

# GREENWALL LANE BRIDGE, DODDISCOMBSLEIGH, DEVON

(NGR SX 8356 8798)

Results of historic building recording

Teignbridge District Council planning reference 13/00444/FUL,  
condition 3

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On behalf of:  
Hammond-ECS

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AC archaeology

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## Summary

*Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology on 28 October 2013 prior to the demolition of Greenwall Lane Bridge, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon (SX 8356 8798). The bridge was situated on an extension of the Teign Valley Railway that opened in 1903. It carried the railway over a track that also gave access to adjacent fields.*

*The bridge and adjacent abutments to the railway embankment were constructed of local stone with brick used for the arch. It had a short lifespan of 55 years and no alterations were made to the structure.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology on 28 October 2013 prior to the demolition of Greenwall Lane Bridge, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon (SX 8356 8798). The work was commissioned by Hammond ecs Ltd and was required under condition 4 of the grant of planning permission (Teignbridge District Council reference 13/00444/FUL) for the "Demolition of single span underbridge and slope back the embankments".
- 1.2 Greenwall Lane Bridge was located on the former Teign Valley Railway to the east of the B3193 on the east side of a valley of the Sowton Brook, a tributary of the River Teign. The bridge carried the railway over an access track from the B3193 to agricultural land as well as an adjacent footpath. It was situated at a height of approximately 60m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Carboniferous mudstone and sandstone of the Crackington formation.

### 2. AIM

- 2.1 The aim of the work, as set out in a brief provided by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET; Reed 2013), was to prepare a record of the bridge prior to its demolition.

### 3. METHODOLOGY (Appendix 1)

- 3.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2013) and the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2008).
- 3.2 A desk-based appraisal, comprising an assessment of the relevant historic Ordnance Survey maps and publications, was carried out.
- 3.3 The survey was prepared in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*, and was undertaken to levels 1-2 as set out in English Heritage's 2006 document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*. The survey comprised:
  - A written description of the bridge and its local context in terms of the topography and the railway line; and
  - A photographic record including the overall character of the bridge, as well as detailed views of the side elevations, the arch and any fixtures, fittings and architectural details. It comprised colour digital format only (minimum 10

megapixels), and where appropriate, all photographs included a photographic scale. Details of photographs taken were made on *pro forma* record sheets. An index of photographs is included as Appendix 1.

#### **4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1** The Act of Parliament incorporating the Teign Valley Railway received its Royal assent in July 1863. The line opened on 9 October 1882 and initially ran from Heathfield (situated between Newton Abbot and Bovey Tracey) to a remote siding at Teign House north of Ashton Station, a total distance of 7½ miles (Pomroy, 1984, 11). The Act for its extension from Christow through to Exeter where it joined the Great Western Railway was passed in 1882 (*ibid.*, 12). Construction work was initially slow, partially due to wrangling with the relevant landowners, but seems to have gained momentum after 1896. The line eventually opened on 1 July 1903 (*ibid.*, 16-21). Passenger services between Exeter and Christow ceased in 1958, and the track was lifted soon after. Extensive flood damage at Ashton in March 1961 heralded the end of the line, which was officially closed in April 1965 (*ibid.*, 114; see also St John Thomas 1981, 88-89; Historic Environment Record entry MDV8969).
- 4.2** The railway bridge carried the former railway over a footpath. Historical mapping indicates that the footpath is a trackway between the B3193 and an un-named road to the east.

#### **5. RESULTS (Plates 1-8)**

##### **5.1 Topographical location**

At Greenwall Lane Bridge the railway was carried on an embankment above the floodplain of the Sowton Brook. To the south of the bridge, the embankment has been partially levelled and its west side merges with the adjacent field. The road to the west has been realigned and straightened, and the footpath under the bridge starts in a layby formed from the old course of the road. Fields to the east are divided by the footpath. In the southern field there is a small coombe that opens out onto the floodplain under the embankment and bridge. To the north of the footpath there is a similar, but wider coombe. The bridge embankment and bridge were constructed partially within a former quarry.

##### **5.2 The bridge**

Greenwall Lane Bridge is a large, tall structure, with a span of 6m, a width of 5.25m and a height of approximately 4.5m to the base of the arch. Its size may imply that it was designed to accommodate wheeled agricultural traffic (Plates 1-3).

