

The Priest Bridge Southfield Lane Seaton Ross

Before the lands around Seaton Ross were drained in the eighteenth century, the area was very marshy particularly to the east of the village where lay "The Ings" and "Everingham Carrs". These were low-lying meadows and pastures, usually marshy nature and liable to floods. The word "Seaton" in fact is derived from two old English words 'ton' meaning a farm or settlement; 'sea' a pool of water which would explain the marsh to the east of the village in earlier times.

The Priest Bridge at Seaton Ross was situated on Southfield Lane approximately fifty yards passed the road entrance to St Helens Farm as you travel south of the village towards Allberies.

Tradition has it that the Priest Bridge at Seaton Ross was part of the route used by the monks from Bursea Chapel who piloted travellers from Howden to York. It seems very likely that their route took them to Everingham or perhaps Shiptonthorpe, which of course lies on the old Roman road from York to Hull. The bridge was probably wooden and built by local monks. In the Middle Ages some bridges particularly in larger towns had a chapel attached for the saying of a prayer for safe delivery on a journey and for the paying of what amounted to a toll. The tolls collected were used to finance the maintenance of the bridge.

The earliest record found on a local map of the Priest Bridge dates from the early 19th century and is clearly marked in William Watson's 1828 Seaton Ross book of roads. His book has the bridge situated near Reangamoor Lane south of the village along with "Priest Bridge Closes" and shows the bridge crossing over what is now the main Southfield Road. The bridge is also clearly defined on the 1851 and 1910 ordnance survey maps. The 1851 ordnance survey map also shows a footbridge south of Seaton Old Hall at the end of Reangamoor Lane along with many other footbridges no longer in existence. Were these old footbridges part of the travellers route? It does seem very likely.

The precise date or type of construction of the bridge is unknown but many of these bridges were associated with religious foundations or chantries, and chapels dedicated to the observance of requiems for the soul of a benefactor or patron saint which may sometimes be found nearby.

As the lands in the surrounding area were drained and passage became easier with improved road systems the use of the bridges diminished. It seems likely this was the case in

Seaton Ross as more roads were built and overall the traveller could find more suitable and easier routes to use.

Very little evidence remains today of the bridge and we are left only to imagine what the crossing was like for all the many hundreds of travellers who crossed over it years ago. The "Priest Bridge" is clearly marked on current ordnance survey maps for the area.

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