

Appendix 3; Pre-1700 Bridges in the Lothians

While revising the document, I have paid particular attention to bridges which are recorded on 17th century maps, especially those produced by Blaeu and Adair. I have taken note of them when I have found them in each river catchment, but here I collect the information together.

River/Stream Catchment	Bridges marked on 17 th century Maps	Standing Bridge Now	Possible Coherent Remains*	Traces (abutments, etc.)	Unknown or No Trace†
Dunglas Burn	1	1			
Biel Water	1				1
R. Tyne	7	4			3
R. Esk	16	3	1	3	9
Niddrie Burn	4		1		3
Braid Burn	3				3
Water of Leith	6		1		5
River Almond	12	2			10
Midhope Burn	2				2
River Avon	5				5
TOTALS	57	10	3	3	41

* Covers cases where it is thought that there may be substantial elements of a pre-1700 bridge in a more modern structure, and where there is doubt about build-date

† Not all the locations of pre-1700 bridges have been examined; the unknown tag acknowledges this, though I think it unlikely that any bridge would shift more than 1 column to the left (into the 'traces' category).

There may have been even more bridges standing by the end of the 17th century, most likely missed by the mapmakers, because the streams which they crossed or the tracks which they carried were insignificant, and escaped notice. Also, they did not include moat bridges, and perhaps others on private estates. Nonetheless it would be surprising if there were more than one or two bridges in those categories.

I have been surprised by these results in a number of ways. Firstly, there are more bridges on the 17th century maps than I would have expected. Secondly, the survival rate is lower than I would have anticipated, and both findings have implications for my compendium of bridges in Great Britain (and Ireland). My assumption was that having identified around 1000 standing bridges, I must have obtained information about a good cross-section of the bridges that were built before 1700. However, if something like 4 times as many were standing in c1700, then my sample is less representative than I had thought. Estimates have been made of the number of bridges built in each century in England, and if results like those presented here were to be repeated there, it would seem that the numbers might be underestimates. I do not think it is possible to project back to the early middle ages, and comment on Harrison's assertions about the large numbers of bridges which stood then, but the results give food for thought.

For those who think I may be drawing unjustifiably wide conclusions from a study of a small part of the country, I would agree save for the fact that my findings for 3 rivers in South Wales, the River Teifi, the River Towy, and the River Usk are not greatly different. Saxton's map dating to 1578, and Speed's map of 1610, mark 27 bridges on the catchments, and I think that 5 survive as coherent if in some cases incomplete or considerably modified form. I suspect that they did miss one or two, and also included a couple about which I am dubious, but that does not alter the pattern. Finally it would be wrong to leave the topic without emphasising the debt that I and anyone investigating times past owes to the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales for the digitised old maps which they make freely available.