

# **THE LOVELACE BRIDGES**

- Photographs & details



*Photograph: Rex Butcher*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the 1860's Lord Lovelace built 15 bridges across his woodlands in the southerly part of his East Horsley estate to allow timber to be hauled by horses to his sawmill on the Epsom Road. He developed a network of tracks with embankments to reduce gradients and created bridges where tracks crossed existing paths or lanes. All the bridges were constructed from local flint and brick from his works in Ockham. It is thought the lime mortar used was burnt in a local kiln, possibly from chalk pits from nearby Kiln Field Coppice.

During this period Lord Lovelace was busy enlarging his home at Horsley Towers and rebuilding the medieval houses across his estate. He developed a particular passion for architecture and personally created unusual designs using local flint and decorative terracotta bricks, materials that he would also use on his bridges. Lord Lovelace embraced different architectural styles and most of his woodland bridges were horseshoe-shaped in the Moorish manner. A similar Moorish influence may be seen inside the Horsley Towers chapel, one of his most intricate architectural creations.

Of the fifteen bridges that Lord Lovelace built across his woodlands estate, ten still exist today. Eight of these bridges lie in East Horsley parish and two in Effingham parish, (Oldlands & Meadow Plat). The bridges all vary in style and size – the largest is Dorking Arch with a span of around 18 feet whilst the smallest is Meadow Plat with a span of just 6 feet. Sites of those bridges that are no longer standing can still be identified by the remains of masonry, flint and bricks remaining around the site.

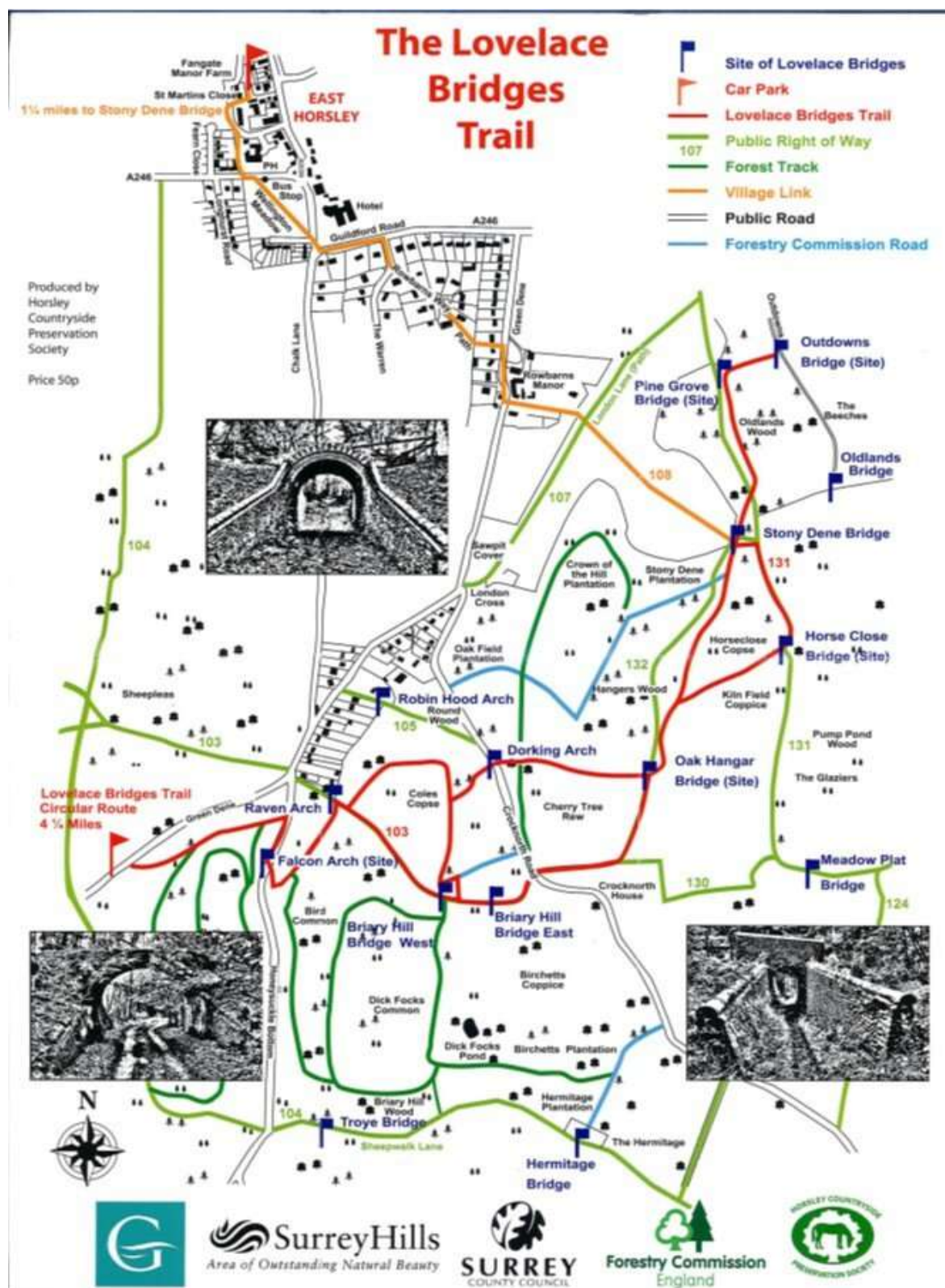
The map overleaf shows the locations of all the Lovelace bridges. Of the surviving bridges, all but one (Meadow Plat) are Grade II listed structures. Photographs and descriptions of each are set out in the pages below in alphabetical order, namely:

