Biggar Archaeology group

Bringing the past to the present

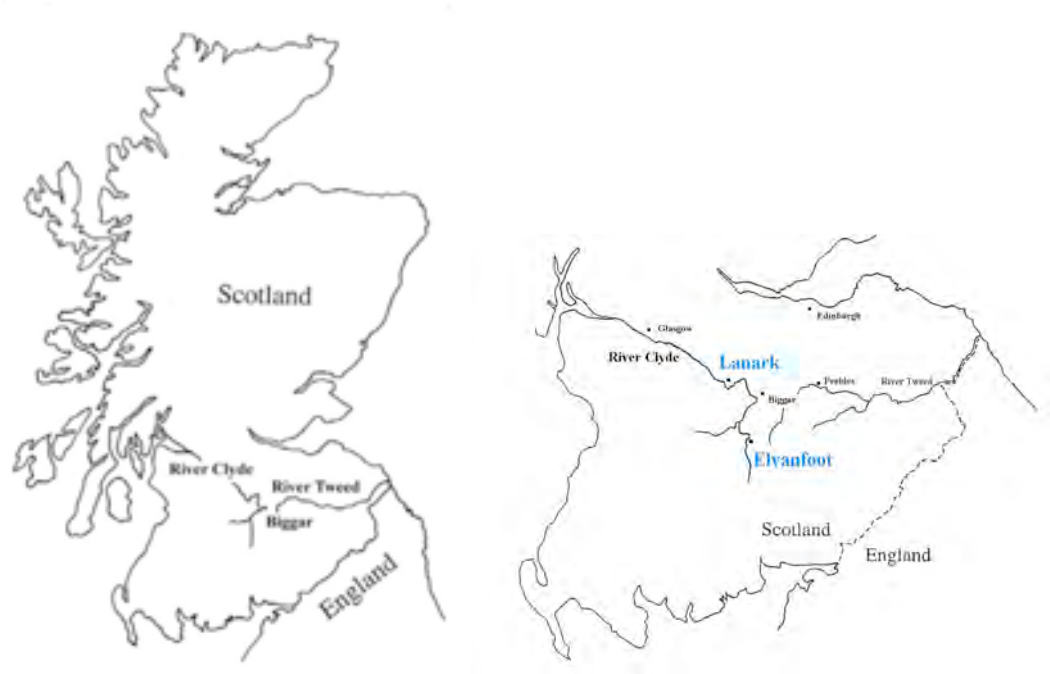
# Crossing the Clyde

## – Clyde and other bridges from Elvanfoot to Lanark

by Tam Ward 2016.

## Introduction

The River Clyde is sourced in the Southern Uplands of Scotland and flows north to Biggar where it turns to the west eventually reaching Glasgow, after which it forms the Firth of Clyde and finally discharges into the Irish Sea (Fig's 1 & 2).




Figs 1 & 2. Location maps.

The Clyde, although of no great length being about 109 miles from its source to Glasgow, may nevertheless be considered the principal river of Scotland, especially for its industrial fame; mainly through ship building in its lower reaches, from Glasgow to Greenock. More recently the Firth has been the home of Britain's nuclear deterrent submarine bases formerly on the Holy Loch and presently in the Gairloch. The river is the eighth longest in Britain and second in Scotland, it has seventy two bridges in total and twenty four of those are given here, although some no longer exist.

However, the Clyde has featured in a much earlier story dating back 10,000 years in human history to the time when Scotland was re-inhabited after the final demise of the last Ice Age around 12,000 years ago. Traces of Mesolithic hunter gatherers have been found on numerous sites in the Daer valley, arguably the source of the Clyde and certainly the geographical source. Their camp sites have been dated there to between 6000 and 10,000 years ago (Ward, 2001) and further Mesolithic camp sites have been discovered further down river at Cornhill Farm near Coulter (Ward, 2001/1). It is likely that river systems were used by the early populations as they explored and eventually settled the landscape.

Since that time people have lived along the sides of the Upper Clyde valley and traces of their existence has been discovered at numerous locations, pre history is represented by the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age and latterly by the Romans. Later medieval and post medieval settlements abound along the valley sides, testament to the importance of the landscape and no doubt the use of the river as the highway through this part of southern Scotland.

There is no evidence that the Romans ever bridged the Clyde but their route to and from Nithsdale (RCAHMS, 1978) must have forded the river near Crawford, after which their forts and camps may be traced northwards to Biggar and west to Old Kilpatrick, but all on the east and north sides of the river.

The settlement and land use has continued throughout the early modern period to the present day, and all of that time people must have crossed the river continuously in their daily travels, and before bridges, at considerable peril as records of drowning testify.

In the early days of course there were no bridges, and fords would have been chosen wisely at points where the water ran shallow for most on the time. However, during winter months and particularly at wet times of the year such crossings would be dangerous and when people took risks with high water, lives and property were undoubtedly lost.

Eventually bridges had to be erected and the earliest evidence for such buildings is from the 17$^{th}$ century, if any earlier bridges over the upper Clyde were built, their traces and records of them have not been discovered.

This paper records the bridges past and present from Elvanfoot to Kirkfieldbank and gives the reader a flavour of crossing the Clyde in pictorial and written form.

The tour starts at Elvanfoot where the River Clyde perversely begins, since its undoubted source lies some 14Km further south and upstream in the head waters of the Daer Water which rises from Gana Hill, although one of Daer's tributaries; the Crookburn springs even further south from Queensberry (hill) where the boundaries between Lanarkshire and Dumfriesshire meet.

Even more bizarre is the fact that the Clyde source is often given as Little Clyde or Clydes Burn, a tiny tributary of the main river course which conjoins just upstream from Elvanfoot and where a former footbridge once existed (Pl 1). The Clyde's Burn originally flowed through the Little Clyde Roman Camp (RCAHMS, ibid) which is still visible, and here is the final twist in the tale of the source of the Clyde; Clydes Burn was diverted in recent historical times and now flows into the head waters of the River Annan, which runs to the Solway Firth.