It was constructed of local Teign Valley basalt dressed in rock-faced or pitch-faced worked blocks, with the quoins having additional line pitched edging (Plate 4). Some of the blocks displayed feather and tare marks (Plate 5). The bonding was dark grey-black cement with light grey/cream cement repointing. On the north face, the wall had white-painted letters "LE" overpainted with the weathered lettering now reading "FXR 7 C4" (i.e. 7 miles 4 chains from its terminus in Exeter) in black (Plate 5). The arch comprised five rows of standard red bricks laid in stretcher bond that supported further stone masonry above including three courses forming a parapet.

The embankment was retained by 0.60m wide abutment walls that were separate from and abutted the masonry of the bridge (Plates 4 and 6). They were constructed of Teign Valley basalt laid drystone. They had been repointed in cement, a material also applied as a capping as well as used in repairs at the ends of the walls. The

abutment walls were slightly battered towards the embankment and angled outwards from the bridge; this 'splay' was more pronounced on the eastern side of the bridge.

The parapet supported railings comprising vertical T-shaped beams through which two rows of steel tubes passed. The parapet and railings did not continue beyond the bridge (Plate 7).

The footpath either side of the bridge was defined by later 20th-century wire fences, with three of the four fences terminating in an upright post with a diagonal support formed from reused rails (Plate 8).

The surface of the footpath under the bridge was quarried local stone mixed with more modern dumps of concrete, brick and other building debris. Under the bridge the path was blocked by modern gates associated with the control and movement of grazing animals. The path was generally dry due to the presence of drains through the embankment dewatering the higher fields to the east. The north drain was a culvert taking water from a stream that is marked on pre-railway maps. It was formed from a large diameter ceramic pipe that fed into the modern surface water drainage system. The southern drain was a smaller diameter pipe and took water from a largely underground watercourse in the coombe in the adjacent field.

## **6. COMMENTS**

- 6.1** The bridge formed an integral part of the infrastructure of the extension of the Teign Valley Railway from Christow to Exeter that opened in 1903. It was provided to allow an existing track to remain in use and to allow access from the adjacent road to fields on its east side. The bridge appears large for such a purpose, although many main-line railway bridges were of such a size, and in part the local topography, with the track bed high above the adjacent road level may have necessitated a tall and therefore wide bridge.
- 6.2** The railway line and bridge had a short lifespan of 55 years and other than some repairs in concrete, no alterations to the fabric of the bridge and adjacent embankment abutment walls were made.

## **7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 7.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. On acceptance of the report by the DCHET the paper archive will be discarded and the digital archive stored with the Archaeology Data Service.
- 7.2** An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier 164228.

## **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1** This report was commissioned by Hammond (ecs) Ltd and managed for them by John Martin and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The survey was carried out by Andrew Passmore who also prepared the report text. The illustrations were created by Elisabeth Patkai and Andrew Passmore.

## 9. SOURCES CONSULTED

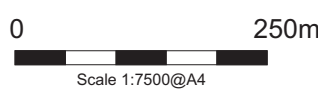
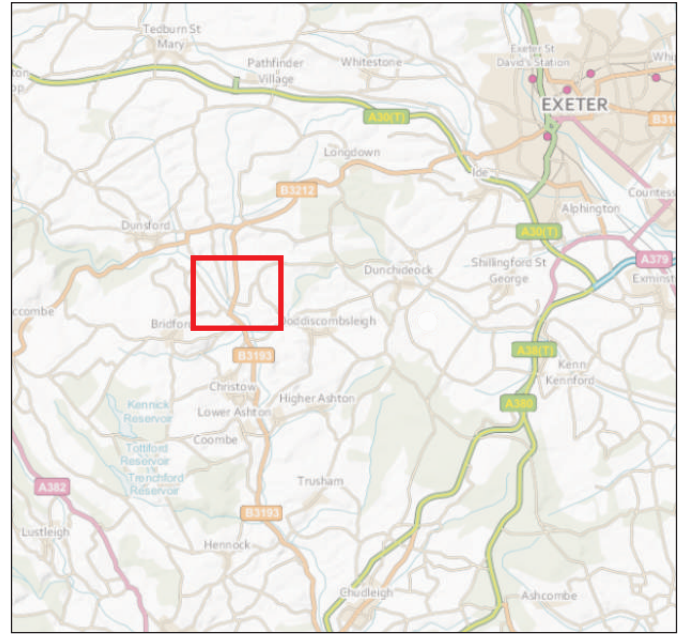
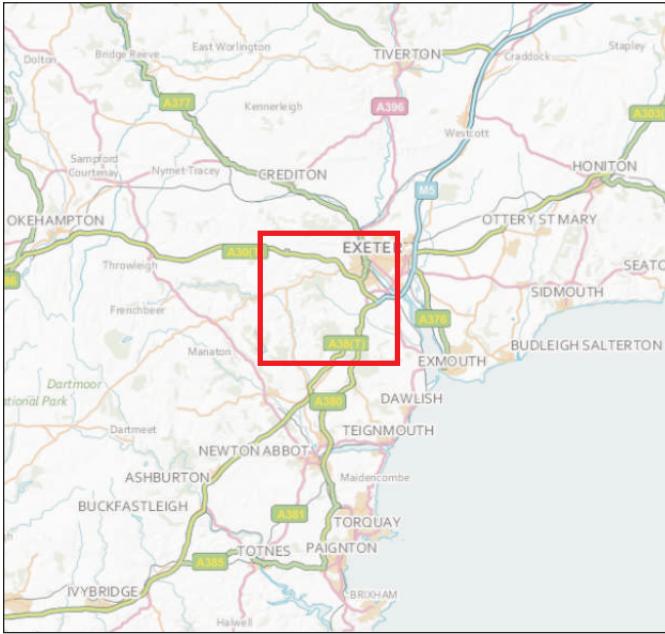
Devon County Historic Environment Record entry MDV8969

