

The Avon Bridge built by the East & West Junction Railway downstream of Lucy's Mill, Stratford upon Avon.

Used by the E&WJR and its successors until 1965 for rail traffic. The original structure was strengthened by the LMS circa 1925, BR circa 1958 and by the Highways Authority when it was converted to road use. Although the E&WJR was a single track concern when built (and through poverty for its whole life) the promoters exercised Victorian foresight in building the bridge to double track width. That vision allowed conversion to road use over 100 years later.

Almost without doubt the most enduring memorial to the East & West and its successors has got to be the Avon bridge at Stratford. Although it has been strengthened and modified by the LMS, BR and the Highways Agency over the years, from most photo viewpoints it looks much the same as it did when it was first built. Perhaps a memorial plaque adjacent to it recognizing the legacy the old railway gave the town would be appropriate. During the 1950's & 1960's the local authorities had endless debates over how and where a second Avon road crossing could be located. They could never get a consensus either because of cost or the influence of the "Shakespeare" lobby on the impact such a structure would have on the theatre or parish church. The graceful arches of the E&WJR bridge complement the area. Just imagine what sort of steel / concrete bridge would have been put there in the 1970's if the railway had not already done the job for them 100 years previously.

This Newton photograph was almost certainly taken in 1897 looking up stream with Lucy's Mill in the background.

Notes by J R Jennings 2013