

Flood Alleviation, Gog and Fishers Brook, Stratford Road, Warwick

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



understanding heritage matters

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National Grid Reference: SP 2753 6362
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SUMMARY

A record was made of the existing structure of Fishers Bridge prior to flood alleviation works taking place. Three phases of bridge were noted. Archaeological observation of excavations for flood alleviation revealed several anti-tank placements.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission was granted by Warwick District Council for the construction of a watercourse flood alleviation scheme at Gog brook and Fishers Brook, Warwick. The proposed works were considered likely to impact upon the historic structure of Fishers Bridge. A condition of planning permission therefore required the applicant to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work to be carried out in conjunction with the alleviation scheme.

1.2 A programme of fieldwork which included the recording of the historic structures and archaeological observation of ground reductions and demolition works in accordance with a brief prepared by the County Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority (February 2008), was commissioned from Archaeology Warwickshire and carried out between June 2008 and November 2012. This report presents the results of that work. The project archive will be stored at the Warwickshire Museum under the site codes WF08 and WF12.

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The alleviation scheme site is located on the south-west of Warwick and the main focus of archaeological recording is around Fishers Bridge at NGR SP 2753 6362.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area is Penarth group mudstone overlain by superficial River Terrace deposits (BGS 2014).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Fisher's Bridge is situated on the main road from Stratford upon Avon into Warwick (Historic Environment Record number MWA 4787, MWA 4820) where it crosses Fisher's Brook. It was assessed in 1998 by Mr R Cragg of the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society (Cragg 1998). At this time the bridge was constructed of four sections and had been widened at least twice. Its measurements were recorded as having an overall width of 63ft

or 60ft between the parapets. It was a semicircular arched structure in stone, brick and mass concrete.

3.2 Other archaeological features in the area include the Second World War Airfield of RAF Warwick (MWA 8101). Pottery, medieval coins and post-medieval coins have been found near to the airfield (MWA 5582, MWA 4556, MWA 12468).

4 AIMS AND METHODS

4.1 The main aim of the work was to record any archaeological remains disturbed by the scheme, 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 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.

4.4 An experienced archaeologist was made available for each day of ground disturbance when notified by the client in accordance with the WSI and the provision of a suitably qualified team in order to undertake the recording of the structure.

5 RESULTS

Fishers Bridge Recording

5.1 Prior to the commencement of flood alleviation works, the existing structure of Fishers Bridge was recorded (EWA 9491). The internal structure of the bridge arch had to be recorded in detail in several phases because the health and safety considerations given to access arrangements. The initial phases provided a scale drawing of the available internal faces of the arch and a photographic record (Figs 2, 4-8).

5.2 In a survey of Warwickshire Bridges in 1997 (WMFS 1997), dating of the bridge was not known. Historic research undertaken with the assistance of Steven Wallsgrove, did not reveal any documentary sources that could provide any useful information about the bridge.

5.3 The bridge measured 19.5m E-W and 7m N-S (Fig 2). The earliest phase of construction was identified in the centre of the Bridge (Fig 2, Section B, C). Sandstone blocks had been used (11, 23, 27) in the 1.5m high, arched structure (Fig 4). The sandstone blocks had been painted at some time with white paint or plaster (Fig 5). A later phase of bridge was evidenced by the use of red brick (8, 14, 31 figs, 2, 6) and an extension to the western end took place using blue engineering bricks which were manufactured from 1832 but became common towards the later 19th century (5, Figs 2, 7).

5.4 Numerous repairs to the inside of the bridge arch were apparent, mostly in red brick (9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, 19, 21, 32, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30). although some were of blue bricks (3, 6, 12 and 30) and there was occasional use of tile (7, 17, Fig 8).

5.5 The parapet (1) and face of the bridge (2) were constructed of sandstone blocks (Figs 2, 9).

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5.6 There was only restricted access for archaeological recording (Fig 10). To the east of the Bridge the sandstone parapet was removed and an area around the bridge was reduced by over 1m (Figs 3, 11). No earlier bridge features were noted. Yellowish brown geological natural sand and gravel was revealed (44) at a depth of c.0.6m. Soil horizons had been considerably disturbed by modern services (41). A layer of greyish brown sandy loam (38) was overlain by c.0.3m of dark greyish brown sandy loam topsoil across most of the area (37).