Passmore, A., 2013, *Greenwall Lane Bridge, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon, (NGR SX 8356 8798), Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording, Teignbridge District Council planning reference 13/00444/FUL, condition 3, AC archaeology Document No. ACD791/1/0.*

Pomroy, L.W., 1984, *The Teign Valley Line.*

St John Thomas, D., 1981, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain Volume 1 The West Country.*

Reed, S., 2013, *Brief for Historic Building Recording, Greenwall Lane, Dunsford, Devon, Doddiscomesleigh, Teignbridge, Devon, DCHET reference ARCH/DM/TE/20050.*



PROJECT  
Greenwall Lane Bridge, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location





Plate 1: The bridge viewed from the B3193 to the west.



Plate 2: The west elevation, viewed from the west. 1m scale.





Plate 3: The east elevation, viewed from the east. 1m scale.



Plate 4: The east elevation showing quoins and separate abutment, viewed from the southeast. 1m scale.



Plate 5: The sign, also showing a feather and tare hole on the stone, viewed from the south.



Plate 6: The west side north abutment, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 7: The parapet and railing, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 8: A fence post of reused rails on the northwest side of the bridge, viewed from the south. 1m scale.

# Appendix 1

Index of digital photographs

Photographic Register  
ACD791 Greenwall Lane Bridge, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon

Archive No	Site Code	Description	Scale	View from	Photo by	Date
1	ACD791	General view from the B3193		W	AJP	28/10/2013
2	ACD791	West elevation	1m	W	AJP	28/10/2013
3	ACD791	West elevation and north abutment	1m	SW	AJP	28/10/2013
4	ACD791	West elevation and south abutment	1m	NW	AJP	28/10/2013
5	ACD791	West elevation arch and parapet		W	AJP	28/10/2013
6	ACD791	North side of arch	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013
7	ACD791	Sign, also showing feather and tare hole		S	AJP	28/10/2013
8	ACD791	South side of arch	1m	N	AJP	28/10/2013
9	ACD791	West elevation arch		S	AJP	28/10/2013
10	ACD791	South abutment, west side	1m	N	AJP	28/10/2013
11	ACD791	South abutment, west end	1m	N	AJP	28/10/2013
12	ACD791	North abutment, west side	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013
13	ACD791	North drain		NW	AJP	28/10/2013
14	ACD791	South drain		W	AJP	28/10/2013
15	ACD791	Fence post of reused rails – northwest of bridge	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013
16	ACD791	North abutment, east side	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013
17	ACD791	South abutment, east side	1m	N	AJP	28/10/2013
18	ACD791	East elevation	1m	E	AJP	28/10/2013
19	ACD791	East elevation showing quoins and separate abutment	1m	SE	AJP	28/10/2013
20	ACD791	Fence post of reused rails – northeast of bridge	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013
21	ACD791	Fence post of reused rails – southeast of bridge	1m	N	AJP	28/10/2013
22	ACD791	North abutment and embankment – east side	1M	S	AJP	28/10/2013
23	ACD791	South abutment and embankment – east side	1m	NE	AJP	28/10/2013
24	ACD791	East elevation		E	AJP	28/10/2013
25	ACD791	South abutment – east side	1m	SE	AJP	28/10/2013
26	ACD791	Parapet railing	1m	SW	AJP	28/10/2013
27	ACD791	Bridge top and parapets	1m	S	AJP	28/10/2013

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