The Romans gave the Clyde as Clota on the earliest known map of Scotland; Ptolemy's map of c140AD and it may be the Roman connection which gave rise to the sourcing of the great River Clyde in their temporary camp.

After the Romans and up to the time of the 18th century, roads were practically non existent in many parts of Scotland and travel for the most part was by horse – or foot. It wasn't until nearer the end of that century that stage coaches could be used due to improved roads under various Turnpike Trust Acts. The Edinburgh to Glasgow 'caravan' was begun in 1749 – the journey took two days! The first mail coach from London to Glasgow reached the latter city to great rejoicing on 7th July 1790. However Edinburgh had ran a mail coach to London since 1754 advertising the journey as eight days but more often than not it took two weeks.

Perhaps the great improvement of Scottish roads began in the early 18th century by General Wade and his building of military roads and bridges in northern Scotland:

"Had you seen these roads before they were made,
You would hold up your hands and bless General Wade".
Attributed to General William Caulfield.

However by the end of the century things hadn't improved enough to impress Robert Burns who penned the words:

*"I'm now arriv'd thanks to the Gods!-*
*Through pathways rough and muddy:*
*A certain sign that makin' roads*
*Is no this people's study".*

By the early 19th century, engineers like Thomas Telford were knocking many miles off routes by building better roads - and bridges, consequently also knocking many hours off journeys, for example Glasgow to Carlisle was shortened by 9 miles. The mail coaches began to run with incredibly efficiency and pride, coaching inns were laid out along the routes to allow changes of horses and give passengers some comfort. However these coaches were primarily for the Royal Mail, passengers were simply an add on and if they wanted comfort at any inn, they had to disembark and not expect to get back on the same coach, because the four fresh horses would be standing waiting, liveried up for the coach to arrive, bang on time, and the coach would often leave in less than one minute to continue its journey, day and night. Mail coaches arriving at inns were the equivalent of Formula One racing car pit stops!

There does not appear to be a Telford bridge over the Clyde now (but see No 9 below) however, several of his bridges survive in Clyde tributaries, most notably that at Cartland Crags (No 28) built in 1822 and spectacularly spanning the River Mouse near Kirkfieldbank in three tall arches.

The next travel revolution was the advent of railways. The Caledonian Railway opened from Glasgow to Carlisle in 1847 and eventually continued to London.

The network of railways which rapidly spread across the country had obvious benefits; Glasgow to London was now a journey of only ten and a half hours, replacing a journey of up to two weeks by stage coach! Perishable goods such as dairy products, fish and meat could be transported to far a way markets and consumers, both bulk cargoes and large numbers of passengers were efficiently transported over long or short journeys in comfort which far exceeded road travel, and a considerable number of jobs were created throughout the country. The trains immediately won the

contract to carry the Royal Mail and at a stroke put the mail coach industry out of business wherever railways existed.

Stage coach inns lost nearly all their customers and this was graphically illustrated at Crawford where a diary was kept by the inn keeper and is now preserved at Biggar Museum.

A secondary downside of the new form of travel was the quick decline of the roads infrastructure, roads were maintained by Statute Labour and then by Turnpike Trusts, but now, with no income, the Trusts folded, the last toll bars in Lanarkshire were destroyed in 1883 and the roads rapidly fell into a state of disrepair again. Interestingly there were five toll houses in the vicinity of Elvanfoot. However, roads were now required to link up villages and towns to get to the railways, so Acts of Parliament were passed allowing County Councils to take charge of the roads. It was not until the advent of a new form of transport that roads were taken seriously again; motor cars were soon and increasingly requiring better quality roads to drive around on at the turn of the 20th century, especially after the ridiculous Man and Flag Act was repealed in 1896. Roads and their bridges were once more seen as important.

Over the millennia people have had to cross the Clyde by foot, boat and bridges, the latter for both road and rail transport. It is perhaps a feature of travel which is often taken for granted, few people in a train will even know they have whisked across the river while drivers and passengers in road vehicles probably don't give it a second thought other than to fleetingly admire the view from the bridge as they equally whiz over.

Bridges have therefore played an important part of journeys for both modern and more ancient travellers, and have over the years saved countless lives of those who otherwise would have taken the risk to cross under unsafe conditions.

Bridges also have an aesthetic quality and are part of our built heritage; in this short stretch of the Clyde they form a wide range of types and ages, from the rather elegant Romanesque arched bridges of yesteryear to the less eye pleasing concrete and steel structures for modern transport systems. The former were built for foot traffic, and horses and carts, but which now stand testimony to their design and construction as some still carry modern traffic weighing hundreds of times more weight than the bridges were originally conceived for (e.g. No's 14, 20, 23 & 25), an amazing legacy - and lesson from the past. The ultra modern bridges are often subject to design faults appearing long before their expected life spans, for example the major crossing of the Clyde in Glasgow, the Kingston Bridge, was in danger of collapse until lengthy and expensive modifications were undertaken on it. Not so the arches designed by the Romans and in some cases still standing and carrying modern traffic after 2000 years or so.

The bridges also form part of the landscape heritage and should be seen as important aspects of the development of human endeavour to overcome obstacles for the improvement of life.

Sadly, this is not the case as recent demolitions and further proposals to destroy old bridges around the village of Elvanfoot can testify, people from outwith the area and

with no sense of heritage, merely see redundant old bridges as a problem and the solution is to get rid of them, it is a great pity that these faceless planners and officials have the power to ethically cleanse our landscapes for no other purpose than the weak excuse of ‘safety’.