1. Briary Hill East
2. Briary Hill West
3. Dorking Arch
4. Hermitage Bridge
5. Meadow Plat Bridge
6. Oldlands Bridge
7. Raven Arch
8. Robin's Hood Arch
9. Stoney Dene
10. Troy Bridge

The Horsley Countryside Preservation Society has played an important role in the conservation of several Lovelace bridges and has also created two self-guided walking routes: a Shorter Trail of 3.2 miles that takes in the five best preserved bridges and a Longer Trail of 5.2 miles passing all the accessible bridges. Both guides may be downloaded from the Horsley Heritage website ([www.horsleyheritage.info](http://www.horsleyheritage.info)) from the section 'Heritage Walks'.

## LOCATIONS OF THE LOVELACE BRIDGES

Locations of the Lovelace Bridges are shown in the map below. Note the red-lined Lovelace Bridges trail has now been superseded by two new trails as referenced on the previous page.





## **1. Briary Hill East**

***A relatively narrow bridge easily accessible from Crocknorth Road.***



*Photograph: Robert Taylor*

Briary Hill East is one of the narrower horse-shoe shaped bridges with a span of about 6 feet. It is still in reasonable condition following conservation work carried out by the Horsley Countryside Preservation Society (HCPS) in 1981.

Unlike some of the other Lovelace bridges, Briary Hill East has barely any knapped flints used in its construction and the brick arch is undecorated. The parapets are both complete although they were largely re-constructed in the conservation work. Both sides are stepped with the steeper sections rising from around the halfway point.

This bridge is very similar in construction to Briary Hill West which is some 100 metres further along the bridleway.

**LOCATION: 275 metres west of Crocknorth Road along BW 103.**

## **2. Briary Hill West**

***Another similar arched bridge, slightly larger and lower down Briary Hill,.***



*Photo: Robert Taylor*

Briary Hill West passes over a bridleway within Coles Copse. This Lovelace bridge has a very similar design to Briary Hill East, except for the slightly angular positioning of the bridge over BW103.

The brick arch has a span of around 10 feet on retaining walls of flint rubble in lime mortar with D-shaped brick coping. The parapets are 3.5 feet in height.

