

# Culham Station Overbridge

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## Official list entry

Heritage Category:**Listed Building**

Grade:**II**

List Entry Number:**1401203**

Date first listed:**17-Jul-2012**

List Entry Name:**Culham Station Overbridge**

Statutory Address 1:**Station Road, Culham, Oxfordshire, OX14 3BT**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

### Understanding list entries

(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

### Corrections and minor amendments

**(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)**

## Location

Statutory Address: **Station Road, Culham, Oxfordshire, OX14 3BT**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: **Oxfordshire**

District: **South Oxfordshire (District Authority)**

Parish: **Culham**

National Grid Reference: **SU5290995225**

## Summary

Railway overbridge at Culham Station, constructed as part of the Didcot-Chester Great Western

Railway branch line in c.1844.

## Reasons for Designation

Culham Overbridge, a road bridge (which carried the Dorchester-on-Thames to Abingdon road over the Didcot Junction to Oxford Great Western Railway Branch line) at Culham Station of c.1844, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Intactness: a form of Brunel-designed elliptical-arched overbridge which is essentially in its intact original form; \* Date: a bridge which although not part of the earliest and pioneering phase of railway building in the world, is nonetheless of relatively early date and from the second 'heroic age' of railway buildings nationally; \* Group value: a bridge which has strong group value claims with the adjacent and contemporary Grade II\* Culham station building,

which is also Brunel-designed. Also group value with Appleford Station overbridge on the line to the south (listed Grade II and of the same design).

## History

In March 1832 the Bristol Railway company (later renamed the Great Western Railway) was set up to construct a 118-mile long railway line from London to Bristol. Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-59) was appointed the company engineer and for the next fifteen years devoted much of his energy to creating what he intended to be 'the Finest Work in England' (Rolt 1957, 171): an unprecedented service of high-speed passenger transport linking London with south-west England. The main line from London to Bristol was constructed in 1835-41 in eight separate sections using a variety of contractors and some direct labour. The first section to be opened, in the summer of 1838, connected Bishop's Road, London to Maidenhead Riverside. Construction then moved westwards in stages with the section from Maidenhead to Twyford opening in July 1839, Twyford to Reading in March 1840 and the remainder of the line through to Bristol opening in June 1841. Thereafter extensions followed to Exeter, Plymouth, and Penzance; as the South Wales Railway to Cardiff, Swansea, and Milford Haven; and northward to Gloucester, Oxford, and the Mersey.

Brunel oversaw all aspects of the GWR concept and design: the choice of route, which by careful survey and grading was relatively level and with gentle curves; the adoption of a 'broad gauge' of 7 feet 0¼ inch rather than the usual 'standard gauge' of 4 feet 8½ inches to give stability at speed; and the carriage of the line via both showpiece engineering structures including viaducts at Hanwell and Chippenham, the Box Tunnel, as well as iron, masonry or brick bridges such as that under consideration here. He employed junior engineers to deliver the build.

The Culham Station Overbridge (hereafter 'Culham Bridge') carries Station Road, Culham over the Didcot Junction to Oxford railway branch line. This was one of the early branch lines to the Great Western Railway, built in 1844 and terminating at the now demolished Western Road, Grandpoint Station, Oxford (ultimately it would extend to Chester and was known as the DCL or Didcot to Chester line). The twin track lines were laid to Brunel's broad gauge. The line opened to Oxford on 12 June 1844.

The bridge is located to the south of Culham Station which is also c.1844 and is listed Grade II\*.

Culham Station was originally known as Abingdon Road Station but was renamed in 1856 to avoid confusion when Abingdon gained its own station. Immediately north-west of the bridge is the unlisted but near contemporary Railway Inn, built by c1846 and shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map as the Railway Hotel.

The date of the construction of the bridge is presumed to be c.1844 and it must have been built before the Railway Hotel in c.1846 as this building is located on the elevated approach to the bridge. An engraving entitled 'Culham, late Abingdon Road Station, 1844' shows a train arriving at the platform with the Dorchester-on-Thames to Abingdon road crossing the line on a level with no bridge. However, if it is correct to assume the title of the drawing is contemporary with the image, it cannot have been executed before 1856 when the station changed its name. Artistic licence must also be taken into account (the station building of c.1844 is also not shown on this engraving although a small octagonal toll-house type structure is.)

## Details

Culham Bridge is a single span overbridge carrying Station Road over the GWR branch. It is built in red brick Flemish bond and has a semi-elliptical arch. The bridge has a string course to both external elevations, and a shallow projecting plinth on the internal parapet walls, part rendered, also copings of dressed stone. The original sloping retaining walls to the abutments survive trackside at all four corners. Stencilled black numbers (56 15) on a white ground can be found at the north-west and south-east parapet ends. These signify the distance from Paddington in miles and chains and are also found on the main GWR line. The parapets are slightly curved and terminate at square piers. Although it has been repointed, the bridge's brickwork is essentially homogenous and original with only very minor repairs.