The same moronic attitudes were adopted by people in the past when they removed ancient monuments such as standing stones and stone circles which had stood the test of time, in thousands of years, to tell the valuable story of our ancestors.

The writer doubts we will ever stop these generally faceless people who despite protests are empowered to wipe our heritage off the face of the earth no matter what form it takes, just to appease their own selfish egos of self importance, their knowledge of the past and its importance to the rest of us is limited or non existent as is their concern for it.

Some bridges at both ends of our trip along the Clyde but which don’t actually cross the river are also given here, as it would be remiss to leave them out. The bridges between Elvanfoot and Leadhills hopefully will support the sentiments given above about their removal, while those at Kirkfieldbank also support that opinion, but additionally in the case of Mousemill, show that survival can depend on laissez-faire, because in the wise words of an old Scots wife – “an old thing lasts a long time”.

Sometimes, but seldom are bridges destroyed by the river, more often they are destroyed by useless men with little regard to the real men who built them.

## THE BRIDGES

### The Clyde Bridges from Elvanfoot to Kirkfieldbank

Nearly all of the information which follows is gleaned from other publications and most especially from Col. T. U. Wilson’s Roads and Bridges of Lanarkshire. (Wilson 1951).

### No 1 Former footbridge over Clydesburn. Pl 1. Circa NS 965 158

**Pl 1. The former footbridge over Clydesburn where it joins with the main river. Taken from a sketch by Sir George Reid published in 'The River Clyde' Edinburgh 1886.**

**No 2 Rail Bridge at Elvanfoot. Pl 2. NS 958 168**

The first bridge on the trail down the River Clyde is the railway bridge at Elvanfoot; in recent times and to achieve higher speeds in rail travel the present bridge replaced an older metal one, but the original bridge which was built for the Caledonian Railway and which opened from Glasgow to Carlisle in 1847 was a wooden viaduct. Gone are the majestic days of steam when trains heading north gained speed here after their gallant climb up to Beattock summit from the south, now the sleek and silent electric darts are upon you before you have seen them coming.

**Pl 2 A Virgin train streaks northwards to Glasgow over the first of the many bridges it will cross to get to the city. Clydesburn flows into the main river to the right of the picture.**

**No 3 Old bridge over the Clyde at Elvanfoot. Pl's 3 & 4. NS 954 174**

Little appears to be known about the three arched bridge which formerly existed at Elvanfoot but which was washed away in a flood. It is illustrated in 1864 (Pl 3) (Irving & Murray) looking upstream and showing Newton House (the home of Irving) and outhouses. It is believed to be and has the appearance of a bridge built in the 17th century but despite the appearance of a robust bridge it succumbed to the floodwaters of the river in the 1890's, after which it was replaced by a metal footbridge (below). Sometimes old engravings can be guilty of 'artistic licence' but in this case a photograph of the bridge (Pl 4) looking in the opposite direction (downstream) shows the earlier illustration to be an accurate depiction. The stout piers and cut water buttresses of the bridge must have concealed some inherent weakness to allow for its seemingly untimely demise.

The writer wonders if there is some confusion between this bridge and the one at Wandel (No 14 below), because that bridge is also alluded to have been built in the 17th century for enabling the transport of lead from Leadhills via Biggar to Leith, but it has a clear date carved on it of 1769 (Pl 18). Is it possible that the Elvanfoot bridge

was the one built for the lead carters? However, this would be somewhat of a long way for a short cut to Biggar if it was.

**Pl 3. The fine three arched bridge which stood at Elvanfoot.**


**Pl 4. The fine three arched bridge which stood at Elvanfoot. Looking downstream.**

**No 4 Pedestrian Bridge at Elvanfoot. Pl 5. NS 954 174**

The present suspension bridge was built in the 1920's to a design by Rowell & Co, to replace a graceful three arched stone bridge built in the 17th century but which was washed away by the river (above). The bridge is the highest crossing over the Clyde apart from the rail bridge (No 1 above).

The bridge is suspended by steel ropes and rod suspenders; it is a lattice truss span of about 125 feet and with lattice girder pylons.

The bridge is presently under threat of demolition. If this happens, Elvanfoot will have lost five historic bridges in recent times, the first was the old stone bridge on the site of the present suspension crossing, washed away in a flood, then Telfords Bridge (below), and then the two historically important Mac Alpine concrete rail bridges on the branch line from Elvanfoot to Leadhills, both built at the beginning of the 20th century. These last two bridges are included here for interest although they do not span the Clyde. Mac Alpines two rail bridges and Telfords bridge were all disgracefully demolished under the pretext of being dangerous! It behoves the present District Council to take all measures to protect the suspension bridge or be damned as part of the destruction of important local heritage, taking the easy option for politically correct reasons, rather than facing their duty to protect and preserve our heritage.

**Pl 5. Footbridge at Elvanfoot – the last survivor but under threat!**

The following two bridges do not span the Clyde, but were important historical bridges in their own right and like so many others (see No 8), were disgracefully demolished in the full knowledge of their significance in terms of local history and architectural history. Both carried the branch railway from Elvanfoot to Leadhills and both were built by the legendary firm of Robert McAlpine, using shuttered concrete before the advent of steel reinforcement, the method was pioneered by McAlpine giving him the nickname 'Concrete Bob' (Earnshaw 1990). The Rispin Cleuch Bridge

was then clad for aesthetic purposes in a layer of red terracotta bricks made at Glasgow. Such bridges should have been monuments in care by the state, but in a Scotland with all the wrong people in charge of heritage, they are swept away for no good reason, the lame excuse in this case being ‘safety’.

