

Hunningham Bridge, Hunningham, Warwickshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING



understanding heritage matters

Archaeology Warwickshire Report No 1604
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*Working for
Warwickshire*

Project:	Hunningham Bridge duct installation
Commissioned by:	Les Williamson, WCC Design Services
Project Report No.	1604
Site Code:	HB15
Planning Reference:	N/A
National Grid Reference:	SP 3726 6852
Team:	
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SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological observation and recording in accordance with Scheduled monument Consent on behalf of Warwickshire County Council was undertaken during the excavation of a trench through the modern road surface above the masonry superstructure. No features of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Hunningham Bridge is a historic structure, Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (SAM no. 1035104). Warwickshire County Council (Design Services) is introducing traffic signals for vehicles crossing the bridge and this work required the chasing of a duct across the monument. Scheduled Monument Consent obtained via Historic England Inspector Ian George, required that the work be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork, consisting of the archaeological observation and recording of the excavation of the trenching across the Scheduled part of the site, was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out in December 2015. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under Site Code HB15.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The area of excavation was located on the upper part of the bridge, which spans the River Leam, centred at National Grid Reference SP 3726 6852 (Fig 1).

2.2 The superficial geology of the area is Mercia Mudstone overlaid by Alluvium (British Geological Survey 1984).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The Warwickshire Historic Environment Record informs us that the bridge was originally a medieval structure (MWA 2509). The current bridge probably dates to the late 17th century and the earliest record dates to 1636 when the inhabitants of the Knightlow Hundred were indicted for not repairing it. It was repaired in 1651 and it is possible that the semi-circular arches are of this date. The bridge has five arches and large cutwaters. The cutwaters are carried up to the level of the parapet coping on the upstream side but are cut back to form half-hexagon shaped recesses on the downstream side. The majority of it has been constructed in red sandstone but there are occasional olive sandstone blocks and the

parapets have been rebuilt in brick (Warwickshire Museum 1997). The maximum span width is 5m. The parapets have undergone several repairs (by 2015) and large quantities of masonry can be seen in the river. As well as being a Scheduled Ancient Monument the Bridge is also Grade II Listed. The Listing is as follows:

12/230 Hunningham Bridge - II

Circa C17 sandstone ashlar bridge over the River Leam. Three semi-circular arches with cutwaters span the river while there are a further two semi-circular flood water arches on west bank. Plain parapets with two pairs of splayed refuges off roadway on each side in the cutwater piers. (Part of bridge in Hunningham Parish.)

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the development, to collate the records in an archaeological archive and present the significant aspects of the archive in a report for dissemination.

4.2 The secondary aim was to form an understanding of the remains recorded in terms of their character and date, and to place the evidence in its local and regional context.

4.3 The objective of the work was a programme archaeological recording during controlled hand-excavation to development formation levels.

4.4 The work undertaken involved the examination of early map evidence as well as records of archaeological remains in the area and local historical journals and other publications.

4.5 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The tarmac that currently forms the upper surface of the bridge was cut by circular saw and the resulting channel of tarmac was pecked out using a breaker attached to a tracked excavator. Excavation then proceeded by hand. The service trench was 0.40-0.44m wide and 0.35-0.50m deep, being deepest on the lowest part of the bridge and shallowest at the apex. The lowest level achieved was a compacted layer of mixed Type 1 sub-base with reddish brown sandy loam (3), of which a depth of up to 0.30m was seen.

This was overlain by 0.10m of sub-base (2), overlaid by 0.10m tarmac road surfacing (1). No finds were recovered and the no part of the stone structure of the bridge was exposed in the service trench.

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The new cable duct did not disturb any archaeological levels on the Scheduled bridge and no finds were recovered. The only levels disturbed were modern in date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology Warwickshire would like to thank Les Williamson of WCC Design Services for commissioning the work and to Ian George of Historic England for his contribution to the project.

