

= Wandsworth Bridge =

Wandsworth Bridge crosses the River Thames in west London . It carries the A217 road between the area of Battersea , near Wandsworth Town Station , in the London Borough of Wandsworth on the south of the river , and the areas of Sands End and Parsons Green , in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham , on the north side .

The first bridge on the site was a toll bridge built by Julian Tolmé in 1873 , in the expectation that the western terminus of the Hammersmith and City Railway would shortly be built on the north bank , leading to a sharp increase in the number of people wanting to cross the river at this point . The railway terminus was not built , and problems with drainage on the approach road made access to the bridge difficult for vehicles . Wandsworth Bridge was commercially unsuccessful , and in 1880 it was taken into public ownership and made toll @-@ free . Tolmé 's bridge was narrow and too weak to carry buses , and in 1926 a Royal Commission recommended its replacement .

In 1937 Tolmé 's bridge was demolished . The present bridge , an unadorned steel cantilever bridge designed by Sir Thomas Peirson Frank , was opened in 1940 . At the time of its opening it was painted in dull shades of blue as camouflage against air raids , a colour scheme it retains . Although Wandsworth Bridge is one of the busiest bridges in London , carrying over 50 @,@ 000 vehicles daily , it has been described as " probably the least noteworthy bridge in London " .

= = Background = =

Although opposite each other across the River Thames , Fulham on the north bank and Wandsworth on the south bank were historically isolated from each other ; the nearest crossing points were at Putney Bridge to the west and Battersea Bridge to the east , both over a mile from Wandsworth . The fast flowing but narrow River Wandle at Wandsworth was well @-@ situated for driving watermills , leading to the rapid spread of industry in the area during the 19th century . Nearby Battersea Railway Bridge opened in 1863 , but as the local population grew and London 's built @-@ up area began to encroach during the 19th century , pressure from local residents and businesses for a road bridge to be built increased .

In 1864 , it was expected that the newly formed Hammersmith and City Railway would build its western terminus on the north bank of the river between Chelsea and Fulham . In 1864 , in anticipation of the new railway line generating high demand for a river crossing , an Act of Parliament was passed granting permission to the Wandsworth Bridge Company to build a bridge , to be financed by tolls , with the proviso that the bridge would be at least 40 feet ( 12 m ) wide and cross the river with no more than three spans . Rowland Mason Ordish designed an Ordish ? Lefeuve Principle bridge to comply with the Act 's specifications , of a similar design to his nearby Albert Bridge . Wandsworth Bridge and Albert Bridge were authorised on the same day , and were the last private tollbridges authorised in London .

= = 1873 bridge = =

The company was unable to finance the building of Ordish 's design , and in 1870 a new Act of Parliament was passed giving the company permission to build a bridge 30 feet ( 9 @.@ 1 m ) wide , crossing the river with five spans . Ordish was asked to design a cheaper bridge to the new specifications but refused to change the design , so Julian Tolmé was appointed designer in his place . Tolmé designed a starkly functional lattice truss bridge of wrought iron . It cost £ 40 @,@ 000 ( about £ 3 @.@ 2 million in 2016 ) to build , and consisted of five identical spans , supported by four pairs of concrete @-@ filled iron piers ; each of the cylindrical piers was sunk 14 feet ( 4 @.@ 3 m ) into the riverbed . The bridge was due to open in early 1873 , but the workmen building it went on strike , and a third Act of Parliament was necessary to give the company time to resolve the dispute and complete the project .

Wandsworth Bridge was formally opened in a small ceremony in 1873 , and a celebratory buffet was provided at the nearby Spread Eagle pub . A utilitarian structure made of mismatched materials

purchased for cheapness , the new bridge elicited unenthusiastic responses ; the Illustrated London News remarked at the time of its opening that " No attempt has been made to produce architectural effect , the structure being substantial rather than ornamental " . A 1 ? 2d toll was charged on pedestrians , and carts were charged 6d .

In 1867 the formerly independent Hammersmith and City Railway was absorbed by the Metropolitan Railway and the Great Western Railway , and was operated from then on by Metropolitan Railway trains . The plan for a terminus in Fulham was abandoned , and the line instead turned west at Hammersmith to run over London and South Western Railway tracks to Richmond . Although Wandsworth Town railway station , near the southern end of the bridge , had provided direct connections to central London since 1846 , the lack of rail connections opening on the north bank meant the area on the Fulham side remained undeveloped , and bridge usage was low . Tolmé 's design was not sturdy enough to carry heavy vehicles , and drainage problems on the approach road to the north discouraged vehicles from using Wandsworth Bridge .

