

**Heritage statement to support a Listed Building Planning Application,
for removal of two concrete infills within existing arches of the
redundant railway viaduct and swing bridge spanning the inner and outer harbours
at Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone, Kent**

Introduction

Folkestone Harbour viaduct was built in 1843 by the South Eastern Railway Company, and was designed by William Cubitt, Chief Engineer of the line. The structure crosses the harbour with 13 arches (one arch to the north of the harbour, on the west side of the viaduct, is hidden by the adjacent jetty access ramp). The swing bridge, which is included for group value, was designed in 1930 by George Ellson, Chief Engineer for Southern Railway. The Second World War gun emplacements beneath the viaduct are not included in the listing.

Description

The viaduct consists of 13 segmentally-headed red brick arches (one arch to the north of the harbour, on the west side of the viaduct, is hidden by the adjacent jetty access ramp) which spans approximately two thirds of the harbour; the swing bridge spanning the remaining distance to the south.

The swing bridge is of steel construction, composed of three main longitudinal girders. It sits on a brick base with stone quoins which are original to the 1893 bridge. The new bridge was operated / swung by means of an electric capstan on the wharf and a rope, and the lifting and locking mechanisms were hand operated.

Reasons for Designation

Architectural interest: the viaduct is a bold piece of railway engineering infrastructure which forms an integral, and primary, element of an important early rail/sea passenger interchange * Rarity: though many viaducts survive and are listed, this viaduct is a particularly unusual example of a harbour viaduct.

Engineering ensemble: the swing bridge contributes to the understanding of the viaduct, as well as providing the important visual link between the viaduct and the south side of the harbour; it is therefore included in the listing for group value.

Group value: the viaduct and bridge have group value with the nearby east pier of 1829 and lighthouse, both listed Grade II.

Historic interest: the harbour, and the viaduct, played a key role in the transportation of troops to Flanders during the First World War.

History

In 1843, Folkestone Harbour was sold to Joseph Baxendale, William Parry Richards and Lewis Cubitt, of the South Eastern Railway Company. The plan was for Folkestone to rival Dover as a harbour for steam packets to France. To this end Folkestone's new railway line was extended to the harbour and the harbour became host to much railway infrastructure. By January 1844 the railway viaduct had been built, carrying the railway at the lower end of the branch line into the harbour; a swing bridge was added by 1847, allowing trains to cross onto the southern harbour arm. The viaduct was designed by Chief Engineer of the line, William Cubitt (Lewis Cubitt's brother), who was also responsible for the Foord Valley Viaduct on the main line (listed Grade II). To either side of the viaduct were timber freight jetties. The railway line was used for coal traffic until the French line to Boulogne Maritime was complete and both sides had passenger stations. By 1849 the harbour branch was open for passenger traffic and was part of one of the first fully scheduled (though still tidal) rail/sea/rail international services. It was by far the most popular Cross-Channel route in these early years, although superseded by the Dover to Calais route in the late 1860s. Removal of tidal restrictions in 1886 (the Dover to Calais service having achieved this in 1882), allowed a fixed timetable to be operated.

The railway brought success and financial viability to the harbour, which continued to develop as the demand for facilities grew. The original swing bridge was replaced in 1893 to allow heavier trains to cross the harbour, and again in 1930. This last bridge was designed by the chief engineer of Southern Railway, George Ellson OBE MICE. Photographs of the installation of the new bridge identify the eminent engineer Conrad Gribble MICE as being present. At this date Gribble was Assistant Engineer, New Works and Bridges, for the railway company, suggesting that he was responsible for over-seeing the works at Folkestone.

Folkestone Harbour played a significant role during the First World War, being the major embarkation point for Europe. Approximately 10 million army officers, service men and other personnel, and over one million tonnes of freight, travelled to or from the battlefields through the harbour.

Assessment of Impact & Justification Statement

The proposals put forward to remove two of four concrete infill panels between arches have been selected in such a way to maintain structural integrity whilst sympathetically retaining a rhythm to the arches and returning them to as near original layout as possible.

The structure itself will be refurbished prior to these proposals in line with a previous full planning and listed building application so we feel that the proposals will only have a benefit impact by giving a new use to the area as a public space as well as maintaining its original intended use of being a route for the public between locations.

We feel the works proposed are in keeping with the structure and that the proposals for materials and techniques used to match the existing were appropriate show our willingness to maintain the integrity of the listing.