

ST. MARY'S BRIDGE, DERBY

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The Trent River Authority's scheme to build a flood barrier along a section of the River Derwent in Derby led to excavations being undertaken near St. Mary's Bridge by the Derbyshire Archaeological Society and Derby Museums.

A trench put down at the rear of St. Mary's Bridge Chapel on the west bank of the River Derwent (SK 354367) located a pier and cut-water of the Medieval bridge. There are records of a bridge over the Derwent here as early as the reign of Edward I (Currey 1931), but by 1789 the existing structure had become too narrow and hazardous to cope with wheeled traffic. It was demolished to make way for a new stone bridge, which still stands today. The new bridge was constructed on a different alignment from its predecessor, east-west instead of south east-west. The 1973 excavations, together with a survey made in 1970, by the Archaeological Research Group, of pier foundations then visible in the river, enable an accurate reconstruction to be made of the Medieval bridge. It appears to have consisted of eight spans, somewhat irregularly spaced.

Deposits of river mud around the pier foundation yielded a wide selection of early- to mid-eighteenth-century material. This included Derby 'Cockpit Hill' products, salt-glazed stonewares, Ticknall wares, and Staffordshire slipwares, together with beer and wine bottles. The clay pipes provide a useful series of eighteenth-century manufacturers' marks, with pipes from both Nottingham and Derby represented.

REFERENCE

- CURREY, P. H., 1931 'The bridge and chapel of St. Mary at Derby', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 52 (1931) 57-79.