The Grade II listing entry made in 1985 uses the name of 'Upper Briary Hill Bridge' although this term appears to be superseded in current use by 'Briary Hill West'.

**LOCATION: Some 100 metres down from Briary Hill East and 240 metres above Raven Arch.**



### 3. Dorking Arch

*The most elaborate of the Lovelace bridges & the only one visible from a public highway.*



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Built in the 1860's this Grade II listed structure has a span of 18 feet, the widest of all the Lovelace bridges. It is built of coursed flint rubble with brick dressings and coping with long ramped retaining walls to the main arch. It is also the most elaborately decorated bridge, with the parapet walls ornamented by a line of 11 arrow slits.

Whilst the other Lovelace bridges are located within woodland, Dorking Arch crosses Crocknorth Road, a busy country highway linking East Horsley with Dorking via the North Downs. It is therefore the most often viewed of all the Lovelace bridges.

Due to the heavy traffic volumes passing beneath this bridge, vibration impacts on the building are regularly assessed. Around 25 years ago, significant cracks were found to have developed and an extensive work programme undertaken to strengthen the arch using concrete injections. Photographs showing this work are held in the Horsley Heritage archive.

**LOCATION:** Dorking Arch spans Crocknorth Road in East Horsley around 0.8 km south of the Green Dene junction. By foot it is a 0.75 km walk along BW103 from the start of Honeysuckle Bottom via Raven Arch on a trail that leads over the bridge.

#### **4. Hermitage Bridge**

***A large Lovelace bridge near the upper end of Sheepwalk Lane, privately owned.***



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Hermitage Bridge is located at the upper end of Sheepwalk Lane, which is an old drover's track. The bridge has a wide horseshoe arch with a span of around 13 feet. Of all the surviving Lovelace Bridges this span is only exceeded by Dorking Arch.

Hermitage Bridge is made of red brick, with the lower part in Flemish bond and the upper part in stretcher bond. The revetment walls are made of flint with brick lacing courses and a coved tiled parapet.

Near this bridge is The Hermitage, a large house which gives the bridge its name. It is believed that the house was also built by Lord Lovelace in the 1860's, around the same time as the bridge, and was probably used by a gamekeeper or forester.

**LOCATION: Near the end of Sheepwalk Lane around 0.8km from Honeysuckle Bottom.**



## **5. Meadow Plat Bridge**

*The smallest of the Lovelace's bridges, located in Effingham parish*



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Meadow Plat is the smallest of the Lovelace Bridges with an arch span of just 6 feet. It is located beside an isolated house of the same name.

It is the only one of the ten surviving Lovelace Bridges which is not Grade II listed. The listing citations for other Lovelace bridges are supported by their contribution towards 'group value'. As the smallest and most remote of the surviving Lovelace bridges presumably Historic England concluded that this bridge did not meet their threshold for such group contribution.

**LOCATION:** Approximately 0.8km east of Crocknorth Road, accessible along BW132 via Crocknorth Farm, then on BW130 to Meadow Plat.



## **6. Oldlands Bridge**

***Not publically accessible and in poor condition, this bridge is not included on any of the current Lovelace Bridges walks.***



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Oldlands Bridge is a Grade II listed structure, located in Effingham parish at the southern end of a private road named Outdowns. The bridge has a single arch with brick edging and a span of around 8 feet. The retaining walls are made of flint rubble and balustrades which rise to around 2 feet in height.

Originally this bridge was part of the route along one of Lord Lovelace's forestry tracks that lead to his sawmills at Brockholes Cross, where Outdowns now meets the Epsom Road.

The bridge itself is located on private property and is not publicly accessible. It also appears to be unstable, with signs warning of the danger. The arch itself has been bricked up, presumably because of the risk of collapse.

**LOCATION:** Access is via a private road in Effingham called Outlands.

## **7. Raven Arch**

***An easily accessible Lovelace bridge reached along a short footpath from Greendene.***



*Photograph: Robert Taylor*

Raven Arch has its western parapet preserved to its full height with a brick-edged recess in the front wall for a name or date plaque. The decorative arch of black tipped tiles is the most striking feature of this bridge.