**No 5 Rispin Cleuch Viaduct. Pl 6. NS 939 172**

Each of the eight graceful arches was 50 feet wide and up to 80 feet high, built with mass concrete and faced with brick, the gently curving viaduct was completed in 1900 and the line opened one year later to serve the highest villages in Scotland, but for the transport of lead ores and produce, although a passenger service was included. McAlpine had built the West Highland Line just before the end of the century and the bare concrete Glenfinnan Viaduct had been seen by The Duke of Buccleuch who used his influence to have a more aesthetically pleasing bridge built for the Leadhills line. The line was closed and scrapped in 1939 but the bridge was blown up in 1991 despite protests locally and cleared away by British Rail who owned it.

**Pl 6. The graceful rail bridge at Rispin Cleuch. Destroyed in 1991.**

**No 6 Elvan Water Rail bridge. Pl's 7 & 8. NS 901 158**

The plainer, but nevertheless elegant skewed two arched rail bridge over the Elvan Water lay upstream from Elvanfoot and at the quaintly named Toddle Moss, it was similarly destroyed, this time in 2015. Another piece of Scotland's industrial legacy was thus erased in yet another act of official vandalism.

**Pl 7. Rail bridge over the Elvan Water. Destroyed in 2015.**

**Pl 8. Showing construction by McAlpine using mass concrete.**

**No 7 M74 Bridge at Elvanfoot. Pl 9. NS 956 183**

In 1990 the A74 was upgraded to the M74 six lane motorway and a new bridge was constructed to carry it over the Clyde at Elvanfoot. The concrete and steel bridge is fairly typical of modern construction techniques and while it is undoubtedly an efficient use of technology and materials, conveying the main road artery into Scotland and over the Clyde, it will be completely invisible to the thousands of daily users who cross it. Although graceful in the modern context of construction, the bridge does not appear to have the charm of its forerunner (next).

**Pl 9. M74 Motorway crosses the Clyde at Elvanfoot.**

**No 8 A74 Bridge at Elvanfoot. Pl 10. NS 957 183**

The County of Lanark were preparing to vastly improve the roads network before WW II and by 1939 Telfords Bridge (below) was replaced by the massive red sandstone single arched crossing. Looking to the future, the section of new road here was dual carriageway along with another short section at Lesmahagow, but finished during the war years they remained as the only parts of the A74 trunk road which was to the new standard until the 1960's when the entire length of the route was upgraded to dual carriageway. The bridge is built with huge blocks of Dumfriesshire red sandstone. Regrettably the commemorative bronze plaque giving its construction date and details has been stolen!

At the base of the bridge and on the south side of the river there is a sad reminder of the human cost in transport construction. A tiny cemetery commemorates the deaths and burial place of thirty seven workers on the Caledonian railway in 1847. Each anonymous grave is apparently marked by a loose rock in the ground set out in four rows. In 1916 the place was consecrated by the Episcopal Bishop of Glasgow and a panel set up explaining the graves which are surrounded by a massive chain suspended on little pointed pillars.

The reason for their deaths and burial at this spot, until recently remained unknown; however in that year Glasgow suffered from a typhus epidemic and most Irish navvies working on the railway would have travelled through Glasgow to the work place. Their deaths are often reported as having been 'killed' on the railway. The answer comes from a London newspaper report as given here:

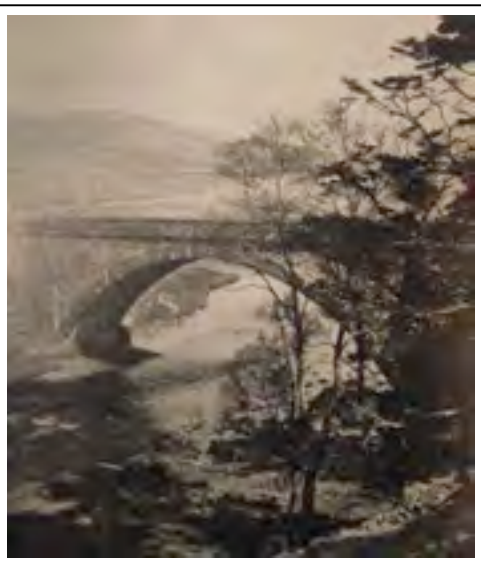
> Their deaths were reported in the London Standard of July 8th 1847:
>
> ALARMING SPREAD OF FEVER AMONG THE LABOURERS ON THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY
> The amount of fever raging among "the navvies" engaged in forming the Caledonian line is very great. It is of a very dangerous and fatal description – mostly black spotted typhus. A great number of deaths have occurred recently. A few weeks ago there were six corpses at one time lying at Ecclefechan. The number of burials in Crawford church-yard was becoming so great, that fearing the place would be shortly filled, a piece of ground has been procured at Elvanfoot, in which a number of interments have taken place. It is a melancholy spectacle this spot, on the bank of the river, close by the bridge, along which the coach-road goes. There they are placed in regular rows, much the same way as are the victims of cholera in the supplementary burying grounds. Funerals there are taking place daily, and now upwards of 20 bodies are laid in it. The fever has assumed the most alarming aspect about the highest summit level; and the contagion has spread to a considerable extent among the regular inhabitants of the district. There are very few who have not known the loss of one or more of their relations. One man who keeps a small shop had his wife, son and daughter dead in one week, and next week his sister, her husband, their son and daughter also died, all from fever caught by infection. The medical men attribute the extensive spread of the disease to the almost entire want of vegetables – the general food being of a dry, hard nature. The appearance of the huts in which many of the "navvies" lodge would strike a stranger as being conducive to disease; many of them are built of wet turf, on a damp mossy soil, and taken possession of immediately on being roofed in. The amount of disease otherwise, caused by irregular habits, is stated to be very considerable.

{I am grateful to Amanda Burgauer of Elvanfoot Development Group for this information.}

The report also dispels the urban myth often cited that the parishioners of Crawford *refused* to allow the burial of navvies in their cemetery.

