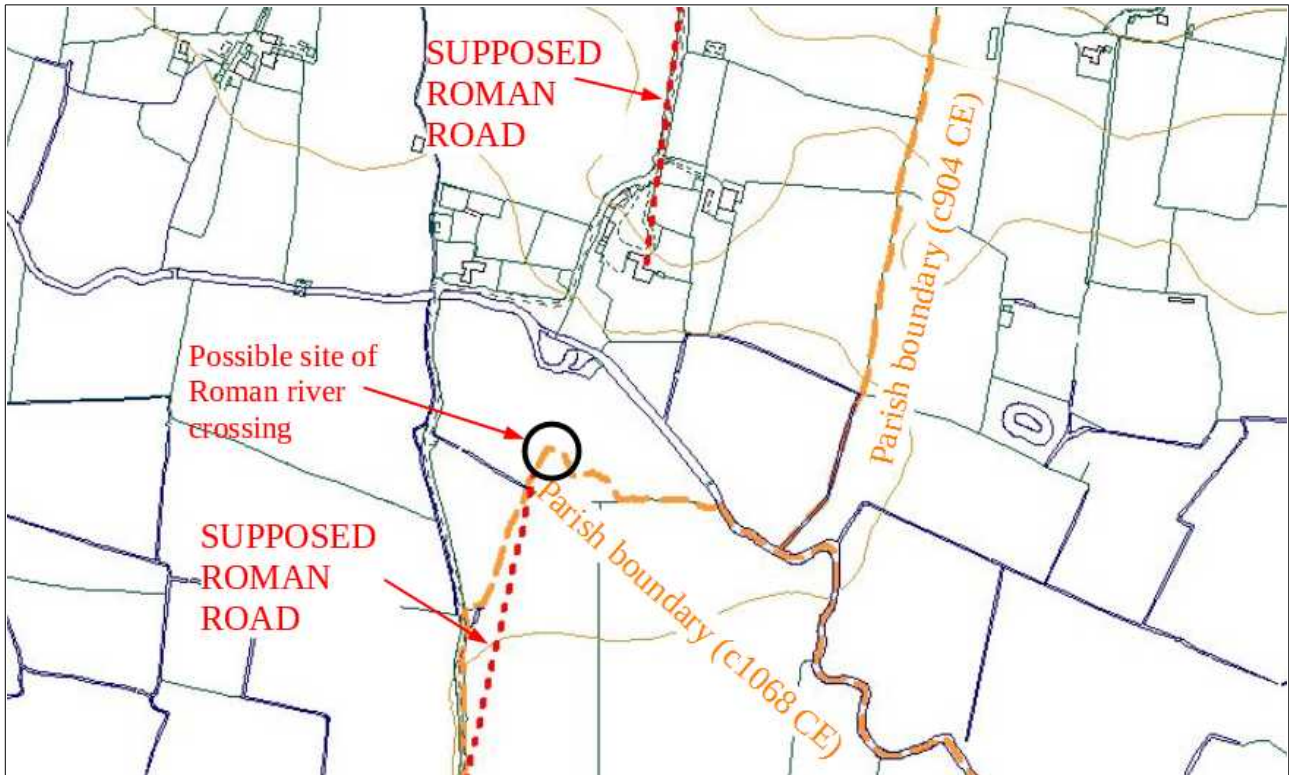


Fig 49: Possible Roman crossing of the former river course at Iwood

Strictly speaking then, this site seems not to lie on the modern line of the Yeo, but the site requires further geophysical survey to be sure.

19 and 20: Sea Wall Farm sluice (Tutshill Ear) and Sea Wall Farm bridge, Kingston Seymour (ST38176579 and ST38426570)

Sea Wall farm sluice carries a vehicular track across its top, which running on the old WC&P railway line, eventually runs into the road at Bourton in Wick St Lawrence, presumably for maintenance traffic.

The route has been the subject of protracted negotiations over a 'Pier to Pier' cycle track (Clevedon to Weston-super-Mare), the latest proposed opening date for which is spring 2024.

