



THE ROCHESTER BRIDGE TRUST ANNUAL REVIEW

2014

15

The Court of Wardens and Assistants presents its Annual Report and the financial statements of the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2015.

DID YOU KNOW...

There are six main types of bridge: beam, truss, arch, cantilever, suspension and cable-stayed. The main part of the Old Bridge is a truss, while the New Bridge and Service Bridge are beam bridges.

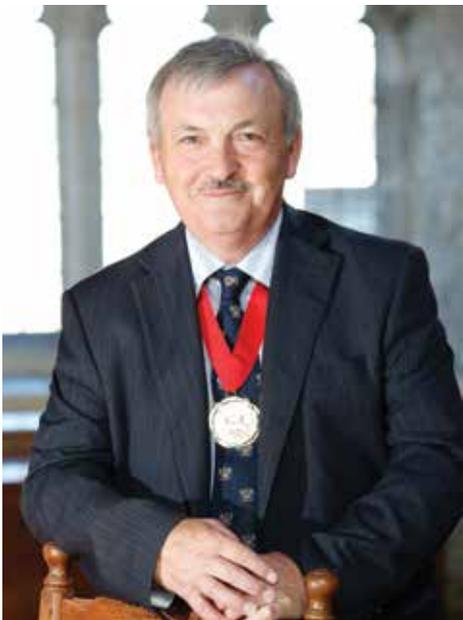
The first bridge across the River Medway at Rochester was built soon after the Roman conquest under Claudius in 43 AD.

Langdon the Lion, our education mascot, is named after one of the first properties endowed to the Rochester Bridge Trust, Langdon Manor Farm in Faversham.

37,000 vehicles cross the road bridges at Rochester every day.



WELCOME FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN



ALAN JARRETT | Senior Warden

I was honoured to be appointed to the position of Senior Warden in June this year and to be following in the footsteps of my many distinguished predecessors in this role.

The Trust was established in 1399 and it is a great privilege for all 12 members of the ancient Court of Wardens and Assistants to lead the charity and ensure it continues its 600-year history of providing crossings of the River Medway at no cost to the public.

The Trust's primary purpose is to maintain its two road bridges and service bridge over the River Medway at Rochester.

In addition to various works and inspections of the bridges and river walls, we have been engaged in a range of activities to promote knowledge about bridges and civil engineering amongst younger children and to support young people wishing to study civil engineering at university. Some grant funding has been provided to other projects and work has been

done to make more material from our extensive archives available to the public.

The longevity of the Trust is due largely to centuries of strong and effective financial control and good management of its extensive property estates. This has continued to be a key area of focus.

We were delighted our achievements were recognised by the *Charity Times*, which selected the Trust as a finalist for the 2014 Charity of the Year Award. This nomination reflects well on the hard work of the staff and trustees in continuing to deliver an effective service to the charity's many thousands of beneficiaries.

We hope this Annual Review gives an insight into the work of the Rochester Bridge Trust over the past year (1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015) and that you enjoy reading it. If you would like to read the full annual report and financial statements then these can be found on our website at www.rbt.org.uk.

ABOUT THE TRUST

In 1381, a flood swept away Rochester's Roman bridge which had crossed the Medway for the previous 13 centuries.

By 1391, Sir John de Cobham and Sir Robert Knolles had built a new stone bridge. They persuaded other benefactors to give land and property for the perpetual maintenance of the crossing and were, in effect, the founders of the Rochester Bridge Trust.

Formally established by Richard II in 1399, the Trust continues to provide its bridges at Rochester at no cost to the public. All its income is derived from the original endowments.

Today, the Trust is a modern charity registered with the Charity Commission. It has a board of 12 unpaid trustees, informally known as the Bridge Wardens. Six of the trustees are nominated by Medway, Maidstone Borough and Kent County Councils. The other six are appointed by the Trust for their skills and experience. They are supported by a small team of salaried part-time staff.

The Rochester Bridge Trust is a unique survivor of the medieval system of providing bridges. It is the only major independent bridge trust still serving



The Old Bridge at sunset

its original purpose – to provide river crossings free of charge to the public.