**Plate 10 above.**
**Pl 10. The massive single arched bridge at Elvanfoot is similar in design to the one at Kirkfieldbank No 26 below. Note the Navvies cemetery beside it. To allow for a straight road the bridge is askew with the river.**

**No 9 Old Telford Bridge at Elvanfoot. Pl's 11 & 12. NS 958 184**
When Thomas Telford built a new road from Glasgow to Carlisle the rather elegant single span bridge over the Clyde at Elvanfoot was built in 1824. Made from random rubble with a single arch of dressed Dumfriesshire sandstone the bridge was constructed at a constricted point of the river where the rocky banks were high on each side. The bridge stood until 1957 when it was blown up having been replaced in 1939 by the massive red sandstone dual carriageway bridge (above). Telfords Bridge, like the former nearby examples of Mac Alpine should have been monuments in care and part of the local and national heritage, however, in the writer's opinion, the countryside has been, and still is, run by people who do not care for heritage matters.



**Pl 11 above showing Telfords Bridge and it's replacement standing side by side until 1957 when the older bridge was destroyed. Telford built his bridge at right angles to the road on both sides of the river to take advantage of rock foundations. No need for fast corners in those days.**

**Pl 12 showing Telfords Bridge over the Clyde.**

**No 10 Camps rail Bridge at Crawford. Pl 13. NS 956 209**

The upper River Clyde tributaries have supplied much of the public water supply for Lanarkshire and Camps Reservoir is one of the earliest and largest. Built between 1916 and 1930 the huge earth dam was constructed by bringing materials to it by a narrow gauge rail on a temporary line from Crawford. Up to two hundred WW I German prisoners of war were employed for part of the work. The line crosses the Clyde on steel beams laid over two pillars with cutwaters and of red sandstone, at each end the bridge buttresses have Romanesque arches for people and animals to pass under, here the stone used is mostly greywacke but with fine ashlar dressing on quoins, arches and coping stones, giving the whole a substantial and rather attractive appearance. The bridge survives as a footpath for sheep and pedestrians and creates a lovely walk from the village to the glens on the other side of the Clyde.

**Pl 13. Looking downstream the bridge is now a public footpath from Crawford to Camps and Midlock Glens.**

**No 11 Camps Road Bridge at Crawford. Pl 14. NS 952 212**

Perhaps the least attractive bridge over the river is the plain box girder road bridge leading from Crawford to Camps and Midlock. It really has little to commend it other than it gives a valuable access over the Clyde to stunning landscapes of Midlock and Camps. Within Camps Reservoir and along each of the glens pre-historic sites and monuments abound; many of which are visible such as the Early Neolithic Class II Henge at Normangill which the Camps road and former rail track actually runs through, and numerous examples of Bronze Age house sites known as Unenclosed Platform Settlements. Iron Age hill forts and settlements and the site of one of Scotland's smallest Roman forts are all available to the visitor (RCAHMS ibid). Of particular interest is the 12$^{th}$ C motte castle of Crawford at Castle Farm and which William Wallace is alleged to have attacked, *however this last site should only be viewed from the roadside as it is in a very dangerous condition*.

**Pl 14. Road bridge to Camps and Midlock from Crawford village.**

**No 12 Rail Bridge at Crawford. Pl 15. NS 948 212**

The second rail bridge down the Clyde is at Crawford. Here the typical piers of red sandstone still survive from the old Caledonian railway first generation bridges which were probably all of timber construction. The recently re furbished bridge now allows for high speed electric trains to make their seemingly effortless journey in and out of Scotland.

**Pl 15. Rail bridge at Crawford village, looking south.**

**No 13 Road Bridge at Abington. Pl 16. NS 934 234**

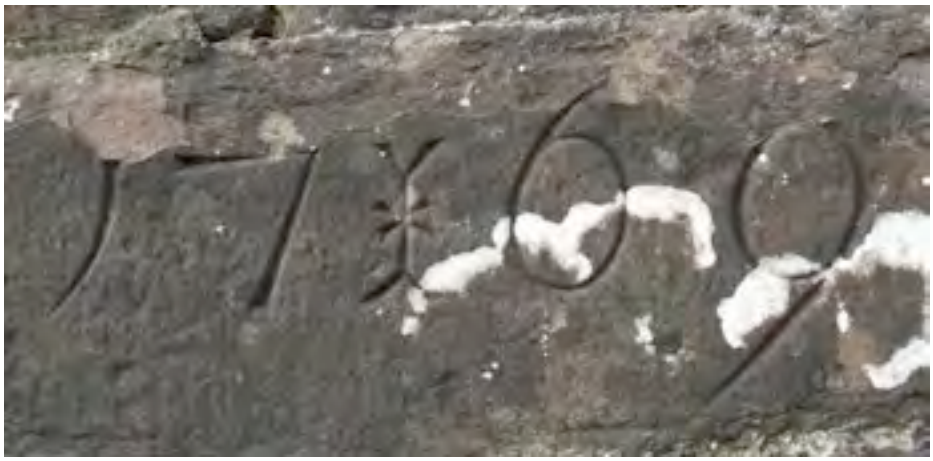
The incongruous arrangement of a modern concrete road bridge sitting on typical railway bridge piers at Abington is due to the fact that a rail track once ran over the Clyde here, but for a very short time. Lord Colebrooke, who lived in Glengonnar House (demolished in 1948) beside the village and on the other side of the Clyde from the main line rail station, had entertained King Edward V II in 1906. In an attempt to impress the King he had a temporary rail line laid from the station up to his house, a distance of about 5 minutes walk! Apparently the cost nearly ruined him. The village and the station were garlanded with decorations for the visit when the King partook in shooting parties at Crawford and Crawfordjohn.