The sluice was the result of major engineering in the 3rd quarter of the 20th century (between air photographs of 1946 and 1971) and included a substantial realignment of the Yeo at the point, the old river course being partly backfilled to carry the track.

This is, for the moment, the lowest crossing point on the Congresbury Yeo.



Fig 50: Tutshill ear sluice, 2023

The western side can be seen in the background of Fig 43 above.



Fig 51: Tutshill Ear sluice, 2023

Seawall Farm bridge, nearby, was constructed in the 2020s (not visible on 2021 air photographs):

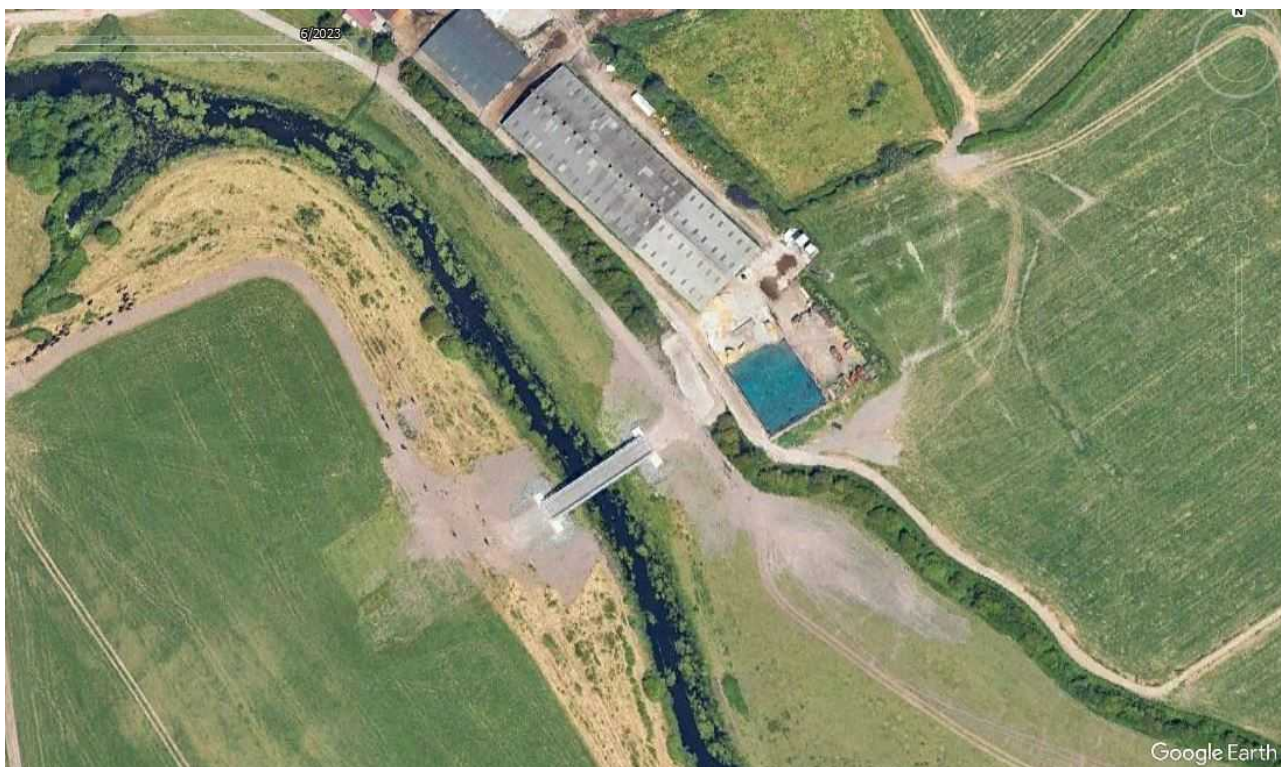


Fig 52: Seawall farm bridge, 2023

21 Footbridge and sluice at Wemberham ST40656517

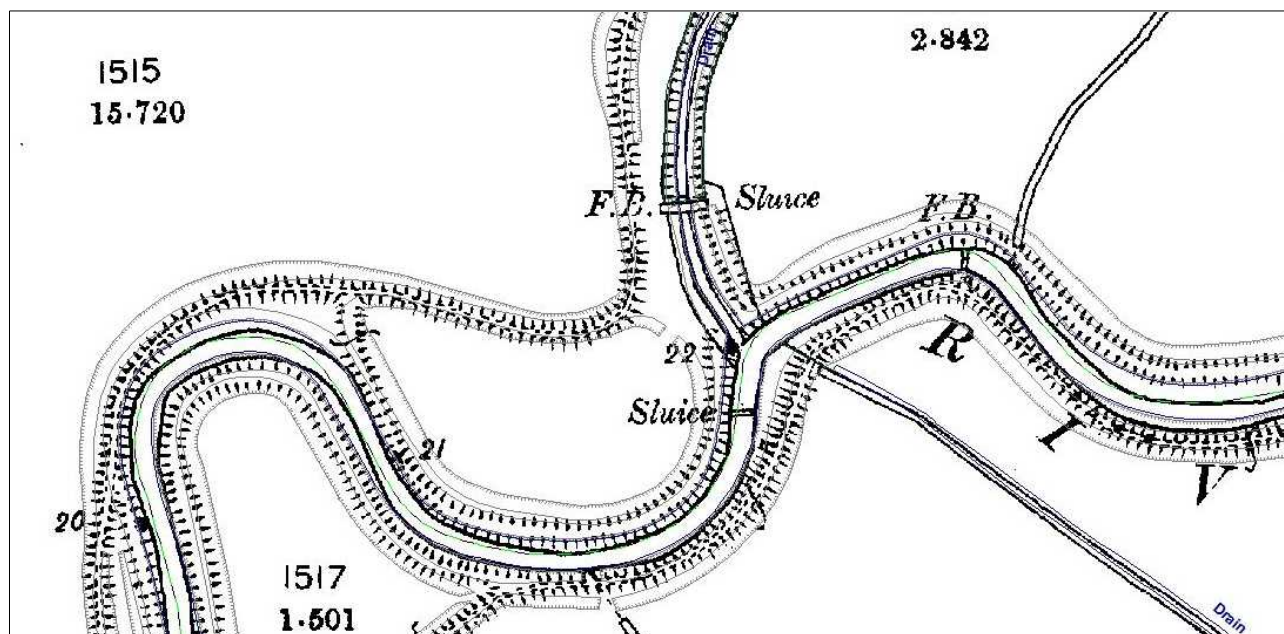


Fig 53: Sluices at Wemberham, 1903 (example in the river not present in 1885) (OS)

The bridge element, actually given a FB label on the 1973 OS plan (Epoch 5), but the

presence of the footbridge cannot be confirmed after the air photographs of 1975. It is surely significant that there is no modern confirmed public right of way along this route.

These 21 crossings (including the slightly off-line Roman crossing at Iwood) are almost certainly not the only crossings there have been during a long history. Unlike many of the rivers in the Northmarsh, though, there is little evidence from lidar that the current river represents a narrowing of a former much shallower and wider waterway.

In this case, then, any structure intending to cross the river below the Wrington boundary would be an engineering feat requiring substantial structures, of which some evidence might remain.

For example, the 1773 Land map (Fig 54 below):

