

**Building Report
Victoria Railway Bridge
Severn Valley Railway**

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Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 038

National Grid Reference: SO7666579254



The Victoria Bridge was listed Grade II* on 18th March 1987: LBS157086.

The Contractors were Messrs, Brassey & Co. and the Chief Engineer was John Fowler. The structure was cast and erected by The Coalbrookdale Company.



On Thursday 24th November 1859 at 3 pm the foundation stone of the Victoria Railway Bridge was laid by Henry Orlando Bridgman (Resident Engineer). A silver trowel to lay the foundation stone was presented by Miles Day on behalf of the contractors. Beneath this stone was placed a glass jar with a note inscribed as below [1].

“the foundation stone of this bridge was laid by Henry Orlando Bridgman(sic) Esq. C.E. Resident engineer on the 24th day of November, in the year of our lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty nine and the 23rd reign of her Majesty, Queen Victoria.

The arc of the bridge is to be constructed principally of cast iron, 200 feet span and, up to the present time, will be the largest cast iron arch constructed in these kingdoms. John Fowler Esq., engineer in chief, London. Messrs. Brassey, Peto and Betts, contractors, also of London.

The railway works were commenced in the autumn of 1858 and were complete in the Spring of 1861. The railway commences at Shrewsbury and terminates at the Hartlebury station of the Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, a distance of 40 miles."

By 2nd Feb 1861 the foundations of the bridge were completed and the castings and forgings for the works were at the contractor's yard in Coalbrookdale. On the 10th May 1861 the last of the 4 main cast iron ribs was installed.



The bridge served the original Severn Valley Railway Company, the Great Western Railway and the Western Region of the British Railways until closure in the 1960s during the era of Dr Beeching. It now carries trains across the River Severn for the present Severn Valley Railway Company.

The bridge has been refurbished at least twice (once in 1980s, and a again early in 2000) by the present owners, the SVR. For many years the bridge was painted green but has now been finished in what is recorded as its original colour scheme.



Items of note

During WW2, as part of the Severn Stop Line [2], a rail block was installed (Grid Ref. SO7668 9723) on bridge in case of invasion. The rail block replaced an earlier trench defence system on the Trimpley side of the river at Grid Ref. SO7671 7929 [2-4]. After the war the blocks were dumped alongside the railway line near the east end of the bridge on the northern side of the track (Grid Ref. SO 7670 7925) but are now covered with stones and are no longer visible [3].

References

1. 'The Severn Valley Railway' by John Marshall. Thomas & Lochar (1969), page 43.
2. 'The Defence of Worcestershire - World War II' by Mick Wilks. Logaston Press (2007), page 77.
3. Carole Gammond. Private Communication.
4. Vic Carvell of Eymore Farm, Trimpley. Private Communication.
5. Photographs by Bob Millward 11th October 2009. All views from the Trimpley side of the river.