**Pl 16. The bridge between Abington village and the rail station.**

**No 14 Old Bridge at Wandel. Pl 17. NS 941 267**

The graceful three arch bridge is one of the earliest to be built over the Clyde. As early as c 1600 there were appeals to build a bridge here, the route was extremely important to convey the lead produce on a two day journey from Leadhills via Biggar to Leith and in 1597 a pack horse convoy was hijacked by "broken men of the bordiere". In 1632 the Presbytery of Lanark were complaining about the delay to build a bridge, and in 1661 a successful petition was made to the Scottish Parliament to finally have it built. However, it was not done until 1683 when a local landowner, William Baillie undertook the work on the basis he had to raise the money by subscription from all parishes in southern Scotland. He was also able to build a toll house and charge for the crossing. The rates were in Scots money; two pennies for pedestrians, a horse with a rider or load, 6 pennies, a cow four pennies and a sheep two pennies. The deal was to also build a bridge over the Duneaton (river) just upstream and to the south. After the bridges were built the lead ingots from Leadhills could be transported in carts carrying seven hundred weights as opposed to horse carrying three. A date of 1769 (Pl 18) carved on the bridge may commemorate a repair (but see No 3 above). The toll house for the bridge sat on the west bank of the river.

**Pl 17. Wandel bridge looking downstream.**



**Pl 18. The date and masons mark carved on Wandel bridge – a repair?**

**No 15 New road bridge at Wandel. Pl 19. NS 941 268**

The old bridge at Wandel was built for loads of less than half a ton, but continued in use up to the end of the 20th c supporting lorries weighing over fifty tons when it was finally replaced with the concrete and steel building now used by the road. The new bridge is clearly more efficient for modern transport but will it last as long as it's more ancient neighbour? Sandstone arches don't rust like modern steel.

**Pl 19. The old and the new, until recently, lorries like the one seen crossing used the old bridge daily.**

**No 16 Lamington rail bridge. Pl 20. NS 969 302**

Like the other rail crossings Lamington is clearly a product of the old Caledonian railway as far as the piers and abutments are concerned. Solidly built with massive sandstone blocks. The bridge however has been replaced on at least two occasions, the most recent when a new bridge for high speed, was built *entirely* beside the piers, and in a single weekend, shunted over to replace the previous one, an amazing feat of modern engineering. However during the course of winter 2015-16 the bridge had a lucky escape when some of the old pillar stones were dislodged by flood water, the track was closed until emergency repairs were executed and now the old pillars are encased in – concrete, but some parts of the original can still be seen.

**Pl 20. Lamington rail bridge showing two of three cut water pillars, the original sandstone pillars are now encased in concrete.**

**No 17 Lamington Bridge. Pl 21. NS 971 303**

The elegant two arched bridge, each with a span of 53 feet, was built in 1836 with local stone from nearby Roberton and at a cost of £900. Like so many bridges it was the result of one too many drowning calamities, in this instance, in 1830 two young men and their betrothed servant girls were washed away while rashly trying to cross the river in flood, near the present bridge location. Lord Lamington is reputed to have borne the cost of the bridge.

**Pl 21. Lamington Bridge seen in low winter sunlight with Tinto Hill in the background**.

**No 18 Wolf Clyde Bridge. Pl's 22-24. NT 019 362**

The graceful multi arched bridge replaced another ford which was located just down stream from the bridge. The bridge was built in 1822 as part of the new route from Stirling to Carlisle. This was the time when engineers like Thomas Telford were creating greatly improved road systems with bridges crossing all rivers en route, thus finally making travel much safer. It was essential that the Mail coaches arrived at their destinations in time and it became a matter of great pride, or shame, if they did, or did not. The bridge was built to service a new route between Biggar and Lanark as the old road twisted over hill and glen between Biggar and Thankerton, and via the Boat ferry there (see below). Wolf Clyde Bridge which is built with Dumfriesshire sandstone is level over its full length and was enlarged to triple the width in 1929, this extension may be seen in the concrete shuttering under all of its eight arches. The two large spans cover the river while the other six allow flood waters to pass through; the entire area of grass on the flood plain is regularly flooded, sometimes to considerable depth.

During the construction of the extension, the road along the riverside towards Cormiston was realigned and the nearby ancient motte there was somewhat 'altered' by the removal of much material, it was later re instated in its present position and

remains a Monument in Guardianship, supposedly a 14th century castle site, but more likely a 20th century pile of gravel, the original motte may now lie within the arches of the bridge (not a lot of people know that!).

Wolf Clyde is a favourite spot for fishers and picnickers.

**Pl 22. Wolf Clyde bridge near Biggar. The river regularly floods the entire field in the foreground, hence the need for additional six arches.**

**Pl's 23 & 24. The benign looking river seen here is misleading, since regular floods come raging through. The 20th C upstream extension is betrayed by the concrete sections of the arches.**

**No 19 Wolf Clyde Rail Bridge. Pl's 25 & 26. NT 018 363**

A branch line from Symington to Broughton and via Biggar was opened by the Symington, Biggar and Broughton Railway, it was acquired by the Caledonian Railway in 1861 and by 1864 it was extended to reach Peebles. Presumably the bridge pillars at Wolfclyde are original and the bridge survived until the infamous 'Beeching cuts' in the early 1960's. Double width pillars are in the river while the landward ones are for single track, perhaps this was for possible expansion to double track line? Unlike most stone bridges over the upper Clyde this one is made with carboniferous sandstone.