This purpose is supported by a long-term plan to maintain the bridges with careful planning and management. Extra to this, a series of educational

initiatives are offered with the aim to inspire young people to gain the knowledge required to become the civil engineers – in particular bridge engineers – of the future. The Trust also makes grants for a range of charitable projects.

FINANCES

The Trust works hard to ensure its assets are carefully managed in order to fund maintenance and eventual replacement of the bridges.

The uncertain and turbulent economic climate has had an impact on income levels but the charity's finances have fared reasonably well, largely because of strong management and the diversity of the investment portfolio.

The Trust is able to take a very long-term view of its financial position given the extended periods between major expenditure.

A vital part of the Trust's financial management approach is to ensure sufficient reserves are in place for the replacement of bridges when that becomes necessary. Therefore, periods of major maintenance expenditure are followed by more restrained expenditure to allow the reserves to recover.

• 2013/14 • 2014/15

EXPENDITURE ON BRIDGE MAINTENANCE

£1,135,199 | £1,071,354

EXPENDITURE ON INVESTMENT PROPERTY

(essential repairs and improvements)
£773,475 | £618,470

INCOMING FUNDS

(mainly investment income and rents)
£3,487,348 | £3,259,535

THE BRIDGES

Like any owner of major infrastructure, the Trust needs to make sure its bridges and other assets are well maintained.

This year, we undertook cleaning and inspection of the river walls in our ownership. A programme of repair work will be carried out over the next couple of years.

It is important we have information about the state of the riverbed around the bridges so that early remedial action can be taken if scour or structural damage is discovered below the waterline. A survey of the riverbed was carried out on the Trust's behalf by the Port of London Authority which revealed no major issues of concern. In the spring, stone samples were taken from the Rochester



Taking stone samples

balustrade. These were analysed to determine rates of chemical weathering and inform future maintenance works.

The opportunity was taken to engage Wessex Archaeology to analyse the data to see whether any remains of the former Roman bridge across the Medway could be located. No conclusive evidence was found but further surveys will be carried out in the next few months which may identify something of interest.

In the final months of the financial year, tendering was carried out for a Term Maintenance Contract for the care and repair of the bridges. F.M. Conway was appointed from May 2015 for an initial five-year contract.



ENGINEERING EDUCATION

Supporting the development of the engineers of the future is also an objective of the Trust. This year saw the launch of our friendly new engineering education mascot, Langdon the Lion, and a book for primary age children, *Learning about Bridges*, which was written by our chief executive, Sue Threader.

Copies of the book, which contains a series of lesson plans, were issued free of charge to all primary schools in Medway, Maidstone and Tonbridge, as well as further afield where requested.

Each lesson plan introduces children to a new principle of bridge building, including materials, loads and forces, terminology and the different types of bridge. In particular, two sessions focus on truss bridges - an example of which is the Old Bridge.

Langdon has made many public appearances to promote the availability of these learning materials and the accompanying resources that are available on a new website www.rochesterbridgetrust.org.uk.

A bowstring truss



Langdon the Lion reads *Learning about Bridges*



School children meet Langdon the Lion

As part of its education work, the Trust was delighted once again to sponsor the annual bridge building competition for primary schools organised by the Royal Engineers Museum. This year the competition was won in style by a team from Benedict House School in Sidcup.

The Trust continues to work in partnership with the Arkwright Scholarship Trust, to award Bridge Wardens' Scholarships to academically outstanding young people. This includes providing them and their schools with additional funding and opening up career development opportunities such as site visits and networking events.

Two further Bridge Wardens' scholarships were awarded in 2014 for sixth form students intending to study civil engineering at university. Three former Bridge Wardens' scholars are now studying civil engineering at Bristol and Cardiff Universities and we continue to provide mentoring and advice.

More information about learning initiatives and the progress of the young engineers can be found on the education website.

