



## Historic Bridge Foundation Facebook Archives

### Did You Know: United Kingdom Bridges

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Did You Know...

...The United Kingdom offers a variety of resources to enhance a visit to the country's unrivaled collection of historic bridges. Perhaps no other country in the world has such a high density of historic bridges, making this country a dream vacation for a bridge enthusiast. Planning for such a trip might seem overwhelming, however there are a few lesser-known hints and resources to help you plan your UK trip.

Scotland is unique in the United Kingdom in that it has a special approach to public access to land. Known as "freedom to roam" and codified into law, the "Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003" allows for public pedestrian access to the private countryside as long as common sense and courtesy is exercised. A specific set of rules is contained in the "Scottish Outdoor Access Code." In short, the public is allowed to walk on private property if they do so responsibly by keeping a distance from homes if possible (and using trails when near houses), not creating a disturbance, and not damaging crops, animals, landmarks, etc. Scotland's approach to land access has numerous benefits for bridge enthusiasts. Long-abandoned bridges can be visited without having to worry about trespassing or asking for permission to see them. You can access different locations and angles to get photos of a bridge, even if the location is some distance away from the public road. See this website for more information: <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>

While the rest of the United Kingdom does not share Scotland's "freedom to roam" approach to private land, there is still a notable interest on access to the countryside, and observant visitors and diligent trip-planners may discover some options that might be easy to miss. In particular, there are a number of footpaths and bridleways that may appear almost completely undeveloped, aside from the path created by the users of the trail. Some of these trails are noteworthy because they may follow rivers and canals, providing access to abandoned bridges or railway bridges that cannot be reached by public highways. In some cases, abandoned highway bridges have been taken over by these trail systems as well. These undeveloped trails may offer the only public access for viewing a particular bridge. One cautionary note

is that some of these trails run for a very long distance (miles) before they reach a public road. So you may be in for a bit of a hike between where you parked your car and the bridge you are hiking back to. Public rights of way may be marked with signs such as yellow arrows for footpaths and blue arrows for bridleways.

The United Kingdom has its own government managed mapping company called Ordnance Survey. Ordnance Survey maps are produced in variety of formats, containing a variety of information, but in most cases are far more detailed than mainstream maps such as Google Maps. In particular, Ordnance Survey maps show footpaths and bridleways, and bridge names are often shown on these maps as well. The downside to these maps is they are not public domain maps like the USGS Maps found in the United States. As such, only some map versions and interfaces are available for free. Other maps may have (sometimes substantial) fees to purchase and use them. This webpage has one set of maps available for viewing online: <https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>. On a side note, the Ordnance Survey has its own national grid reference system, which provides the same function as latitude and longitude coordinates. You may encounter these references (example: NH 1953 8058) in lieu of traditional latitude/longitude when using maps and researching bridges in the UK. While these cannot be entered into Google Maps search, many UK map apps can search using these coordinates. A detailed explanation can be found here: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/getoutside/guides/beginners-guide-to-grid-references/>.

The UK currently does not have a single website comprehensively listing all historic bridges. Nevertheless, several databases are of use in locating bridges of interest. Geograph is a particularly useful resource because it is a very extensive database of photos and information for "every square kilometer" of the UK. Many bridges have been added to its database, both modern and historic. The database can be searched by subject and area, and visual map-based search tools are also offered. Visit the website at: <http://www.geograph.org.uk/>. An additional note about Geograph is that many of its photos can be downloaded and reused with a Creative Commons license. Another resource is the Transport Trust, which has a searchable database of heritage sites, many of which are bridges. Their website is <http://www.transporttrust.com/>. England's public body that looks after historic structures maintains a database of listed structures, which can be searched for bridges here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> and, at the time of this writing, 6,339 structures on the list were classified as bridges. This database is primarily text-only and technical in nature. Forgotten Relics is another excellent source of bridge information. Dedicated primarily to railway bridges and neglected or abandoned bridges, this website has section dedicated to bridges here: <http://www.forgottenrelics.co.uk/bridges/index.html>. Lastly, Google's Streetview cars have covered the UK extensively, such that nearly all roads, even those in rural locations, typically have a Streetview available. However, remember if the bridge is a deck arch bridge, and the deck and roadway have been altered from the original design, it may be difficult to confirm a historic bridge using Streetview unless you can find a road alongside the crossing that offers a view toward the bridge.



Although this cast iron arch bridge over Langwell Water in northern Scotland has been abandoned and is well off the public road, it remains accessible to visitors thanks to Scotland's Freedom to Roam laws.



The Geograph database documented the Auchindrain Bridge, in far northern Scotland. Sir John Fowler, who was a designer of the famous Forth Rail Bridge in Edinburgh, built this bridge in 1870. The bridge led to an estate he owned.



Although the beautiful Gauxholme Railway Bridge is not located next to any public highways, it can be reached by the public thanks to England's extensive system of footpaths and bridleways along canals and rivers, including here along the Rochdale Canal.