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1. Breaking through the tarmac surface



2. Service trench with conduits in place

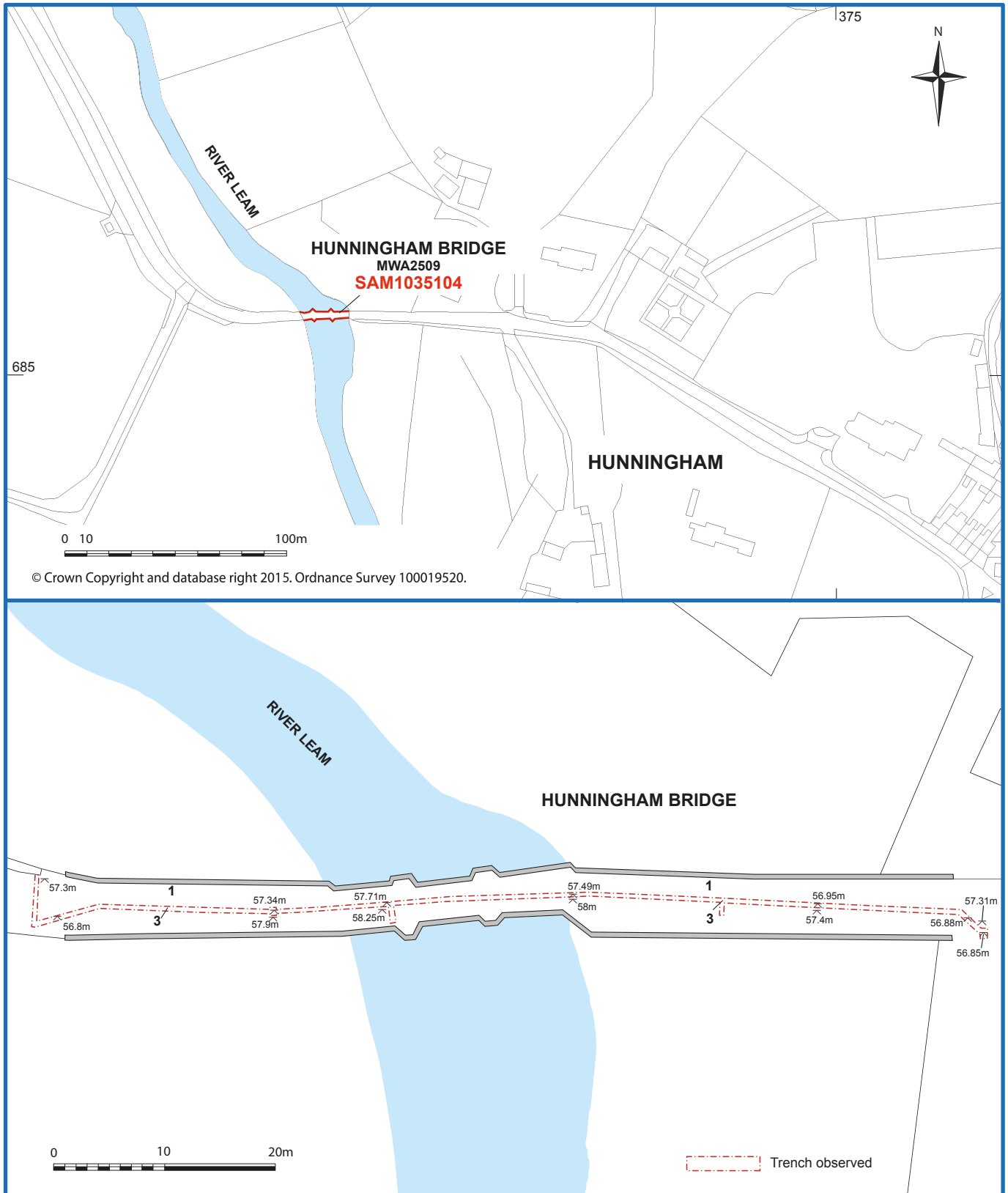