Conservation work from 2007 by the Horsley Countryside Preservation Society (HCPS) included restoring the eastern parapet and conserving the flint work and wall capping by remedial repointing and individual brick replacement as necessary.

It is believed that the name of Raven Arch may relate to a coat of arms or heraldic device which could have originally featured on the bridge but is no longer preserved.

**LOCATION:** Raven Arch is easily accessible, being just 150 metres along public footpath FP103 from the corner of Greendene and Honeysuckle Bottom.



## **8. Robin's Hood Arch**

***A narrow horseshoe-shaped bridge just 90 metres by public footpath from Greendene.***



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Robin's Hood Arch was built by Lord Lovelace in the 1870's and represent one of his later woodland bridges. It would originally have carried a logging trail above it. The bridge is jointly owned between the two adjacent properties.

The arch displays a narrow horseshoe shape reminiscent of the Moorish style. The retaining walls are made of flint rubble in lime mortar and D-shaped brick coping. There is glazed brick decoration to the main arch with stepped arches at the ends. The decorative brickwork is identical at both ends but there is a row of black lipped tiles over the western portal. The flint parapets are 3 feet high under terracotta coping.

The track going over the bridge comes from the direction of Raven Arch to the south and follows the contours of the hill. The route to the sawmill is not clear but the bridge aligns with the Old London Lane at the junction with Crocknorth Road and Greendene.

The reason why this arch is named Robin's Hood is not known.

***LOCATION: Footpath 105 begins at Greendene some 110 metres east of its junction with Chalk Lane. The footpath passes between the houses of Wildacres and Robins Hood. The arch is 90 metres up from the Greendene highway.***

## **9. Stony Dene**

***The most ornamental of the Lovelace Bridges aside from Dorking Arch, with a major restoration programme completed in 2011.***



*Photograph: Robert Taylor*

Stony Dene is a horseshoe-shaped arch with a span of around 9 feet. The upper part is made of brick on a flint and stone rubble base set in lime mortar with the retaining walls having D-shaped brick coping. There is corbelled decorative brickwork to the main arch on both sides, more so than on any of the other surviving Lovelace Bridges apart from Dorking Arch.

This particular Lovelace bridge has undergone significant restoration, initiated by the Horsley Countryside Preservation Society (HCPS) in 2003 working in partnership with related parties. The former chairman of HCPS, Mr Des Hollier, personally lead some of restoration work himself after attending workshops on 19<sup>th</sup> Century construction techniques. The restoration work lasted until 2011, concluding with an official bridge re-opening by the Duke of Gloucester. Sadly, Mr Hollier died of a heart attack before the work was completed.

**LOCATION:** Near the parish boundary of East Horsley and Effingham, some 0.75km south of the A246 and 0.65km east of Greendene.



## **10. Troy Bridge**

***A wide and elegant arch, easily accessible on foot from Honeysuckle Bottom.***



*Photograph: Ian Capper*

Troy Bridge is one of two wide-span bridges that cross Sheepwalk Lane, each having a span of around 13 feet. The lane descending gently from the top of Ranmore Common to Honeysuckle Bottom avoids the steep Crocknorth Hill. This was probably an important route requiring passage for horse drawn vehicles.

This bridge is in a relatively poor state with the original parapets now destroyed. However, the attractive-looking arch is still intact. Decorative brickwork on the arch is arranged in four rows, each with different profiles. Like the nearby Heritage Bridge, this bridge also has the unusual feature of a narrower waist for the centre of the arch, a feature reminiscent of Moorish architecture. Similar Moorish influences may also be seen on other Lord Lovelace creations, in particular the Horsley Towers' chapel.

It is believed this bridge was named after Wilhelmina Troye of Brabant who was the wife of the fifth Lord King.

**LOCATION: On Sheepwalk Lane, 150m from end of Honeysuckle Bottom.**

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