

WIGSTHORPE BRIDGE, THORPE ACHURCH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

(NGR TL 04070 82116)

Results of historic building recording

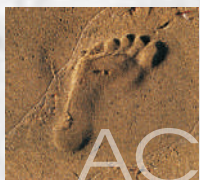
East Northamptonshire District Council planning reference
15/00907/FUL, condition 8

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On behalf of:
Hammond-ECS

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AC archaeology

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Summary

Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology on 20 October 2015 prior to infilling under Wigsthorpe Bridge, Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire (TL 04070 82116).

The bridge carries the B662 over the route of the former Northampton to Peterborough Railway Line. The line was first opened in 1845, and later formed part of the London & North Western Railway, which itself became part of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in 1928. The line closed to passenger traffic in 1964 and was fully closed in 1972.

The three-arch bridge was constructed using orange-red and blue bricks laid in English brick. There are various patches of repair to the bridge, the largest being a red brick repair to the insides of the central and western arches. There is a further brick repair on the northeast corner of the wall in the eastern arch.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology on 20 October 2015 prior to infilling under Wigsthorpe Bridge, Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire (TL 04070 82116). The work was commissioned by Hammond ECS Ltd and was required under condition 8 of the grant of planning permission (East Northamptonshire Council reference 15/00907/FUL) for "structural works to the carriageway including the insertion of a corrugated steel arch through the central span and back filling with concrete, infilling of side spans with stone and concrete, the formation of embankments on either side of the bridge, topsoil finishing, minor repair works to the parapet and the installation of protective fencing"
- 1.2 Wigsthorpe Bridge carries the B662 over the route of the former Northampton to Peterborough Railway Line. At the bridge the line passes through the adjacent fields in a shallow cutting. The road level is at a height of around 40m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Jurassic sandstone and siltstone of the Kellaways Sand formation.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 The aim of the work was to prepare a visual record of the bridge prior to the infilling of its arches.
- 2.2 The work was identified as having the potential to contribute to a number of possible research topics set out in the East Midlands *Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006, 245). These were:
 - Non-intrusive survey of extant transport features, such as structures, railways, horse-drawn railways, road, waterways, and canals, with the aim of updating SMR databases; and
 - Fieldwork and research to establish the nature and development of linear transport systems (railways, canals, rivers, tramways).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2015), which was drawn up in accordance with a brief prepared by the Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Officer (Mordue 2015), and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2014). The recording was carried out to level 1 as set out in Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*, and the slightly broader requirements of the brief. It comprised the following:

- A photographic record, prepared using a high-quality digital SLR camera, including the overall character of the bridge and its immediate context of the railway line and public highway, and oblique and right angle views of the elevations of the bridge and underside of the arches; and
- A written description of the bridge and its local context in relation to the topography and the railway line, including a note on its construction method (including materials used), principal architectural features, and the nature and date of any subsequent alterations or repairs.

3.2 The survey identified that, other than modern repairs, the bridge was of a single phase of construction, and therefore no drawn records were prepared.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The Northampton to Peterborough Railway Line (Northamptonshire Sites and Monuments no. 6294/1) was opened in 1845, and later formed part of the London & North Western Railway, which itself became part of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in 1928. The line closed to passenger traffic in 1964 and was fully closed in 1972.

4.2 The B662 is the former Lilford to Molesworth Turnpike Road (SMR no. 9384/1).

5. RESULTS (Plates 1-14)

Topographical location

5.1 The Wigsthorpe Bridge carries the B662 Clopton Road over the route of the former Northampton to Peterborough railway line (Plates 1 and 2). The former railway line is situated within in a cutting with embankments on each side to the north of the bridge and for a short distance to the south. However as it continues to the southwest its course is a low embankment which is clearly visible as an earthwork adjacent to a field boundary (Plate 3).

The bridge

5.2 The bridge has three arches, and is constructed of orange-red and blue bricks laid in English bond; the blue colour has been achieved by burning the faces of the bricks (particularly the headers) rather than using specific clays that would create this colour. Other than for the arches (see below) there is no definitive distinction between the use of blue and red bricks, although blue headers are more prevalent than blue stretchers. The former railway line passed through the larger central arch, with the road being carried over the embankments on further arches either side of the main span (Plates 4 and 5). On each elevation the end of the bridge is emphasised by the masonry projecting forward by two courses (Plate 6). White limestone blocks have

been used to cap the bridge parapets, and for a projecting string course at the base of the parapet. The third course of brickwork below this string course also projects out slightly from the face of the elevation. White limestone blocks have also been used as imposts from which the arches are sprung (Plates 7-11). The arches are constructed of four courses of blue industrial bricks laid in header bond, which manifests itself in curved headers on the elevations. The central arch is taller and has a steeper profile than the outer arches. The two piers supporting the central arch are constructed entirely in blue bricks laid in English bond, whilst the masonry supporting the outer sides of the other two arches is constructed of red bricks.