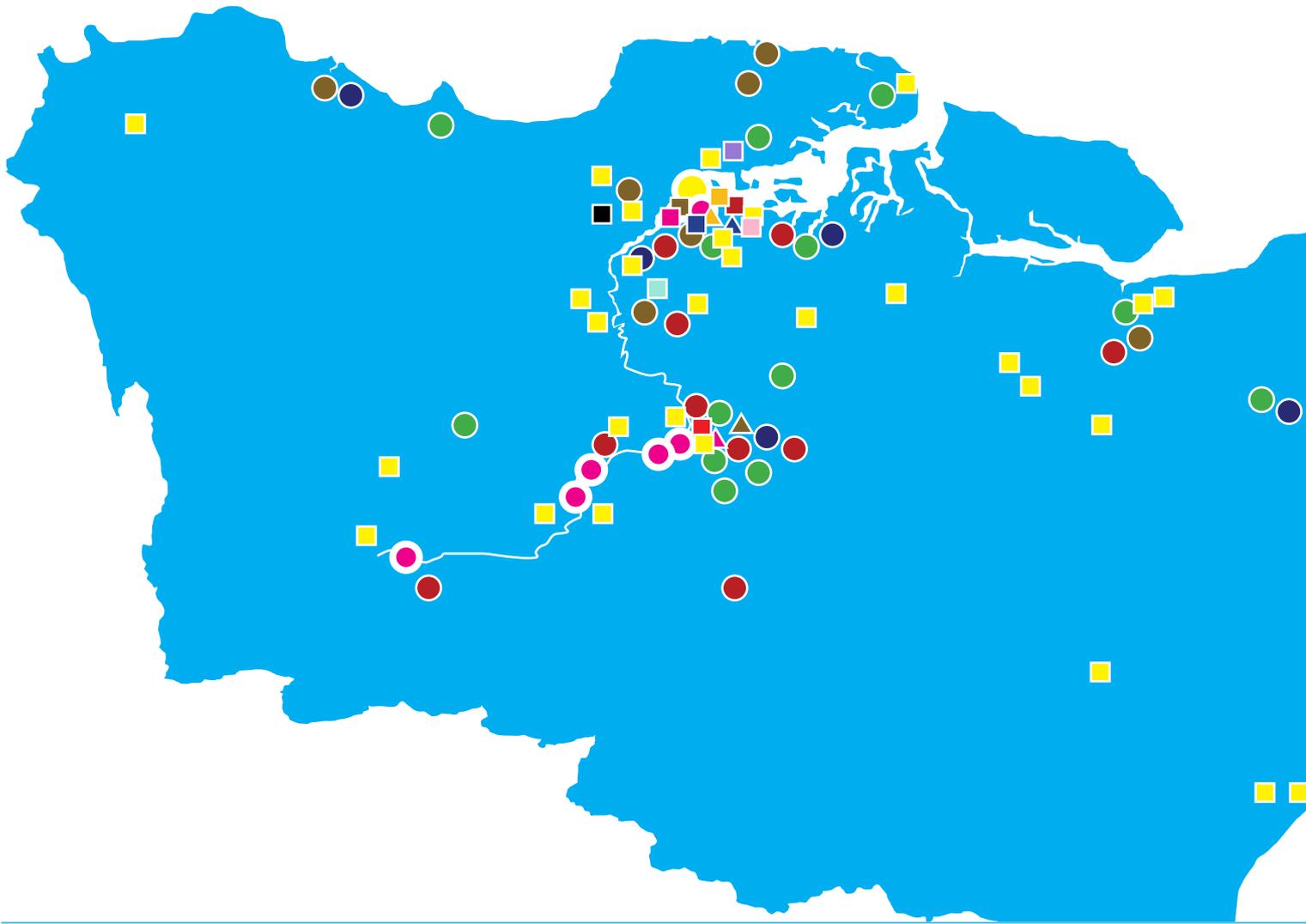


The bridge building competition



Testing engineering principles

ROCHESTER BRIDGE



GRANTS

When other priorities and funds allow, the Trust offers a programme of grants to charities in Kent and areas close to its landholdings elsewhere. Grants are primarily made for engineering and historical research, promotion of engineering education and historic building restoration.

A reduced programme of grants has been offered for the past two years as the Trust has been concentrating on events linked to the centenary of the Old Bridge and its education projects.

Nonetheless, grants were awarded for some smaller projects, notably the restoration of a stained glass panel in East Sutton Church, improvements to access to the River Medway for Maidstone Sea Cadets, engineering afterschool clubs, work to the historic fabric of a World War Two air raid shelter at Maidstone Girls Grammar School and repairs to a 15th-century font in Penshurst Church.