5.7 Excavations within the road revealed the arched red brick structure of the bridge, context 43 which was the same as 8, not 11 as shown (Fig 12). It was covered with aggregates (48) and tarmac (49). Similarly the footpaths (33, 35) were constructed of a less substantial depth of make-up (34, 36).

5.8 The northern bank of the brook on the western side was revetted with unbonded sandstone blocks (47). Ground reductions alongside the bridge structure revealed the sandy natural (44) overlain by greyish brown sandy loam (46) and road construction layers (48, 49, Fig 13)

5.9 Ground reduction of up to 0.4m took place in a wider area to the east of the road. Here within the greyish brown sandy loam topsoil (37) three anti-tank traps were found (39,

40 & 42, Fig 3). A total of six traps were revealed during the work and these were all cylindrical shaped with central hole to which a handle would be attached should they need to be moved (Fig 14).

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The recording exercise carried out in 2010 concurred with the earlier 1998 recording by R. Cragg. Two phases of extension were visible along with numerous repairs. The latest phase of extension is likely to have taken place in the later 19th-century as it utilised blue bricks.

6.2 The work revealed WWII tank traps the existence of which had been previously unknown. The anti-tank traps were used for temporary road blocks on approach roads or at bridges and presumably formed part of a Home guard Stop Line in WWII. They may have been associated with the nearby RAF Warwick or more likely, they were to protect the town in the event of an invasion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

BGS 2014 (British Geological Survey Viewer <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/mapViewers/> accessed May 2014).

Cragg, R. 1998 Warwickshire Industrial Archaeological Society Warwickshire Bridges Survey Bridge Data Record Form; Fishers Brook Bridge, Warwickshire County Council 1998

WMFS 2007 Historic Road Bridges in Warwickshire: a preliminary Study, Warwickshire Museum Field Services, March 1997

APPENDICES

A List of contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	Sandstone blocks	Parapet
2	Sandstone	Wall
3	Blue brick	Repair
4	Concrete	Bridge support
5	Blue brick	Repair
6	Blue brick	Repair
7	Red tile	2 nd phase Bridge extension
8	Red brick English bond	2 nd phase Bridge extension
9	Red brick	Repair
10	Red brick	Repair
11	Sandstone	Bridge
12	Blue brick	Repair
13	Red brick	Repair
14	Red brick	Repair
15	Red brick	Repair
16	Red brick	Repair
17	Red tile	Repair
18	Red brick	Repair
19	Red brick	Repair
20	Red brick	Repair
21	Red brick	Repair
22	Red brick	Repair
23	Sandstone	Bridge
24	Red brick	Repair
25	Red brick	Repair
26	Red brick	Repair
27	Sandstone	Bridge
28	Red brick	Repair
29	Red brick	Repair
30	Red and blue brick	Repair
31	Red brick	Repair
32	Red brick	Repair
33	Tarmac	Path
34	Aggregates	Make-up layer
35	Tarmac	Path
36	Aggregates	Make-up layer
37	Dark greyish brown sandy loam	Topsoil
38	Greyish brown sandy loam	Layer
39	Concrete	Tank Trap
40	Concrete	Tank Trap
41	Plastic	Duct
42	Concrete	Tank Trap
43	Red Brick	Bridge
44	Yellowish brown sand	Geological natural
45	Concrete	Plinth
46	Greyish brown sandy loam	Layer
47	Sandstone blocks	Revetment
48	Aggregates	Road make-up
49	Tarmac	Road surface

