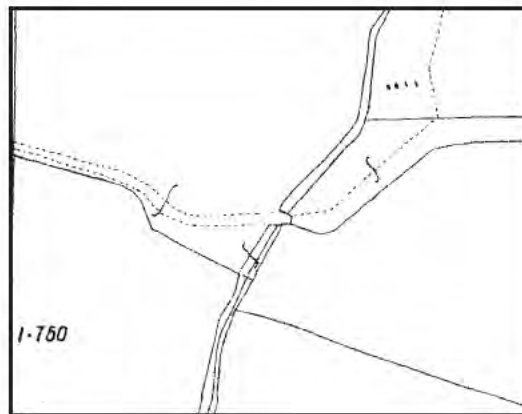


# BRIDGE ON THE FARM TRACK AT MYNYDD BLEWOG, LLANFFLEWYN, ANGLESEY

## WATCHING BRIEF

Report No. 436



Prepared for

Environment Agency

January, 2002

By

J. Kenney

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**



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**(G1738)**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The farm of Mynydd Blewog lies at the end of a track across the fields, to the south of Llanfflewyn, in the north-western corner of Anglesey, at grid reference SH 3543 8747 (see figure 1). The farmhouse and buildings are now disused, except as animal shelters, but the track is still used for field access. Where the track crosses a small stream it is carried on a small stone bridge. The bridge is located at grid reference SH 3519 8742. The bridge had partially collapsed, causing a large crack to appear in the road surface and the stream channel to be partially blocked. As the bridge was unsafe for vehicular use, and the stream was not flowing freely, it required repairing, which would inevitably involve the demolition of a considerable proportion of the existing structure. This work was carried out by the Environment Agency, who asked Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) to carry out a watching brief during the demolition work.

## **2. SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN**

No formal brief was issued for this small project, but the work conformed to the IFA guidelines as given in *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (IFA 1994, revised 1999)*. A watching brief is defined as 'a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive'. The aim of this watching brief was to record the bridge before demolition, and to record any details of its construction that might be revealed during the demolition process.

## **3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

### **3.1 Fieldwork**

The work took place on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2002. An archaeologist was present to record the bridge before demolition started and to watch the process to record any uncovered elements relating to the construction of the bridge. Recording was carried out by means of photography and written notes. It became clear that the archaeologist was not required to watch the demolition continuously, so the opportunity was taken to briefly inspect other, related, features in the area. This allowed a better understanding of the landscape context of the bridge, as well as improving the general record of the area.

### **3.2 Documentary research**

Such a small project did not justify extensive documentary research, but the maps easily available in the Record Office in Llangefni were consulted. This allowed some idea of the date of the bridge to be assessed, and gave an indication of the development of the farm layout, of which the bridge forms a part. The Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record, held by GAT, was also consulted, but this revealed that there were no previously recorded sites in the immediate area.

### **3.3 Archive**

The photographs and notes taken during this project are archived in Gwynedd Archaeological Trust under the project number G1738.

## **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

Initially the layout of fields shown on the tithe map (1841) appears to be very different to the present. However, closer inspection demonstrates that the large fields on the tithe map have merely been subdivided, and their boundaries can still be traced on the modern map (see figures 1 and 4). The farmhouses of Ucheldref Uchaf, Ucheldref Goed and Tyn Buarth all existed in 1841, but Mynydd Blewog did not. The field on which it was to be built was owned by Lord Newborough, and is called “Blew” in the tithe schedule. “Blew” means hair and “blewog” means hairy, but this may refer to the quality of the grassland. The subdivision of the fields into their present form occurred before the first edition 25” OS map of 1890 was surveyed. Mynydd Blewog was in existence by this date, and the layout of fields and farms has not changed significantly since.

The line of the track to Mynydd Blewog, with its odd bend where it crosses the stream, was the same in 1890 as it is now. It is probable that this is the original line, and that the track never took the obvious straight route. There is no evidence on the ground of the track ever having run to the north of its present course, and the natural stream terrace in this area appears entirely undisturbed. The track presumably bent to reach a suitable point to cross the stream.

On the 1890 map it is not clear whether the stream crossing is a bridge or a ford. By 1900 (figure 2) the map appears to indicate a bridge, though an enclosed fording place might be represented. The farmer has stated that the present bridge was constructed after the Second World War, and that there was a ford at this location before this date, but it seems possible that there was a bridge at the turn of the twentieth century.