Good progress continues to be made on the restoration of a Short Scion II Seaplane by the Medway Aircraft

Preservation Society Ltd, funded by the Trust through the River Medway fund. An etching *Heave Away barges up bound shooting Rochester Bridge* by W. L. Wyllie was purchased.

The map above also includes a selection of current and historic grants provided by the Trust. The Trust will launch new grants programmes in 2016. The themes will be engineering education, heritage structures, history and agriculture, and the River Medway. Details will be announced on the website at www.rbt.org.uk.

TRUST IN KENT

KEY TO MAPS

HISTORIC CROSSINGS INVESTMENT

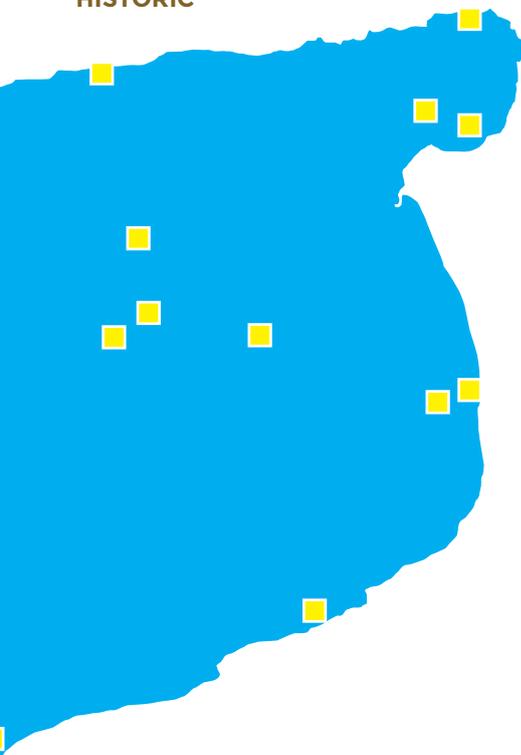
(● Rochester)

RESIDENTIAL

AGRICULTURAL

COMMERCIAL

HISTORIC



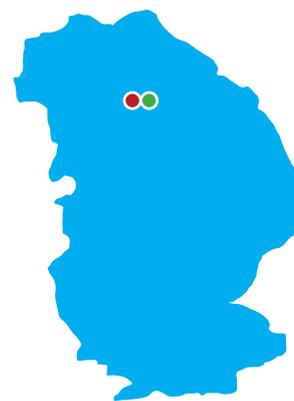
A SELECTION OF HISTORIC GRANTS

- ▲ Maidstone Grammar School - £3,500 in 1886
- ▲ St Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester - £4,000 in 1886
- ▲ Rochester Grammar School for Girls, founded and endowed in 1888 - £6,000
- ▲ Maidstone Girls Grammar School, founded and endowed in 1887 - £6,500

A SELECTION OF GRANTS SINCE 1991

- University of Kent - £2,500,000 - Bridge Wardens' College
- Rochester Cathedral - total £391,000 - restoration and conservation works
- Royal Engineers Museum - a total of £25,000 for The Bridge Study Centre
- University of Greenwich - £250,000 for Chair of Bridge and Tunnel Engineering
- Medway Maritime Hospital - £500,000 towards Intensive Care Unit
- Maidstone Sea Cadets - £4,000 to improve access to the river
- Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Ltd (MAPSL) - £40,000 towards restoration of a scion floatplane
- St Margaret's Rainham - £10,150 to restore rare 15th-century ceiling paintings
- Hoo St Werburgh - various restoration work totalling £14,000
- St Mary Magdalene, Cobham - a total of £19,000 towards church repairs
- Smaller grants since 1991

LINCOLNSHIRE



CAMBRIDGESHIRE



WEST SUSSEX



PROPERTY ESTATE

The Trust's income and reserves are derived entirely from endowments of land and money from benefactors in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The charity does not raise funds, charge tolls or receive any public funding. Most of the original endowment was in the form of land, some of which remains in the Trust's ownership.