Fig 1: Location of Hunningham Bridge, above, and trench observed, below

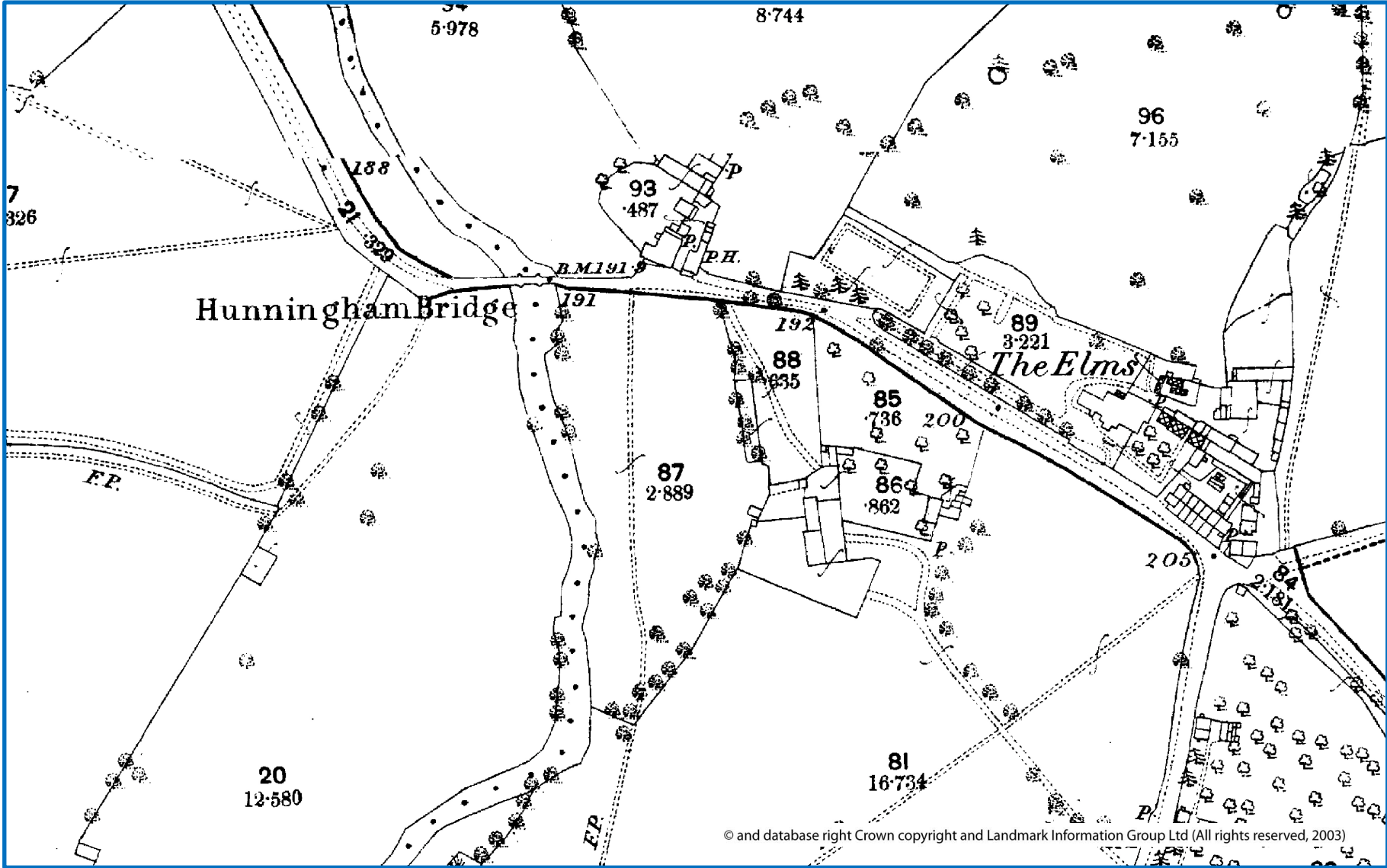


Fig 2: Detail from First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887