### **4.2 Results of the watching brief**

(see figures 5 and 6)

The bridge carrying the track to Mynydd Blewog Farm, which was the subject of this watching brief, has been given the primary record number (PRN) 15972. It will be recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record under this number.

The bridge measured 5m by 3.8m, and was 1.8m high on its southern side and 2.0m high on its northern side. Two lintelled culverts carried the stream under the road (plates 1 and 2). These culverts were 0.7m wide and composed of large stone slab lintels bridging the gap from the bridge sides to a central support. There appeared to have been no central support under the middle on the bridge, where the lintels, with little to hold them up, had slumped into the stream. The western culvert on the southern side of the bridge had two box-sectioned pieces of iron instead of stone lintels. These seemed to have been an original feature of the bridge.

The bridge was of drystone construction, though the southern face had been crudely pointed with mortar, presumably to help consolidate it. On both faces drystone walling, of irregular courses, had been constructed above the culverts up to the level of the road. The road surface was of stones consolidated with concrete. When a large section of the concrete road surface was lifted off the bridge it was revealed that the apparently strong construction was a façade only. Behind the facing there was nothing to support the road surface, and, as mentioned above, the lintels covering the culverts were also largely unsupported in the middle. Only the strength of the concrete had prevented the bridge from collapsing (plate 3).

A mechanical excavator was used to remove the concrete road surface, and to loosen the stone faces of the bridge. The stones were moved into the excavator’s bucket by hand, and then deposited on the bank of the stream. The stones were to be reused in rebuilding the bridge. The central supports were removed, as the channel needed to be widened to improve the stream’s flow (figure 5), but the side revetments, lining the stream channel, proved to be sufficiently well built to be incorporated into the new bridge (plate 4).

The demolition allowed the construction of the bridge to be understood. The side revetments had been built to canalise the stream, and the track on either side of the bridge had been built up by a maximum of 1m with stone and crushed slate. This stony deposit extended over the top of the side revetments. A central

support was built on the north and south sides of the bridge, but these did not appear to extend the full width, leaving the centre of the bridge unsupported. The lintels were laid so that they rested on the side revetments and the central supports. The drystone faces were built on each side, with some rubble behind them, but a void left in the middle. The concrete road surface was laid over the top.

To rebuild the bridge the Environment Agency team intended to build up the side revetments to the height of the road surface, and to span the gap with iron beams supporting sleepers (see figure 5). This will change the appearance of the bridge considerably, but the original stone is being reused. It was not possible to rebuild the bridge to resemble its original appearance because of the need to widen the stream channel by removing the central supports.

#### **4.3 Notes on other sites briefly recorded**

These sites have been allocated new PRN numbers and will be added to the Sites and Monuments Record.

##### **PRN 15973**

##### **Mynydd Blewog Farm**

SH 3543 8747

The farmyard seems to have always been of similar rectangular layout as survives now. All the buildings are constructed of rounded stones originating from the local fluvio-glacial gravels. The farmhouse, on the southern side of the yard, was originally a small, single storey structure, with only one room, containing a large fireplace at its eastern end. An extra room, containing a cast iron fireplace, and a barn were added to the eastern end of the house. This addition had been made by 1890, when the farm first appears on the maps consulted.

The barns and stalls forming the northern side of the yard had been built by 1890. A shed was added on the eastern side of the yard between 1900 and 1924. Between this period a spring to the south-west side of the farmyard had been converted to a well. By the time the 1:10,000 map was surveyed in 1973 a building had been constructed next to the well. Although the buildings in the farmyard are all upstanding, most with their roofs intact, this structure has been demolished down to its foundations, with the exception of its brick chimney stack.

##### ***The trackway to Mynydd Blewog***

Where the trackway runs down hill in the field west of the bridge it runs in a sort of hollow-way. However, this is cut through the slate bedrock, and is clearly deliberately constructed, rather than being the result of wear by traffic. This is consistent with the relatively recent date for the farm indicated by the maps. The field boundary south of the track is a stone faced earthen bank (clawdd), typical of this part of Anglesey.

##### **PRN 15974**

##### **Standing stone**

SH 3501 8751

Measuring 1.65m in height, and 0.75 by 0.15m at the base, this stone stands on the top of a low hill. Its long axis is aligned close to magnetic N-S, and it has good all round views. It rests directly on bedrock, which is exposed on the hilltop, and appears to be wedged, with packing stones, in a slot cut for it in the rock. The stone is a slate slab, and fresh breaks suggest that it came from a quarry, rather than naturally occurring in the fields. This appears on none of the maps before the 1:10,000 map, despite the fact that standing stones are usually shown. It is safe to conclude that this stone was erected fairly recently, presumably as a rubbing stone for livestock, though perhaps to commemorate a local event.