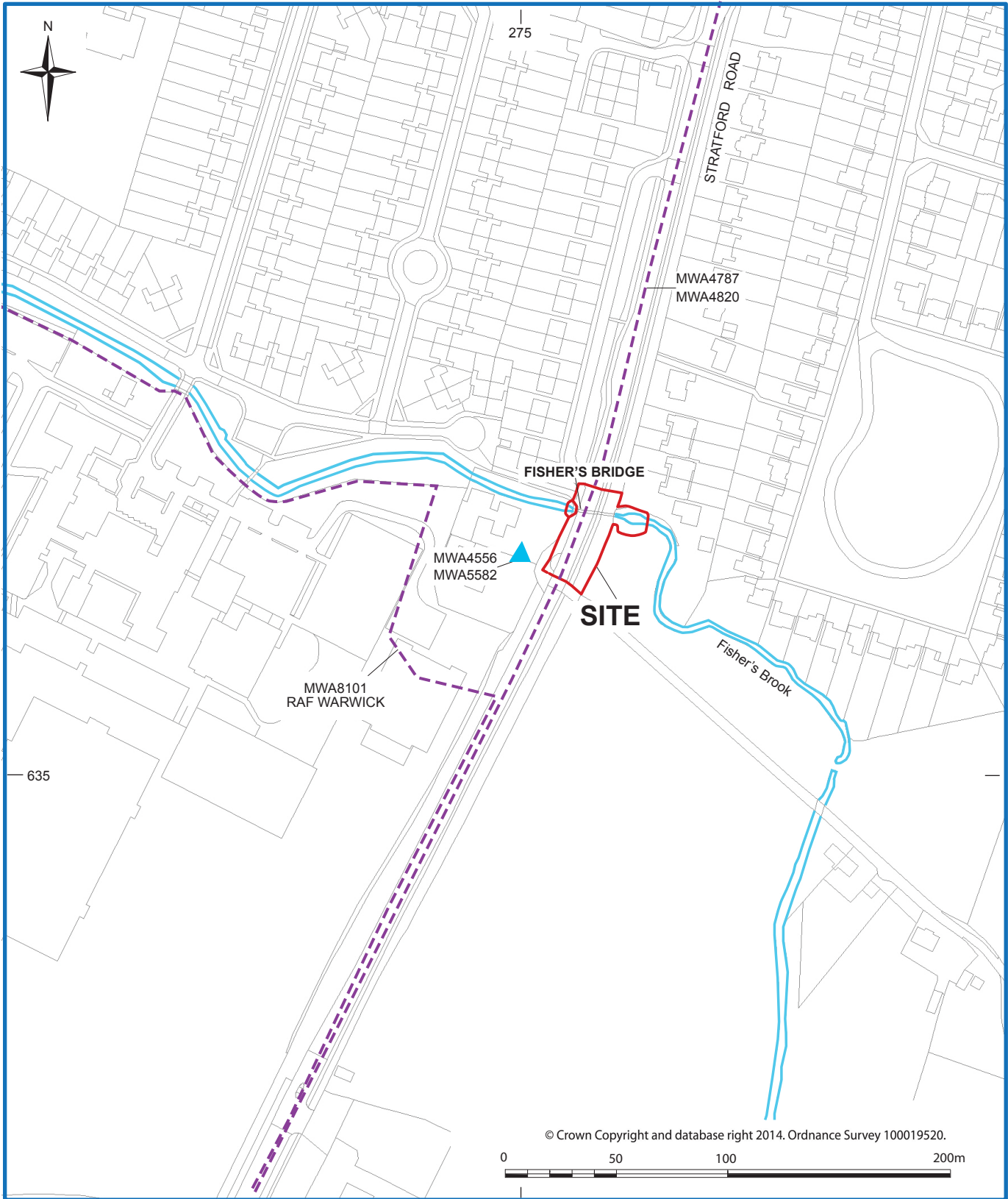


Fig 1 : Site location

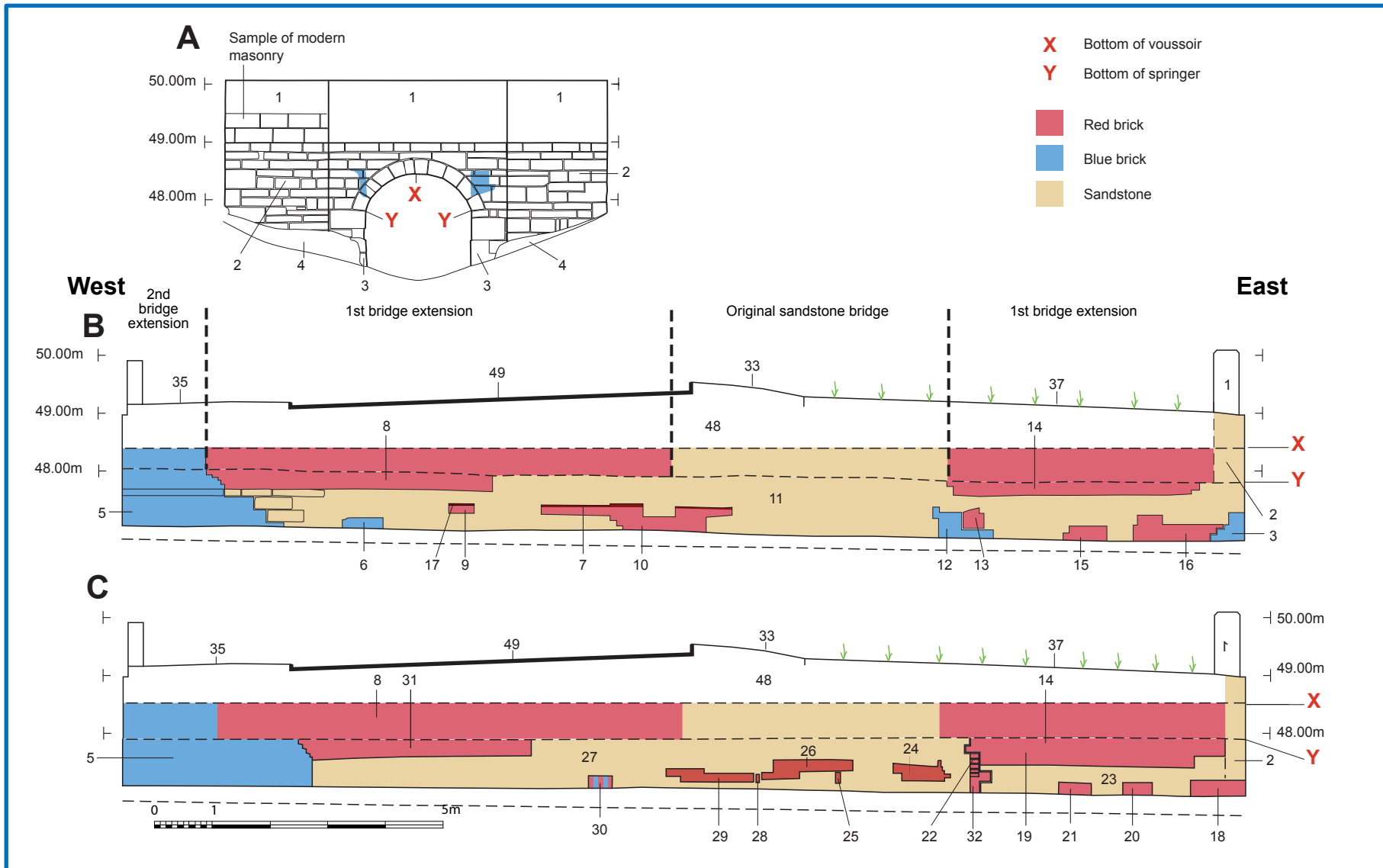


Fig 2: Bridge Phasing

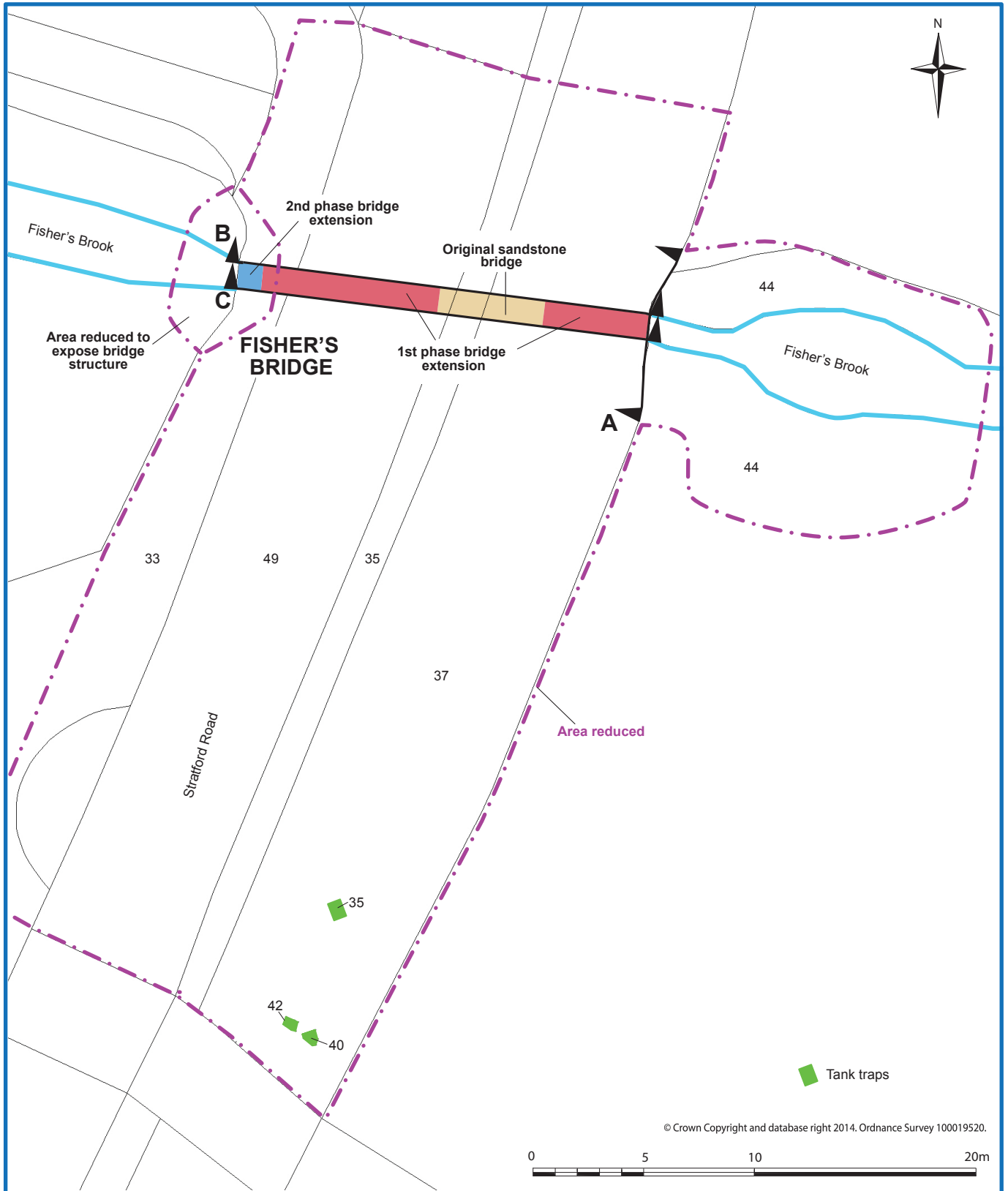


Fig 3: Areas observed



Fig 4: Original phase of bridge (left) with extension (right) and repairs below



Fig 5: Painted sandstone



Fig 6: Red brick phase of bridge arch



Fig 7: Western end of bridge arch; 2nd phase of bridge extension



Fig 8: Tile used in repair



Fig 9: Eastern end of bridge prior to works



Fig 10: Observation from a safe distance



Fig 11: Ground reductions at eastern end of bridge



Fig 12: Exposed bridge arch (context 8)



Fig 13: Western edge of bridge during excavations



Fig 14: Tank traps