= = Public ownership = =

Wandsworth Bridge never raised enough toll revenue to cover the costs of repairs and maintenance . In 1877 the Metropolis Toll Bridges Act was passed , and in 1880 Wandsworth Bridge , along with other London bridges , was taken into the public ownership of the Metropolitan Board of Works . Despite having run at a loss throughout its lifetime , the Board of Works paid £ 53 @, @ 313 ( about £ 4 @. @ 5 million in 2016 ) for the bridge , a substantial premium on its £ 40 @, @ 000 construction cost . On 26 June 1880 Edward , Prince of Wales , and Alexandra , Princess of Wales , presided over a ceremony abolishing tolls over the three bridges .

By the time it was taken into public ownership , the bridge was in very poor condition . In 1891 a weight limit of 5 tons was introduced , and in 1897 a 10 mph ( 16 km / h ) speed limit was imposed . With its narrowness and weight restrictions , by this point it was effectively a footbridge . As narrowness and weight restrictions meant that it was unable to carry buses , in 1926 a Royal Commission recommended its replacement and the London County Council agreed to finance a new bridge on the site . In 1928 it was decided instead to give priority to widening the much busier Putney Bridge , and the replacement of Wandsworth Bridge was delayed .

= = 1940 bridge = =

In 1935 , the Ministry of Transport agreed to finance 60 percent of the projected £ 503 @, @ 000 ( about £ 31 @. @ 5 million in 2016 ) cost of a replacement bridge , and the London County Council approved a new design , by Sir Thomas Peirson Frank , for a three @- @ span steel cantilever bridge 60 feet ( 18 m ) in width , allowing two lanes of traffic in each direction , and designed to allow widening to 80 feet ( 24 m ) if necessary . The design featured distinctive low curves , intended to reflect the low riverbanks in the area . The design was presented to the Royal Fine Art Commission for approval , with a covering note stating that " in the design of the bridge a severe simplicity of treatment has been carried out , expressed in a technique essentially related to the material proposed for its construction " . Although the Commission expressed concern that the bridge might be too narrow , the design was approved . The work was put out for tender , with a stipulation that all materials used in the construction of the new bridge should be of British origin or manufacture .

The contract for the new bridge was awarded to Messrs Holloway Brothers ( London ) , and work began in 1937 . A temporary footbridge that had been used during the redevelopment of Chelsea Bridge between 1935 and 1937 was re @- @ erected alongside Wandsworth Bridge , and the existing bridge demolished . The new bridge was expected to be complete in 1939 ; however , a shortage of steel in the buildup to the Second World War delayed its opening until 25 September 1940 . The steel panels cladding the bridge were painted in varying shades of blue to camouflage it from German and Italian air raids , a colour scheme it retains today . Although it is one of London 's busiest bridges , carrying over 50 @, @ 000 vehicles per day , its drab colour scheme and minimalist design have led to it being described as " probably the least noteworthy bridge in London " .

= = = Later developments = = =

Historically , the southern approach roads had been in poor condition and confusing to use . In 1969 the Greater London Council built the A214 road , a three @-@ lane dual carriageway linking the southern end of Wandsworth Bridge to Tooting . At the immediate southern end of the bridge is a large roundabout adjacent to Wandsworth Town railway station , where Bridgend Road ( A217 ) , York Road ( A3205 ) , Swandon Way ( A217 ) and Trinity Road ( A214 ) meet . The roundabout is a noted example of 1960s modernist design , and served as the setting for parts of A Clockwork Orange in 1971 . In 2007 approval was granted for a series of 40 @-@ foot ( 12 m ) glass cone @-@ shaped " flames " designed by architect Steven Lenczner , which would change colour with the tides , to be added to the bridge deck . The cost , estimated at £ 800 @, @ 000 , would be raised by private sponsorship . The " flames " were to be raised above the sightlines of drivers to avoid causing a distraction .

Wandsworth Bridge now marks the boundary above which a lower speed limit on the Thames is enforced . A 12 knots ( 22 km / h ) speed limit is now in force downstream from Wandsworth to Margaretness but because of the number of rowers using the upper reaches of the river , all of the tidal Thames upstream of Wandsworth Bridge is subject to a strictly enforced speed limit of 8 knots ( 15 km / h ) .