##### **PRN 15975**

##### **Road bridge**

SH 3499 8713

A well constructed bridge of mortared stone, with a single arch. On the 1900 25" map this stream crossing is clearly marked as a ford, but the bridge had been constructed by 1924.

**PRN 15976**

**Road bridge**

SH 3511 8689

Another well constructed mortared stone bridge with a single arch. The 1900 map shows this crossing as a ford with a footbridge on the eastern side. By 1924 the road bridge had been built.

**5. SOURCES**

**Sources held by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

1:10,000 OS maps sheets SH 38 NW and NE, 1980

6" County Series map sheet Anglesey 6 NE, 1926

**Sources in the County Record Office, Llangefni**

25" County Series map sheet Anglesey VI.7, second edition 1900 and 1924

Tithe map and schedule for the parish of Llanfflewyn, Anglesey, 1841

**Map from the Internet site [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)**

25" County Series map sheet Anglesey VI.7, first edition 1890 (not reproduced in this report)

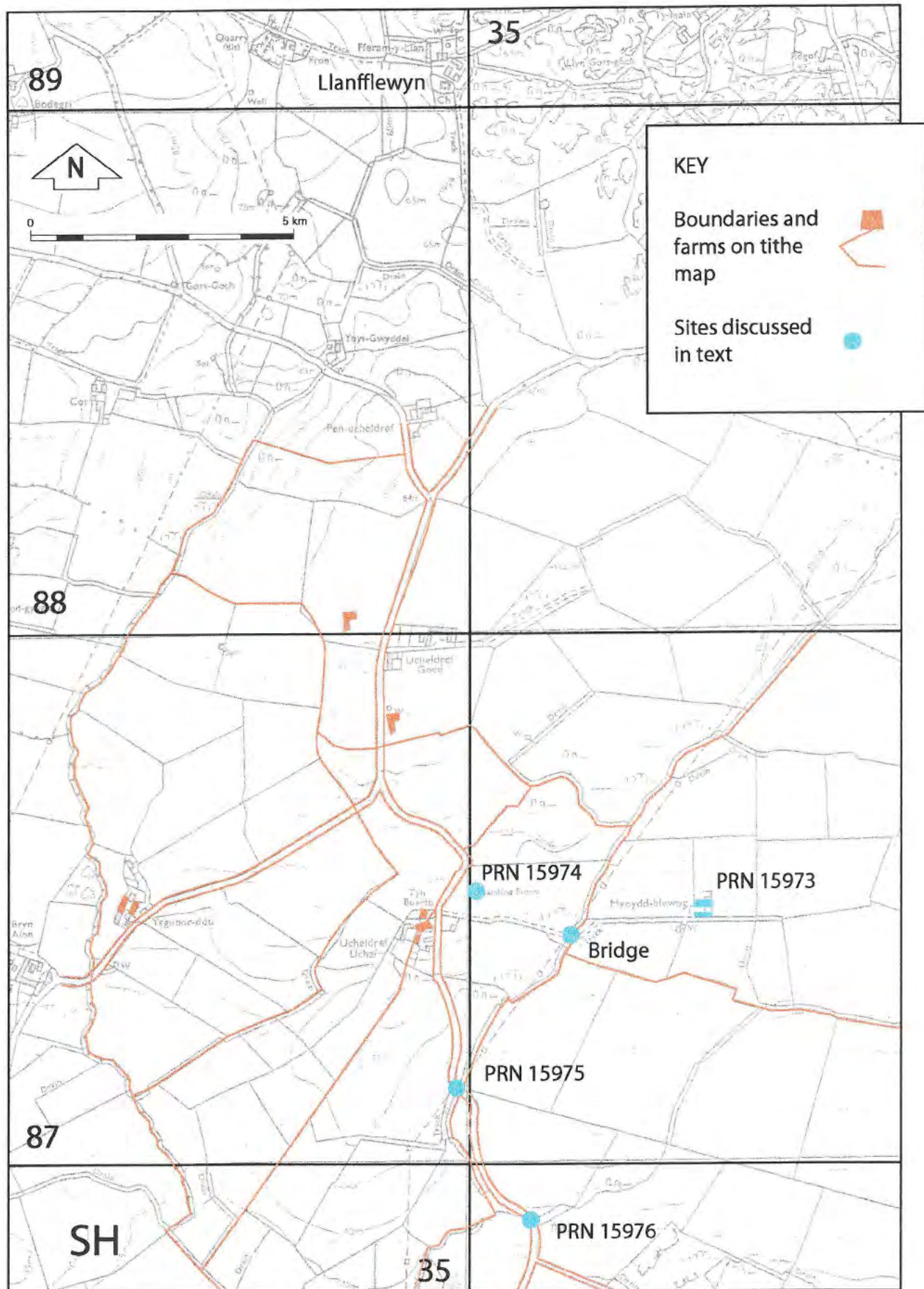


Figure 1: Location of sites, and information from the 1841 tithe map





Figure 2a: 25" map 1900 edition

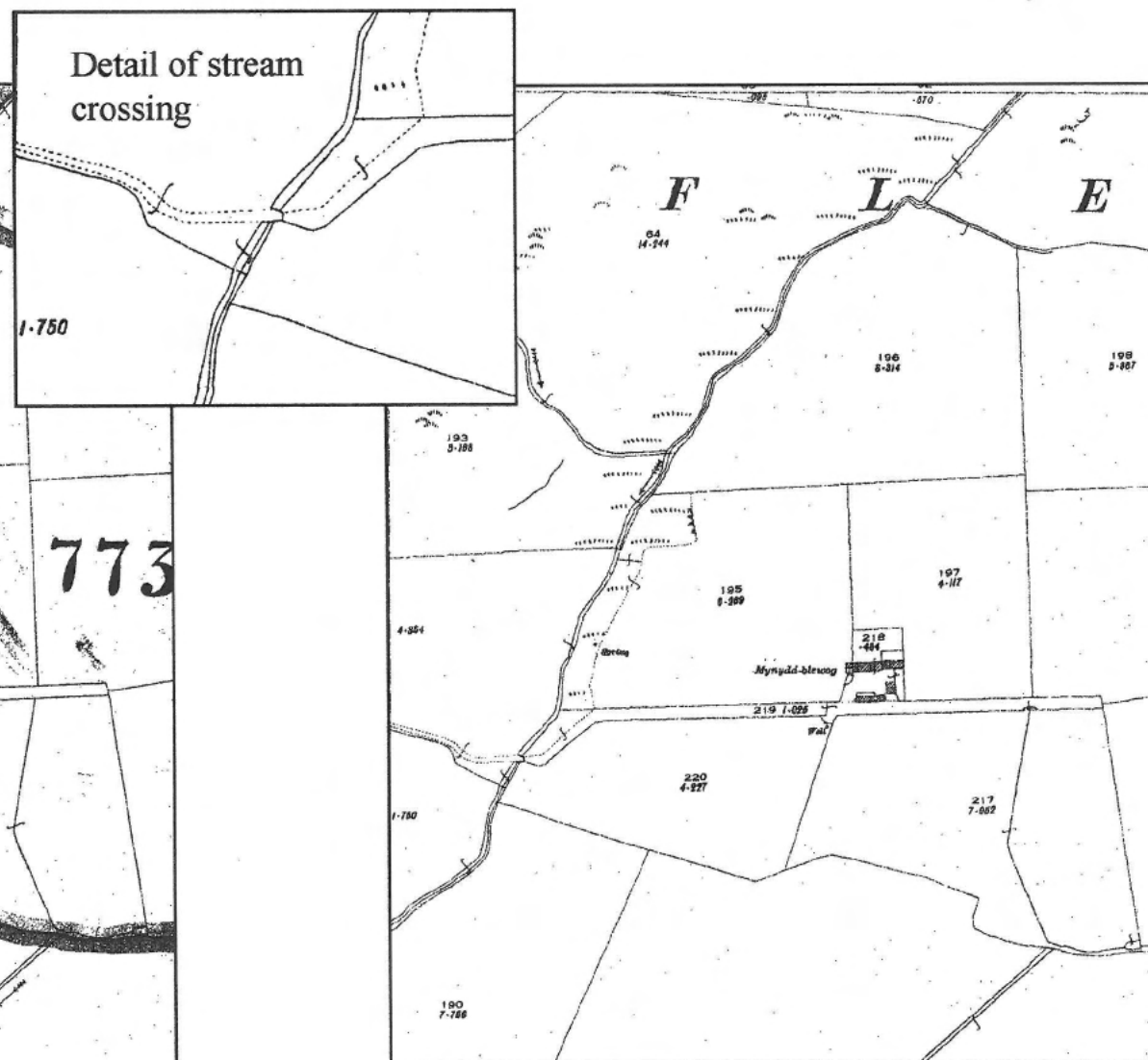
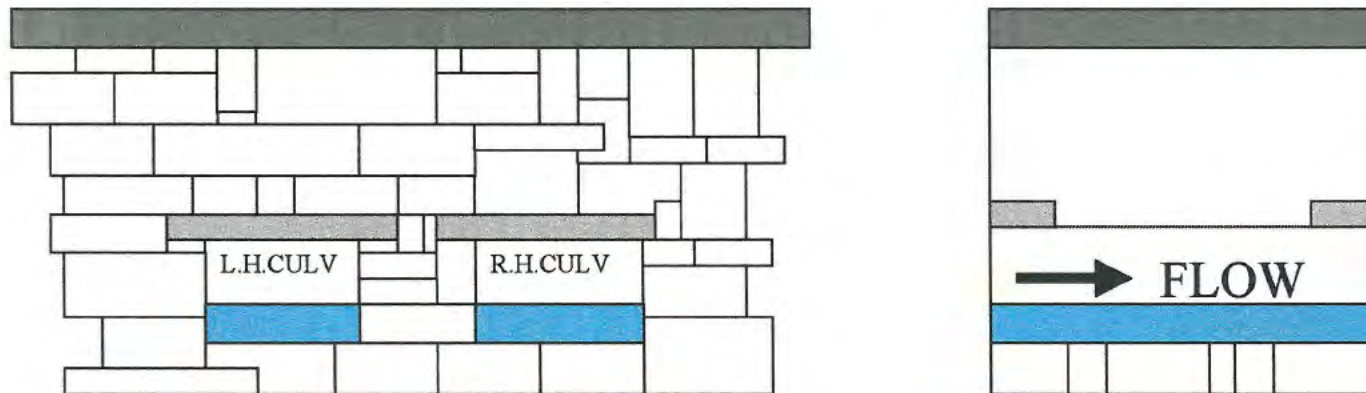