- 5.3** There are various patches of repair on the bridge, with bands of new red bricks inserted into the central and western arches (Plates 12 and 13), along with a brick repair on the northeast corner of the wall in the eastern arch. Two patches of cement have been placed over cracks to monitor the movement of the structure. These have been marked, including the dates 15/12 and 05/06/13, and the number 3.6.001. There are other cracks throughout the brickwork of the structure.
- 5.4** The B662 Clopton Road, over the bridge, is a two lane highway with a 0.5m grass verge on either side of the road. The parapets of the bridge here stand to a height of 1.20m. An inscription which appears to read 'IF MAY 10.18 IF', has been scratched into one of the parapet capping blocks on the north side of the bridge (Plate 14). Several cracks are apparent in the parapets and there are again patches of dated concrete.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1** Wigsthorpe bridge formed an integral part of the infrastructure of the Northampton to Peterborough Railway Line which was opened in 1845. It carried an existing highway over the railway. To achieve this, the railway line was laid within a cutting, whilst the road level was raised very slightly. As is often the case, the railway bridge displayed evidence for a single phase of masonry, with little alteration other than modern, probably post-railway, repairs. Although functional, the design of the bridge has aesthetic qualities, even if most of these would not historically have been appreciated by users of both the railway and the road.
- 6.2** The survey has contributed to one of the research objectives in the East Midlands *Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda* through the non-intrusive survey of extant transport features, and the updating of the county Historic Environment Record database.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY (Appendix 1)

- 7.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It is expected that in the longer term the paper archive will be deposited with the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre and the digital archive with the Archaeology data Service.
- 7.2** An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier 231749, and includes a digital copy of this report. A copy of the completed OASIS entry form is included as appendix 1.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