As a charity, the Trust has a responsibility to manage its estate actively to deliver the best returns in the very long term. In accordance with

the estate strategy, two older cottages were sold during the year and a newly-built property was purchased in Hassocks, West Sussex. This comprises a retail unit occupied by Sainsbury's and four apartments. A new lease was agreed with Chapel Down Group plc for a vineyard which will be planted on the Trust's land at Street Farm, Boxley. The usual programme of property repairs was undertaken in the interests of preserving and improving the value of the property portfolio, which includes the Conington estate in Cambridgeshire.



New House Farm, Thanington

ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL RESEARCH



Rochester Bridge in 1779

The Trust holds an extensive archive of material dating from its foundation in 1399, which is managed by the Bridge Archivist Dr James Gibson. The archive catalogue is available on the Trust's website and is extensively used by historical and family history researchers.

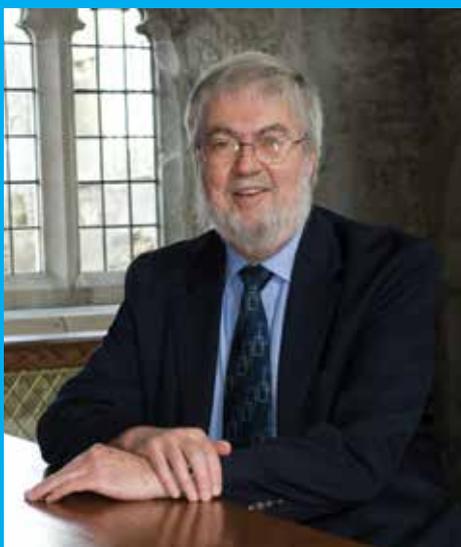
A major digitisation project was carried out with the support of specialist company Max Communications. Images of some of the most important manuscripts are being prepared and will be made available on the Trust's website by the end of 2015.

The Bridge Clerk and Archivist have given talks on the history and work of the Trust to local history societies and other groups across Kent during the year. For details of how to arrange a presentation, tailored to your group's particular interests, please visit the website.

MEET THE ARCHIVIST

James M. Gibson has been Bridge Archivist for the Trust for almost 30 years. During this time he has catalogued the bridge archive, edited and helped to write *Traffic and Politics*, the official history of Rochester Bridge, and also produced a 36-page, colour illustrated booklet describing the various activities of the Rochester Bridge Trust.

In 2004 he constructed the original website for the Trust, including the online, searchable archive catalogue, and for the past 11 years he has managed and maintained the site.



DR JAMES GIBSON | Bridge Archivist

In addition to his work for the Rochester Bridge Trust, James serves as part-time archivist for the Richard Watts and the City of Rochester Almshouse Charities. He has also catalogued the records and written the histories of The New College of Cobham and the Walthamstow Almshouse and General Charities.

Before moving to Kent, James gained his PhD in English from the University of Pennsylvania and lectured for nine years in English literature and writing at Houghton College. He also edits the Kent volumes for the international research project *Records of Early English Drama*.



LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, the Trust will continue to maintain the bridges and to support other charitable work as funds allow. Work planned or under consideration includes:

- **Principal inspections of the New Bridge and Service Bridge and a general inspection of the Old Bridge. Removal of the redundant inspection gantry under the New Bridge;**
- **Geotechnical survey work on Rochester Esplanade;**
- **Refurbishment of the Strood section of the Old Bridge where the Trust has its maintenance workshops;**
- **Installation of a new electrical distribution board and bearing monitors for the Old Bridge;**
- Establishing an estate strategy for a newly-acquired agricultural estate in Lincolnshire and carrying out some immediate maintenance work;
- Disposal of further residential properties which no longer meet the Trust's investment return criteria;
- Major roofing works at a farm in Cambridgeshire and the installation of a new water main;
- Delivering engineering education events, activities and additional resource materials;
- Delivering a programme of free public lectures;
- Carrying out an independent review of the Trust's governance arrangements.



CONTACT US:

The Rochester Bridge Trust, Bridge Chamber,
5 Esplanade, Rochester, Kent ME1 1QE

t: 01634 846706

e: bridgeclerk@rbt.org.uk

Find more information on our website:

www.rbt.org.uk