Figure 2b: 25" map 1924 edition





## PRESENT DAY BRIDGE TY'N BUARTH



## REBUILT BRIDGE

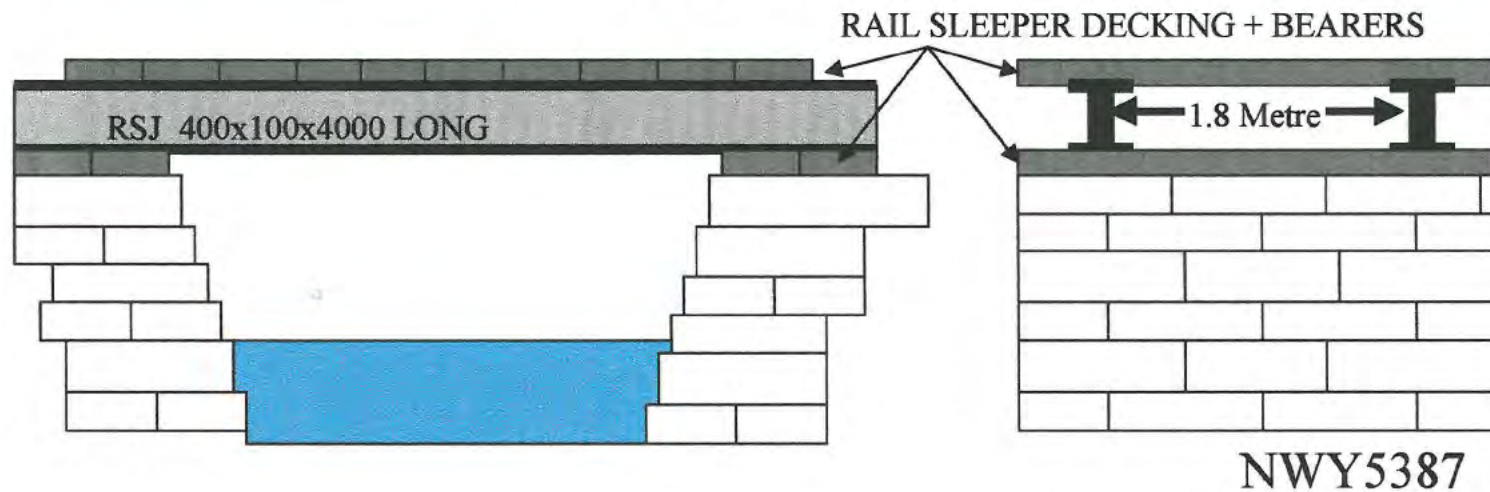


Figure 5: Plans for rebuilding the bridge supplied by the Environment Agency

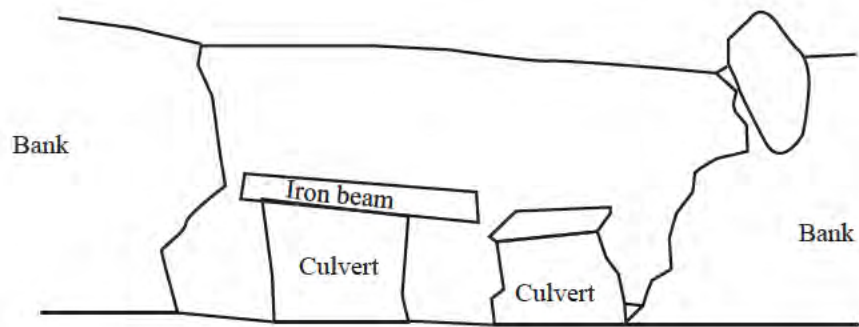


Figure 6a: Sketch elevation of south face

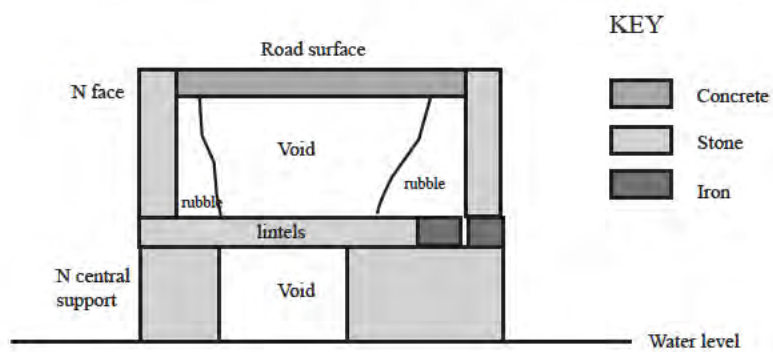


