

**BRIDGES**  
**in the Chester County Pleas,**  
**CHES 29/1–22**  
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Bridges were an obvious improvement over ferries where rivers were too deep to be forded: place names suggest that there were fords upstream at places like Warford and Somerford. Building and maintenance of bridges was an expense, but charging pontage or toll for their use was a source of income. From an administrative point of view bridges are of particular interest, because by their very nature they involved structures on, and passengers from, both sides of a river, and rivers are most often boundaries between manor and manor, township and township, parish and parish, hundred and hundred, shire and shire.

Which side of a river paid for a bridge and took the tolls? When, as occasionally happened, a carter was killed crossing a bridge, who was responsible for reporting the matter, claiming the deodand, repairing the damage? Was some computation necessary as to which side of the *filum*, the thread or centre-line of the river, the incident took place?

Pontage was specifically exempted for burgesses of Altrincham and Macclesfield in their boroughs' foundation charters, and freedom from pontage was enjoyed by burgesses of Chester, religious and secular clergy, officials of the earls and the barons.