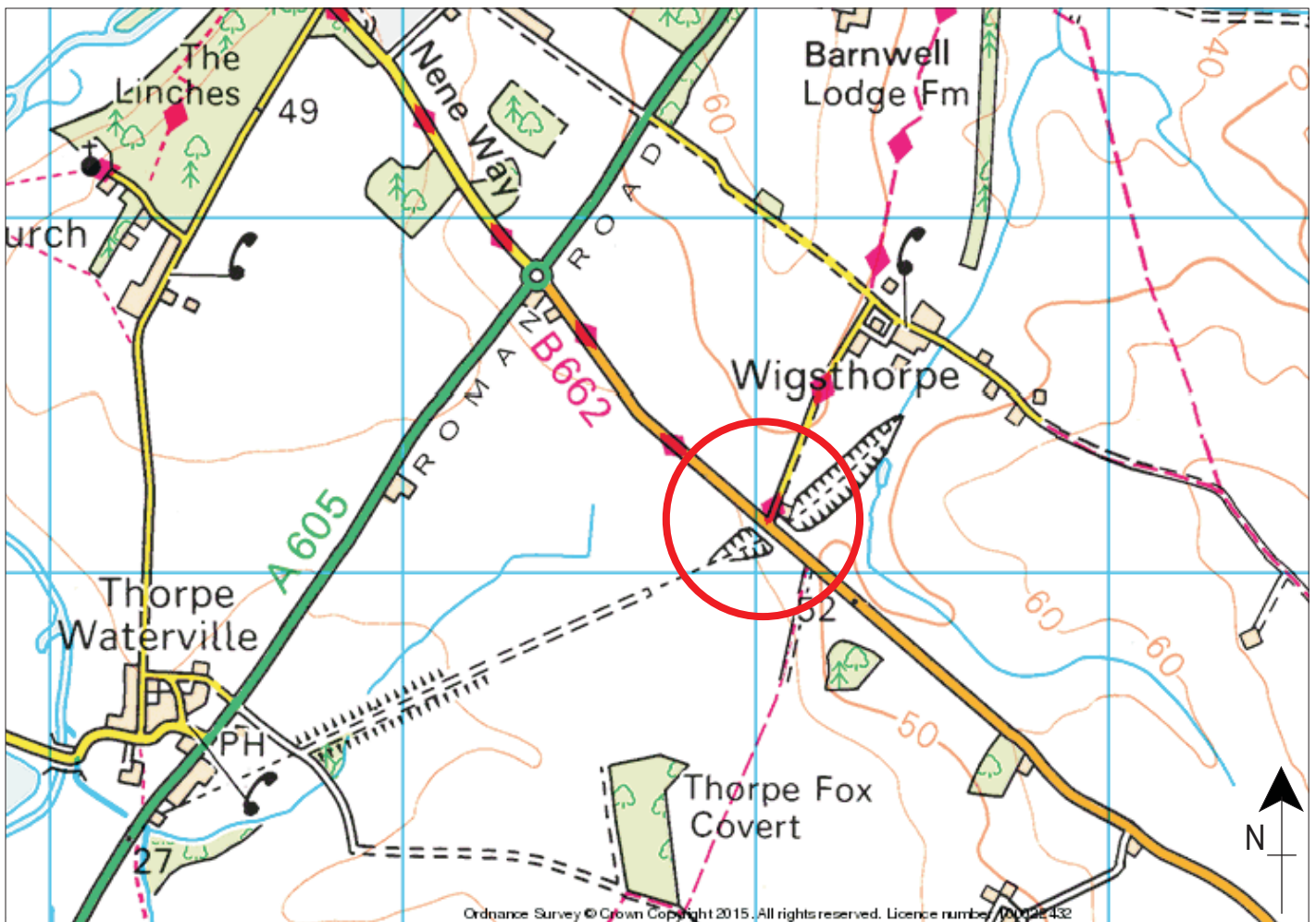
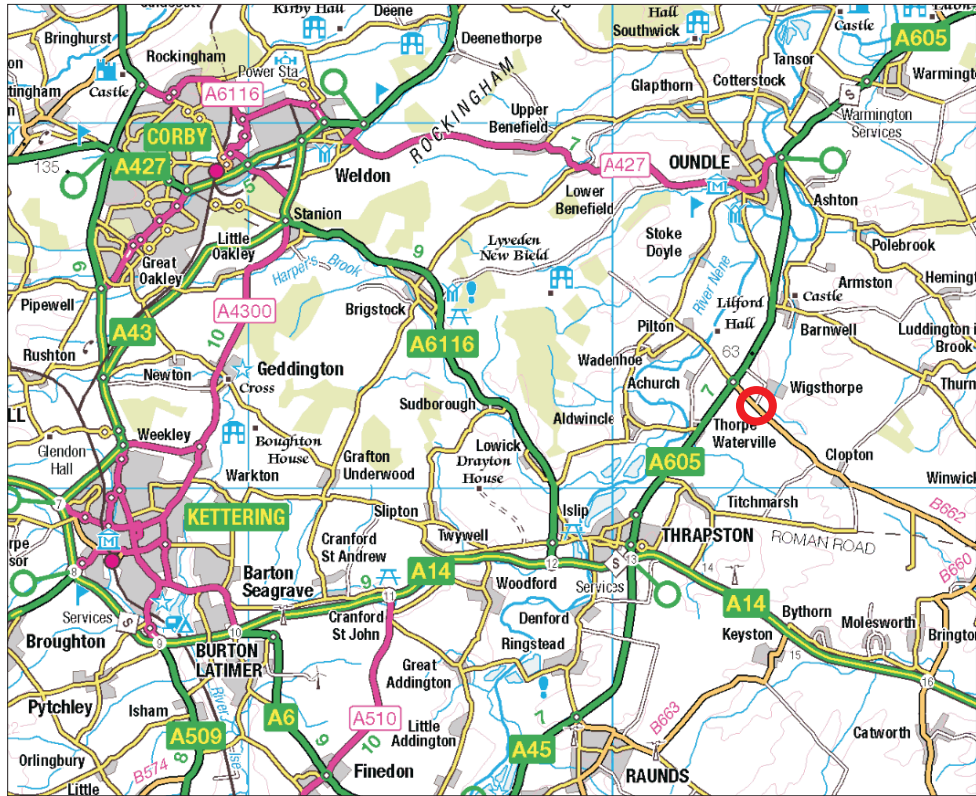
- 8.1 This report was commissioned by Hammond (ecs) Ltd and managed for them by John Martin and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The survey was carried out by Stella De-Villiers and Paul Cooke. The report illustrations were prepared by Stella De-Villiers.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Cooper, N. J., 2006, *The Archaeology of the East Midlands, An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda*, Leicestershire Archaeology monographs No. **13**