Figure 6b: Sketch section (not to scale)

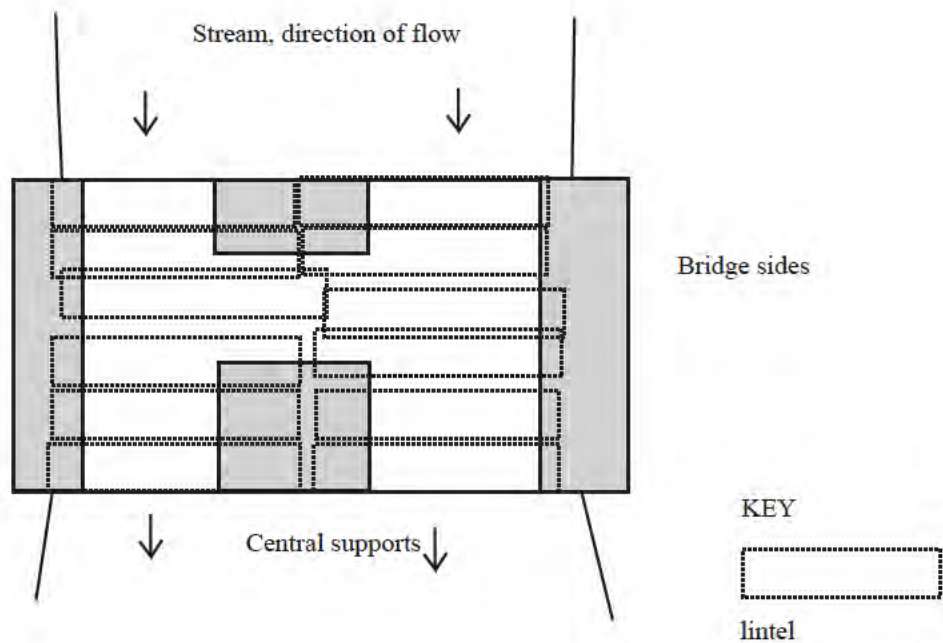


Figure 6c: Sketch plan (not to scale)





Plate 1: north face of bridge



Plate 2: south face of bridge



Plate 3: after removal of the concrete



Plate 4: after demolition was completed



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