



Lady Wimborne Arch (Bridge 77)



The highly ornate design of the railway bridge spanning the Canford Manor carriage driveway has in recent years become known as the 'Lady Wimborne Bridge' and perhaps reflects the power of landowners over British railway companies in the mid-nineteenth century. Its Grade II listing, granted in 1991, records it as the "Lady Wimborne Bridge" but its true name is the much more mundane, "Bridge 77"

It was built shortly after the railway came to the town of Wimborne in Dorset, and it is now a Grade II listed structure cared for by the Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Local Authority (BCP). It lies just south of the River Stour in Oakley, which until the late 20th Century was in the Dorset area and was considered a part of Wimborne Minster Town. The bridge we see today is however not the original bridge planned in 1847 when the railways first arrived and the station built; the planned routes and stations having been tentatively approved in 1844; but even the station's final site on the North side of the Stour had been reconsidered. Following the restyling and reconstruction of the Canford Manor house between 1848 and 1853, this current bridge was 'requested' by the wife of Sir John; Lady Charlotte Guest, who ultimately financed the construction (1853-1854) after her husband died.

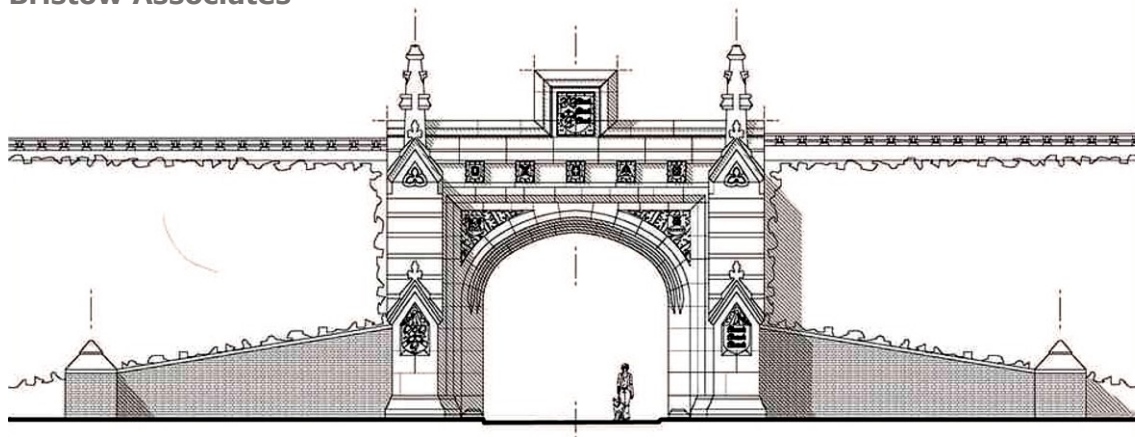
Sir John Guest had bought the estate in 1846. The archway's grander name association coming from when Sir John's son Ivor became the First Lord Wimborne in 1880, some 30+ years after its construction. Ivor Guest had married Lady Cornelia Henrietta Maria Spencer-Churchill; the daughter of the 7th Duke of Marlborough and a first cousin of Winston Churchill. It is therefore Lady Cornelia after whom the bridge is more recently named; perhaps in the late 20th Century – and not the wife of Sir John who commissioned and financed it

The Wimborne part of the Southampton and Dorchester Railway was authorised before the Guests came to Canford Manor and negotiations with the company after Sir John's death, led in 1852/3 to the replacement of the original structure with this ornate design that greeted visitors to the estate and complimented the carriage driveway to the house - with even the route of the driveway itself being an uncertain issue. For many years the architect to whom the bridge was attributed was the well-known English architect Charles Barry Jr., the eldest son of architect Sir Charles Barry. Amongst Charles Barry Junior's projects were The Crystal Palace (High Level) railway station (1863-1865; demolished 1961) and the surviving Crystal Palace Subway, along with the forecourt of Burlington House in Piccadilly, London – the home of the Royal Academy. However, more recent research shows that it was the more famous father that had been commissioned to undertake alterations to the manor at the time of this bridge's construction – and he designed the bridge we see today. Sir Charles Barry Snr. is really best known for his role in the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster – the [Houses of Parliament](#), assisted by Augustus Pugin. His architectural projects also introduced the Italian Renaissance garden style for many gardens he designed around country houses.

The line was in use until the 'Beeching Cuts' of the 1960s - that saw Britain's railway network re-assessed by Dr Richard Beeching with the less profitable lines being axed. The last train left Wimborne and headed over Bridge 77/"Lady Wimborne Bridge" in 1977 (3 May) and a short walk over nearby Canford Bridge will reveal the embankments on either side of the Stour over which the tracks ran on their way into Wimborne Station.



Bristow Associates



For a detailed historical report on the politics, the negotiating and the planning of Bridge 77 - now know as "Lady Wimborne Bridge" *Please read Colin Dival's text :*

<https://eastdorsetrailways.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/History-Bridge77-web-v1-3.pdf>

<https://www.wimbornehistorytrail.uk/>