Mordue, L., 2015, *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Building Recording at Thorpe Achurch Railway Bridge, Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire*

Passmore, A., 2015, *Wigsthorpe Bridge, Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire (NGR TL 04070 82116) Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording, East Northamptonshire Council planning reference 15/00907/FUL, condition 8, AC archaeology Document No. **ACD1235/1/0***



PROJECT
Wigsthorpe Bridge, Thorpe Achurch,
Northamptonshire

TITLE
Fig.1: Site location



Plate 1: View of the B662 crossing the bridge, looking northwest



Plate 2: View of the B662 crossing the bridge, looking southeast



Plate 3: View of the former railway line visible in fields adjacent to the bridge, looking southwest



Plate 4: General view of the south elevation, looking north



Plate 5: General view of the north elevation, looking south



Plate 6: View of one end of the bridge emphasised by projecting forward by two courses of brickwork, looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 7: General view of the south elevation, looking north



Plate 8: General view of the south elevation, looking northwest



Plate 9: General view of the south elevation, looking northeast



Plate 10: Detailed view of one of the arches, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 11: Detailed view of the brickwork, capping stones and two string courses, looking south (1m scale)



Plate 12: View of brick repairs to the roof of the central arch, looking east

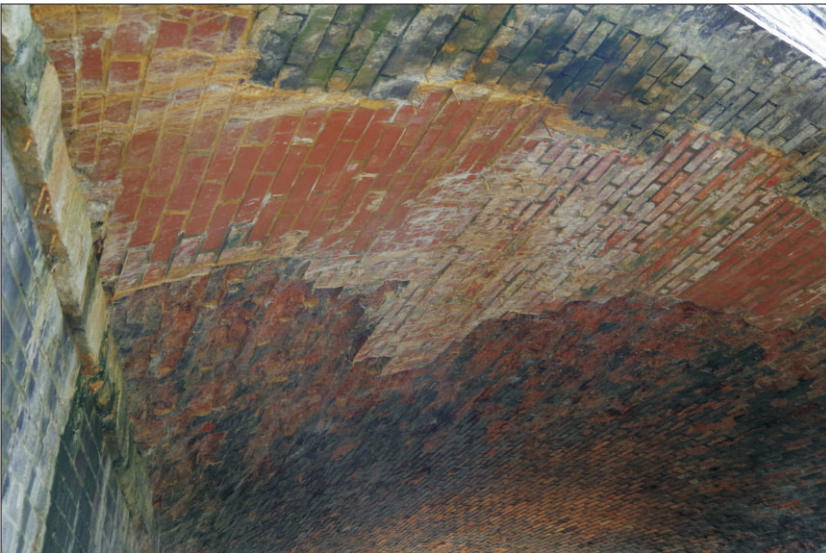


Plate 13: View of brick repairs to the roof of the western arch, looking south



Plate 14: View of inscription which appears to read 'IF MAY 10.18 IF', seen on a capping block on the north side of the bridge

Appendix 1

The OASIS entry

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: acarchae2-231749

Project details

Project name	Wigsthorpe Bridge
Short description of the project	Historic building recording was carried out at Wigsthorpe Bridge. The bridge carries the B662 over the route of the former Northampton to Peterborough Railway Line. The line was first opened in 1845 and was fully closed in 1972. The three-arch bridge was constructed using orange-red and blue bricks laid in English brick. There are various patches of repair to the bridge, the largest being a red brick repair to the insides of the central and western arches. There is a further brick repair on the northeast corner of the wall in the eastern arch.
Project dates	Start: 20-10-2015 End: 20-10-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Building Recording
Monument type	BRIDGE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	""Photographic Survey"", ""Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE THORPE ACHURCH Wigsthorpe Bridge
Study area	20 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 04070 82116 52.426728866473 -0.469271484816 52 25 36 N 000 28 09 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	AC Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	AC Archaeology

Project director/manager Andrew Passmore
 Project supervisor Stella de-Villiers

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient ADS
 Digital Contents "none"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"
 Paper Archive recipient Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre
 Paper Contents "none"
 Paper Media available "Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes',"Report"

Project bibliography 1

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