## Sources

### Books and journals

Brindle, S, Paddington Station: Its History and Architecture, (2005)

Brindle, S, Cruickshank, D, Brunel: The Man Who Built the World, (2005)

Rolt, L T C, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, (1957)

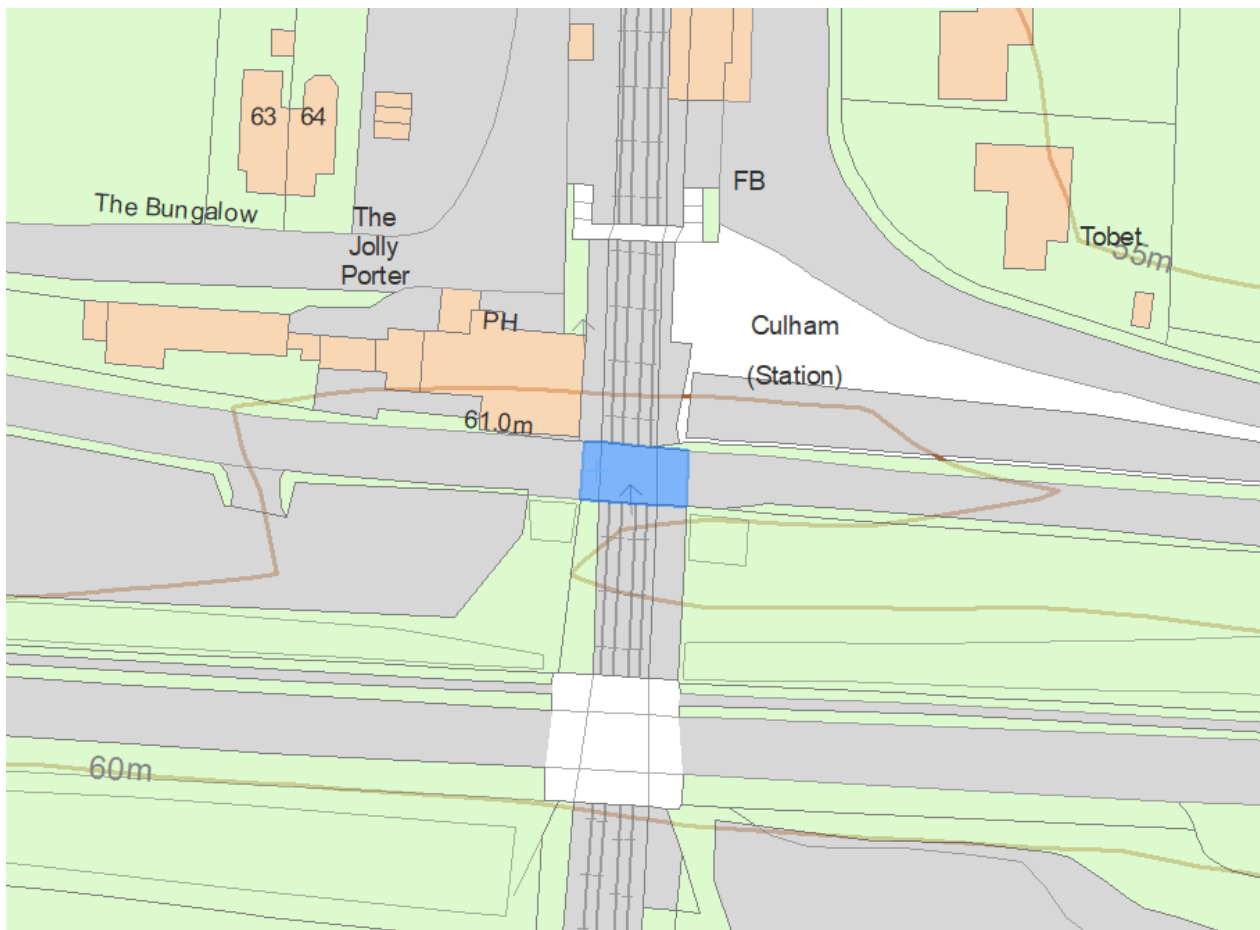
Buchanan, R , 'Oxford Dictionary of National Biography' in Brunel, Isambard Kingdom (1806-1859), (2004)

### Websites

A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 7: Dorchester and Thame Hundreds (1962), accessed from <http://www.british-history.ac.uk> (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>)

## Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



## Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. This copy shows the entry on 17-Mar-2025 at

13:12:25.

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**End of official list entry**