**Pl's 25 & 26. Wolf Clyde rail bridge. The river piers are twice as long as the landward ones and buttresses. The 'motte' is below the pine trees.**

**No 20 Boat Bridge. Pl 27. NS 979 383**

The amazing high and steep sided but graceful Boat Bridge was built in 1778 and as the name implies replaced a ferry service. The route was originally the main road between Biggar and Lanark and interestingly, although seven miles from Lanark, the magistrates there were concerned that it was the artery between the two most important places in the then Upper Ward of Lanarkshire and should therefore have a bridge, which was built at the expense of the County. The west arch springs from high ground and the rest of the crossing drops down to the much lower floodplain on the east side, occasionally under severe flood conditions the bridge becomes inaccessible from the Biggar side. In the 1820's Telford changed and improved the route between the two towns by building the existing A72 and A73 roads. Interestingly, while roads have been shortened, the Clyde sometimes varies its length, from Boat Bridge to Hyndford Bridge it is about $4^{1}/_{2}$ miles as the crow flies, however, the Clyde takes 13 miles to make that journey, twisting tortuously as it goes around Cairngryffe Hill.

**Pl 27. Boat Bridge**. **Looking upstream**.

**No 21 Railway bridge at Carstairs Junction. Pl 28. NS 963 442**
Unlike most rail bridges in upper Clydesdale this one is entirely modern with three concrete piers and abutments supporting four steel sections, all replacing the earlier Caledonian structures. The view here is upstream and the line runs west (left) in the photograph straight into the major rail connection in southern Scotland, trains would split here for Glasgow or Edinburgh. All rail travellers have heard of Carstairs Junction as it was the hub for the rail network.

Interestingly the River Clyde, as stated in the introduction, was the natural route through the upland landscape of southern Lanarkshire, and that can easily be traced back to Roman times, Carstairs also formed a major connection for the Romans as one of their most important forts is located here at nearby Ravenstruther.

**Pl 28. A tranquil Clyde flowing deep at Lampits and just above the Ferry Bridge (below).**

**No 22 Lampits Ferry Bridge. Pl's 29 & 30. NS 956 445**
The bridge on this calm stretch of the river has nothing to commend it for appearance as it is rather unattractive, although interestingly being partially made from pre cast concrete. The very narrow bridge crosses the Clyde on three sets of double circular pillars, each pair is connected by a cross lattice also of concrete, these are set in line with the river but are askew of the road above, which crosses at an angle. Clearly the planners at this time were not preparing for future levels of traffic, perhaps taking the view that the advent of motorised vehicles was just a fad? However they did take into consideration the flooding Clyde, and like Wolf Clyde above, additional flood tunnels were built under the approach road.

The bridge replaced a well used ferry (hence the name) which, because of the depth of water was seldom put out of use; the ferry was pulled back and forth by the use of a rope stretched across the river. There were numerous ancient pre bridge crossing points over the Clyde and these have been discussed by Thomas Reid in 1912 (Reid 1912). In 1905 a new ferry was made at a cost of £400 but it was soon replaced by the bridge built by the County Council, however, the ferry was still inexplicably working in 1913 as an old photograph (Biggar Museum) shows.

**Pl 29. Lampits Ferry Boat Bridge. Note the flood tunnels. Looking upstream.**

**Pl 30. The unusual design, presumably re-enforced concrete. Looking downstream (left).**

**No 23 Hyndford Bridge. Pl's 31 - 38. NS 915 414**

Where the A70 and A73 cross over, this elegant five arched structure with pedestrian refuges over each pier was built in 1773 to allow the new Edinburgh to Ayr road pass over the Clyde, the route replaced that which formerly crossed the Clydesholm Bridge (below). Designed by Alexander Stevens for horse and cart traffic, it is now amazing to see huge juggernaut lorries using this bridge which is now restricted by traffic lights to one way traffic, but only a few years ago was subject to lorries passing each other on the summit of the bridge, truly a testament to the skill of the builders. The house at the north end is probably the original toll house while that on the south end (now ruinous) is the toll house for Telfords' improved roads, built in the 1820's. Charges for using the bridge were a half penny for pedestrians and 1/6d (7.5 Pence in modern money) for coaches and carts. It must have been a magnificent sight to see the scarlet Royal Mail coaches crossing this bridge.

Undoubtedly the finest bridge in this series, it is built almost entirely of dressed ashlar on five arches springing from four piers; two of which are in the river and carry the three main arches to span the water. Eight rounded buttresses are carried up from the piers and upon each are a semi circular refuge for pedestrians, modern rails now surmount the parapet which stands on corbelled ledges on the exterior face, and above each arch a string course runs to accentuate the graceful curves of the bridge. At each end of the bridge is a pair of tall pyramidal columns set within the parapets, all the features give an extremely pleasing appearance, although there is a slight downside to the whole effect; that is the almost incessant modern traffic controlled by lights, and the unsightly clutter of electricity and signage poles – all of course aspects of our modern world, and a far cry from what must have been the more picturesque, tranquil and elegant travel scene of yesteryear.

**Pl 31. Hyndford bridge looking upstream.**

**Pl 32. Heavy transport loads.**

**Pl 33. One of eight refuge positions.**

**Pl 34. Original toll house? North side.**

**Pl 35. Original toll house?**

**Pl 36. Telford's toll house. South side.**

**Pl 36. Approach from the south.**

**Pl 37. Detail of stonework.**

**Pl 38. Once it was a red stagecoach.**

**No 24 Crookboat rail bridge. Pl 39. NS 900 402**

A short distance downstream from Hyndford at Crookboat the massive buttresses for a double line railway survive, the bridge and piers are now gone. The railway was the mineral line from the Douglas coalfields bringing the produce up to Lanark and thereby connecting to the main Glasgow-London Railway (old Caledonian line). The name gives the clue to another fording place on the Clyde where eventually a ferry operated.