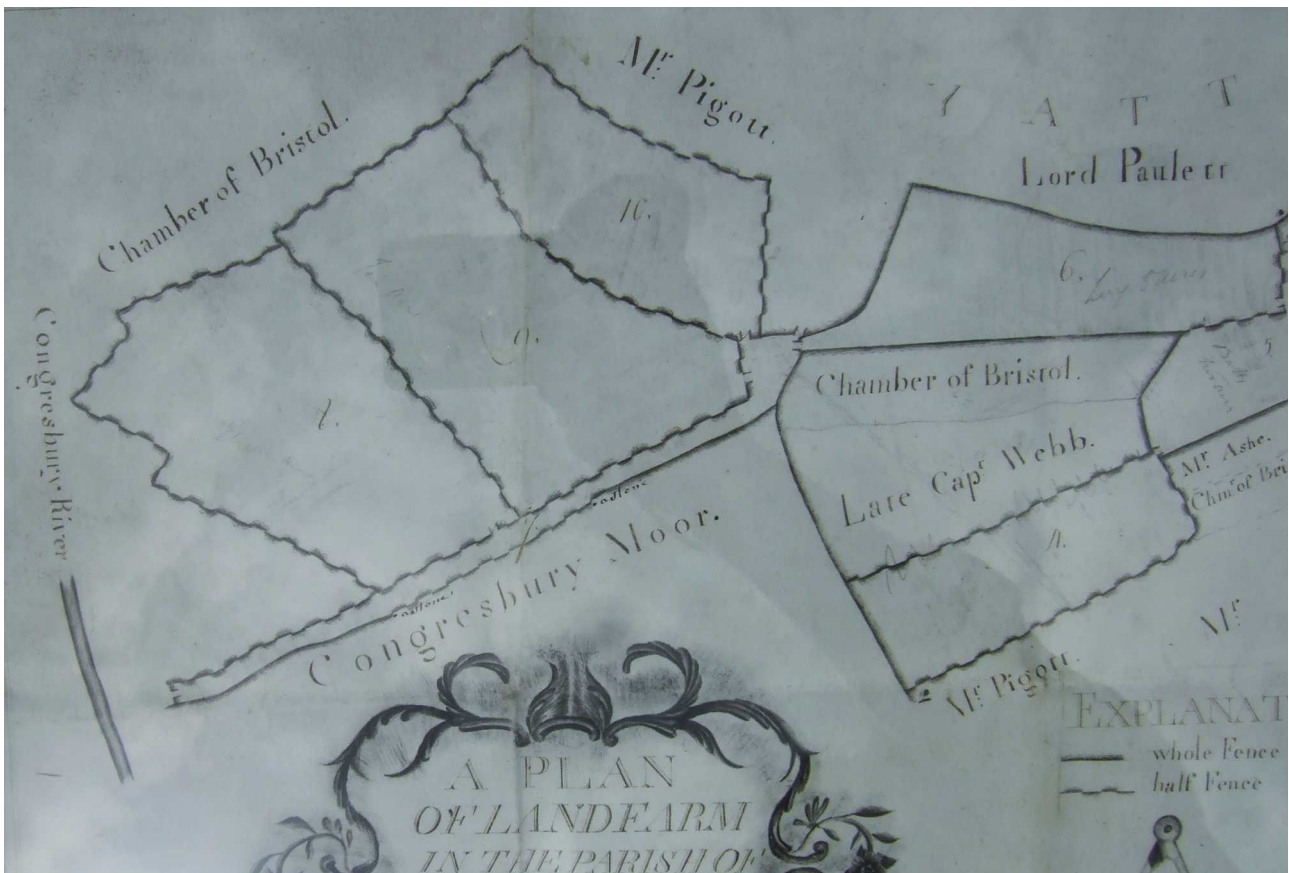


Fig 54: Land at Land Farm, Congresbury, 1773 (courtesy of Mr Mark Britton)

This clearly shows a lane leading down the west side of Congresbury Great Moor towards the river (at extreme left). On this map, the lane seems to close with a gate short of the riverbank, but given the known adjacent occupation at Benny's (YCCART 2022), the presence of a river crossing would have been very welcome, avoiding a long detour via Gangwall or Congresbury Bridge.

Examples might be multiplied, but the above seem to be the well-authenticated crossings known to date.

Recommendations for further work

Several of these crossings could benefit from further work. For example, bridges 3-5 at Congresbury would, especially in view of their Listed status, repay detailed recording.

Some of the more recent sites, especially those managed by the IDB or Environment Agency, will have further information available in their records.

Further old photographs would be useful: it was particularly disappointing not to find photographs of Phipp's Bridge: I cannot believe this important feature escaped record entirely.

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YCCCART 2018	Congresbury Bridge: Documentary and photographic survey <i>Available at ycccart.co.uk</i>
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YCCART 2023

Marking the boundaries: The Yatton Little
River Part 2: Boarden Bow to Congresbury
Yeo
Available at yccart.co.uk

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