

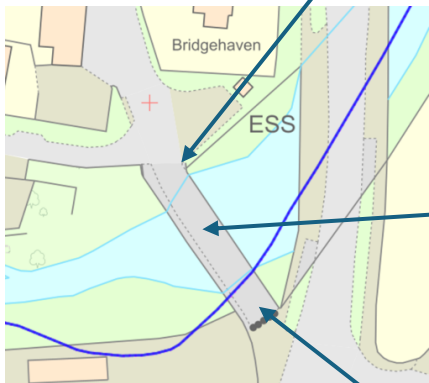
The Old Bridge, Newton Flotman, proposed display boards and table with bench

The River Tas is a chalk stream which has a wide variety of wildlife in, on and around the river which can be seen from the Old Bridge. Scan the QR code to record what you see from the bridge.

WILDLIFE ON OR NEAR THE RIVER TAS

MAMMALS	BIRDS AND DUCKS	PLANT SPECIES	FISH	TREES
Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo athya</i>)	Watercress (<i>Isotria medeoloides</i>)	Roach (<i>Rutilus rutilus</i>)	Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)
Water vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>)	Goosander (<i>Mergus americanus</i>)	Willow-herb (<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>)	Minnow (<i>Leuciscus leuciscus</i>)	
Water shrew (<i>Neomys fodiens</i>)	Common crane (<i>Grus grus</i>)	Willow-herb (<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Roe deer (<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>)	Mute swan (<i>Oxygonia dior</i>)	Purple loosestrife (<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Muntjac deer (<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>)	Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Red deer (<i>Cervus elaphus</i>)	Red kite (<i>Elanus milvus</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Badger (<i>Meles meles</i>)	Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Rabbit (<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>)	Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)	Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	
Hedgehog (<i>Eurosternus europaeus</i>)	Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Hemp-nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	

Produced by Newton Flotman Parish Council. Thanks to Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Ross Jelliffe, Jon Hatch and Sharon Poyser.



The Old Bridge over the River Tas

The old bridge at Newton Flotman is a five-arch road bridge that carries Old Street (the former Norwich to Ipswich road that runs through the village; now bypassed) across the River Tas.

The midline of the river originally formed the boundary between Newton Flotman parish on the west bank and Saxlingham Nethergate parish on the east, but the river's course has been heavily altered since that boundary was laid out, first by a channel or leat (now infilled) dug to bring water to Saxlingham Thorpe Mill that stands close to the southern end of the bridge and, since 1968, by channel realignment both up- and downstream of the bridge carried out as a flood-alleviation measure. The old course of the Tas – which the original bridge was designed to span – later acted as the mill bypass channel.

The old bridge is a complex, multi-period structure of at least five principal phases. The arches are numbered 1 to 6 from north to south (the 6th arch lies buried in the southern riverbank).

The phase-1 bridge

The western (upstream) side of the bridge is clearly the earliest. The style of architecture and masonry suggests this phase-1 bridge is late medieval in date. It consisted of four stone arches: the current spans 2-5. This early bridge was probably only a maximum of 1.8m or 6 feet wide at deck level. It also clearly had a slightly humpbacked profile.

The phase-2 bridge

The phase-2 bridge is that depicted in a drawing of circa 1830. The drawing also shows an additional arch (here called arch 6) through the southern causeway close to where it departed the south bank. The causeway and arch were likely constructed to accommodate the outflow from the tail race of the nearby Saxlingham Thorpe watermill.

The mill leat has since been filled in and the riverbank extended forward across its line (Norfolk Mills 2024) to enlarge the mill car park, but both causeway and arch must still exist buried within the bank.

At some point in phase 2 (certainly pre the circa 1830 drawing), the bridge had been strengthened by iron tie rods inserted above the crowns of arches 2-5 and secured by circular patress plates.



The A140 in the early 1960s

The phase-3 bridge

In 1838 the bridge was widened by circa 2.67m towards the east (downstream) by the construction of a new, brick-built bridge directly up against the old stone structure. The arches of the bridge are elliptical verging on four-centred to match those of the phase-1 structure.



A stone in the centre of the upstream parapet contains the inscription
SIN
1838

The letters 'S' and 'N' are the initial letters of the two parishes Saxlingham Nethergate and Newton Flotman, and the 'I' as just a vertical line denoting the (then) position of the parish boundary.

The phase-4 bridge

In 1848 the bridge was once again widened downstream, this time by an additional circa 3.45m or 11 feet 4 inches: in effect, a third bridge was built alongside the second making the overall width of the bridge 7.92m or 26 feet between elevations. The spans of this third (i.e. phase-4) bridge have a more definite pointed, four-centred-arch profile, as may be seen in the visible downstream elevation

The phase-5 bridge

View of the upstream elevation from the north bank. Arch 1 is closest to the camera



Arch 1 is a totally modern affair, built in 1976 when the bridge was lengthened as part of channel realignment works. Most of the river's flow is now directed beneath arch 1, for arches 2-5 all have concrete inverts poured between steel shuttering laid in the bed of the river to protect the older parts of the bridge from scour.

Flooding in the Tas Valley

In August 1912, severe flooding in the Tas valley caused pier 4 and parts of the adjacent arches 4 and 5 on the upstream elevation to collapse. The repairs had been completed by November 1913 at a cost of £778 11s 1d. (equivalent to £5,402.92 in 2026).