

Charmouth Bridge

"Charmouth Bridge". In volume I of his history Hutchings says ***"Order for the inhabitants of Whitechurch Hundred (which included Charmouth) to have liberty to build a bridge over the river at the east end of the parish. Mich.Session 1662. Order set aside and the inhabitants of Charmouth to build said bridge. Epiphany session 1671"***.

On 7th May 1753 at a Vestry meeting a rate was voted for the repair of Bridges after inspection by John Tucker J.P. and on 7th Jan 1762 it was voted "that the surveyors of the Highways do purchase an area and got a firm and strong bridge with rails on both sides at the bottom of the parish, said that they take the old bridge that is there at present and repair therewith the bridges leading to the sea in the strongest and cheapest manner". Among the parish papers I found the following "1815. To the constables of the hundred of Whitechurch Canonorum.'To repairing a bridge at Charmouth. Cost £2-7-6. Share for Charmouth. 10 pence. The bridge was inspected by County Surveyor in 1823 who reported that it was not so dilapidated as represented and that repairs should not exceed £53. (.Report by County Archivist)

The old mill bridge was built by the County in 1824 and was one of several bridges which contained the following warning:-***"Dorset. Any person wilfully injuring any part of this county bridge will be guilty of felony and upon conviction liable to be transported for life by the Court. T.Fooks."*** During the war in 1940 when a German invasion was threatened the word "Dorset" was cut out. The bridge had a dangerous hump, was narrow and curved. In 1937 a lorry collided with the south parapet, which had to be replaced by an iron railing. The river could be crossed by stepping stones below the arch of the bridge, which disappeared when the mill ceased working. In 1957 a new bridge was built, the Charmouth men assisting in the building were :- E. Harry Grinter, Fred Grinter, Alfred T. Bradford, Brian Bowditch and Charlie Stirk with the tractor. The walls and parapets were almost entirely their work. The 1824 bridge was 19 feet with no footpath. Visibility over the bridge was bad owing to the hump and curve. The new bridge is 34 feet between the parapets with two 5 feet paths. The crown was lowered by 2 feet 9 inches which gives a clear sight line and a smooth gradient. The last stone was laid by C. R. Wordsworth, vice chairman of the County Council on Monday 29th July 1957.



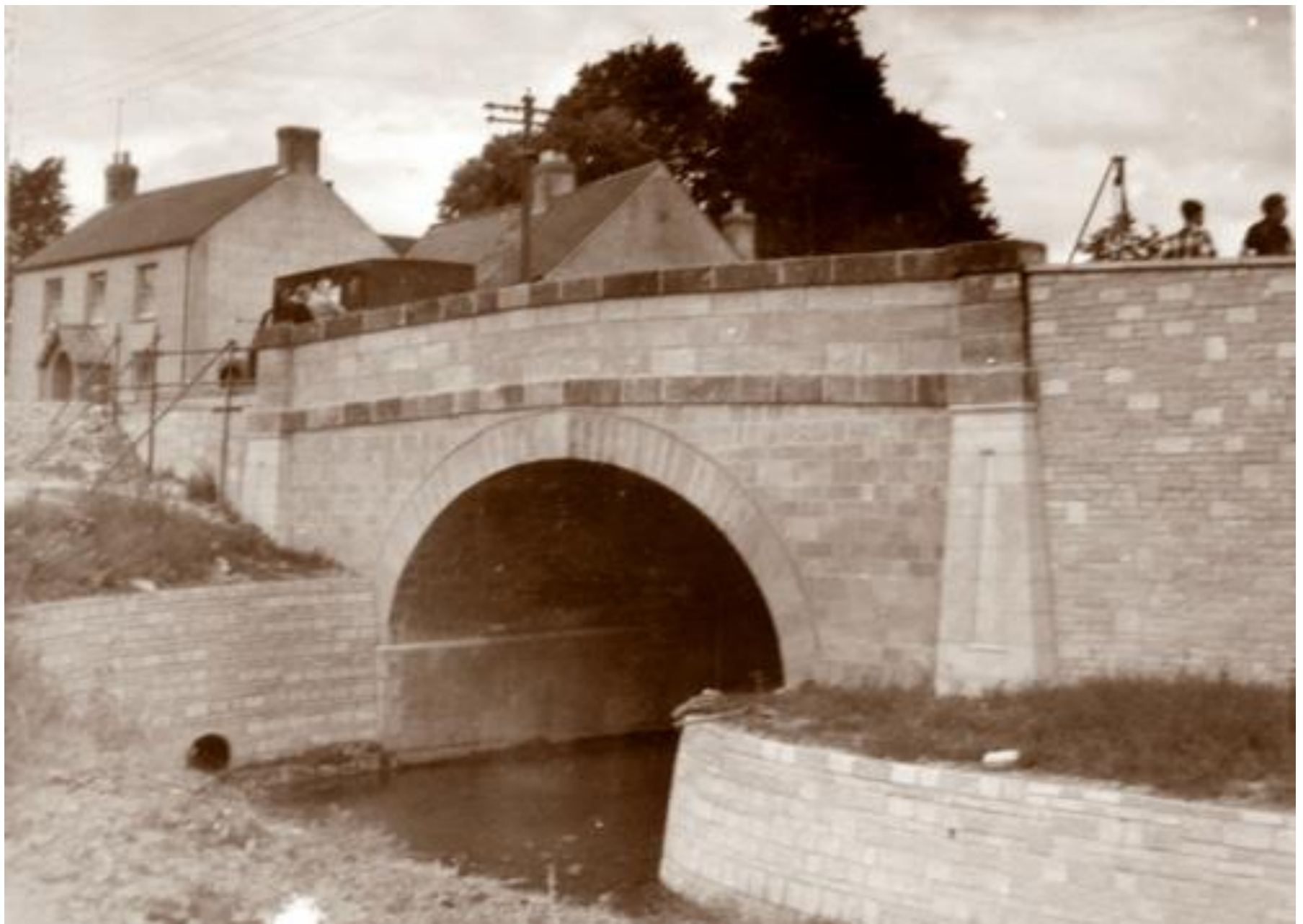
Charmouth Bridge c.1900



A group of smartly dressed villagers line up under one of the decorated Arches celebrating the Coronation of King George V.



The same view today



Bridge after widening and improvements in 1957



Bridge today



View from Bridge in 1890 showing Drill Hall before Gable added



View in 1900 looking from Manor Farm



Lorry going over Bridge in 1937



New Bridge in course of construction