

Railway Bridge 76

– Wimborne Railway Bridge –

***No longer there but the means by which the railway came into Wimborne**

After approaching Wimborne from Poole in 1542, John Leland who was on his journey of ecclesiastical research for Henry VIII wrote:

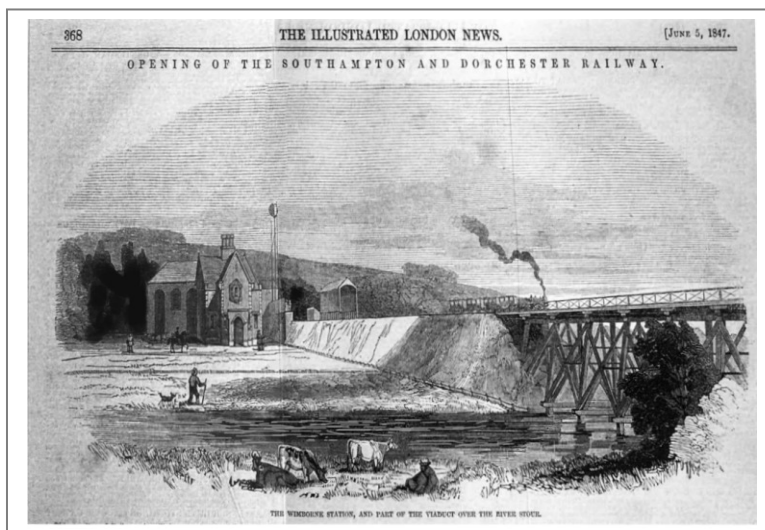
'A half-mile before I reached the town, I passed over Allen Bridge, a twelve-arched bridge across the Stour.'

The 1831 highway bridge on this site is now properly known as Canford Bridge (and by some locals Merley Bridge) and is the county boundary between Dorset and the BCP Local Authority (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) – The oldest parts of the bridge are the flood arches on the Poole side dating back to the 17th Century.

[John Leland](#) was compiling a list of valuable literary assets for the king that churches around the country had in their possession – but in his diverse travels he began to chronicle some information of the places he visited that gives us a glimpse into the life of the people of that time.

The road bridge he was referring to was the forerunner of Canford Bridge, which connects Oakley Hill and Poole Road and from this vantage point – had he been around four hundred years later, John Leland could have looked to the east, about 200 metres downstream and seen the site of the railway bridge that brought a huge change to Wimborne. The arrival of the railway saw a great expansion to the town – as it did with many similar towns at that time in history.

The rail bridge, which you will have to imagine, was first built in 1847 and connected the embankments that are still visible on both sides of the river. It was not initially built in brick as the photograph above shows, but was a wooden trestle

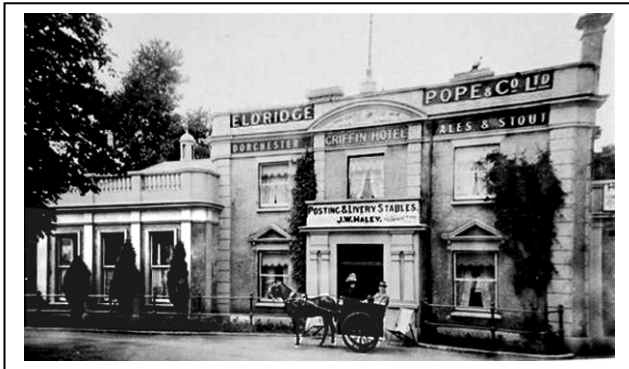


structure between the two still-existing embankments. These had to be constructed to allow the rail tracks to enter Wimborne Railway station from the higher ground on the southern side of the river. (Shown in this 1847 artists - impression engraving) The main railway station building is to the left.

The line was open from the 1st of June 1847 to the 3rd of May 1977 with the old station

having its frontage on the current Station Road. It was built for the Southampton and Dorchester Railway but the station was operated from the start by the London and South Western Railway which took over the ownership in 1848. Later the line was operated by the Southern Railway from 1923 until 1947 and finally from 1948 by the Southern Region of British Railways.

The main site of the Railway Station itself is now occupied by an industrial estate but the alignment of the remaining Northern embankment helps to show the position of the old station site. The overlay of the current road layout with that taken from an 1850s map will help anyone interested in railway history to imagine the scene. The Griffin Hotel, demolished in 1979 with a block of flats subsequently built on the site, stood in front of the main entrance to the station and for many years this image was displayed in the reception area of the hotel until its closure.



Griffin Hotel – Station Road - Wimborne

The Hotel stood in its own three and a half acres of ground and the cattle and horse sale markets, both served by the railway - were less than one hundred yards away and adjacent to the station. Apparently Canford School was just a fairly short and easy walk alongside the river Stour for the Day boys !



1. Looking South-west from 'Dreamboats'

Photo: April 1977 Colin Divall

Approximate Camera sites for images 1-3





2. Looking downstream – south-east

c. 1892. Photo: E.J. Brett



3. Looking downstream – north-east. "*The Royal Train*"

Photograph : Peter Russell

Flight Refuelling's offices are seen beyond the bridge. The Riverside housing development replaced the factory in the early 2000s with the current Dreamboats Landing Stage (2001 onwards) just a little along the slope of the far river bank. (<https://www.wimbornehistorytrail.uk/dreamboats.html>)