**Pl 39. Crookboat former rail bridge.**

**No 25 Kirkfieldbank or Clydesholm Old Bridge. Pl's 40 & 41. NS 869 439**

Before the old bridge was built (1696 – 99) Clydesdholm at the bottom of the steep road which rises up to Lanark was a ferry and ford location. The use of a boat in the slow running deeper water is mentioned in a charter by James IV in 1491. Two boatmen were stationed there in their own houses (now gone) and in 1552 they were appointed by the Baillies and community of Lanark. Petitions were made from 1649 by Lanark Burgh to have a bridge built because many lives were being lost attempting the crossing; boats especially were vulnerable as the lofty Stonebyres falls lie a short distance down stream, twelve men were killed in just four years. Eventually after several attempts to raise funds and changes of location, the work got under way in 1696 and was completed three years later. The estimated cost was 25,000 merks Scots, a merk was two thirds of a pound Scots and Scots money was worth a twelfth of English sterling. The cost if it came under budget and was 16,500 pounds Scots which were £1375 Sterling. The detailed accounts for building this bridge survive and are accurate to a penny (Reid 1912 ibid). To offset the construction a toll was levied at 2d for pedestrians and 6d for wheeled traffic among other charges

Another fine three arched stone bridge and one of the earliest in this series, its maximum load would have been a few horses and carts, the angular cut water piers are carried up to form refuges for pedestrian traffic as this would have been an extremely busy bridge. Two islands on the upstream side of the bridge split the river into three channels, each one flowing through its own arch.

Too narrow for modern traffic the old bridge was used until 1959 when it in turn was replaced by the neighbouring single arched road bridge which exists today.

**Pl 40. Clydesholm Bridge at Kirkfieldbank.**

**Pl 41. One of the pedestrian refuges on the bridge parapet, with the modern bridge beyond.**

**No 26 Kirkfieldbank New Bridge. Pl's 42 & 43. NS 868 440**

Built for £143,000 and opened in 1959 the modern bridge dwarfs its elder neighbour, but good views of each may be had from one another. The massive red sandstone bridge is strikingly similar in design to that at Elvanfoot (No 8) above.

**Pl 42. Kirkfieldbank Bridge. Looking downstream from the old bridge.**


**Pl 43. Date plaque on Kirkfieldbank new bridge.**

The final two bridges given in this report do not cross the Clyde but each is historically important and each is only a short walk from Kirkfieldbank and the two bridges given above.

The trail ends here and it is hoped that the basic information thus supplied may be of interest and use to visitors to Upper Clydesdale, since a trip by car up the river will encounter most of the bridges or locations of former bridges and where at least some of the atmosphere of the past may be appreciated.

**No 27 Mousemill or The 'Roman Bridge' over the River Mouse.**

**Pl's 44 & 45. NS 870 442**

Although not spanning the Clyde, the narrow pack horse bridge lies near the river at its confluence with Mouse Water. The graceful single arched bridge replaced an earlier wooden one about 1649, making it one of the earliest bridges in the area. A further replacement road bridge was built just downstream and leading to the village of Nemphlar. The old pack horse bridge was due to be demolished when a local man purchased it for £50 with a view to re-using it; it still stands as a monument to the past, unlike the former bridges at Elvanfoot.

Pack horse bridges were generally not wide enough to accommodate wheeled traffic, hence the name and were restricted to use by animals and people, they are extremely rare, a fine but much smaller example may be seen in the town of Biggar and known as The Cadgers Brig. Each probably dates to the 17th century but no earlier, certainly not to Roman times as has been suggested for Mouse Mill.

Here is the case in point: and refutes the modern claims by the 'faceless men' regarding safety, this bridge has stood the test of time for well over 150 years, in the same state and almost exactly as it is seen today. The parapet was missing then and comparison with the two illustrations given here will show that even without any maintenance "an old thing lasts a long time". Nor have there ever been any reports of injury on or from the bridge even though its crossing requires a steady nerve as it is less than 2m wide at its elevated summit where the parapets have gone.

This remarkable bridge appears to have survived more by good fortune than for any one caring for it; however we may be thankful the idiots involved at Elvanfoot didn't have cause to be involved with it. The bridge aught to be a Monument in Care.

**Pl 44. Mousemill Bridge. Shrouded in trees, keeping it out of sight of officials. Looking downstream.**

**Pl 45. Mousemill Bridge as illustrated in 1864, looking upstream. (Irving & Murray 1864). A remarkable survivor of important bridge architecture.**

**No 28 Cartland Bridge. Pl's 46 - 48. NS 869 445**

Like Mousemill this bridge does not cross the Clyde but is so close and important, it would be remiss to exclude it. Built in 1822 to the design of the great engineer Thomas Telford, the bridge is made from the local stone found in the gorge of the River Mouse which it spans, it was built by John Gibb of Aberdeen who later on built many of the docks in London. The toll house still survives. Standing at 129 feet (39m) high the three lofty arches make a spectacular image from below, and a scary one looking over the parapet.

However the gorge is almost completely shrouded in woodlands which obscure the bridge from below. Nevertheless, fortunately many paintings, etchings and photographs were taken when the woodlands were not as dense, such was the attraction of this 'wonder' for its time.

**Pl 46. The only view the writer could obtain of Cartland Bridge, taken from the other side of the valley above Kirkfieldbank, but compare with Pl's 47 & 48 below.**

**Pl 47. A romantic painting by T Allom and engraved by E Benjamin, published in Scotland Illustrated in 1837. The river is not quite accurate in relation to the pillar bases and the washer women would certainly not like to wash in it today as the Mouse generally runs muddy!**

**Pl 48. A tinted postcard shows that the painting above is fairly accurate apart from the base of the pillars which both spring from rock above the river bed. The trees are beginning to obscure the view even back then (early 20th C).**

The National Monuments Records of Scotland publish actual elevation plans of the bridge on their web site: Canmore.org.uk. Canmore ID 46638.

Another similar deep gorge at Braidwood on the A73 road from Lanark to Carluke has an equally impressive bridge; The Fiddlers Bridge (from the name of the burn it crosses) (NS 851 477), also designed by Telford, but equally hidden from roadside view by trees, but that is beyond the scope of this work.

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