

# Langstone Bridge

by Margaret Sheppard

Two hundred years ago the first bridge from the mainland to Hayling Island was opened on 8th September 1824 by the Duke of Norfolk. Before the bridge was built the main access to the island was via the historic Wadeway causeway. This was cut in two by the excavation of a deep channel when the short-lived Portsmouth and Chichester Canal was built in the 1820s. The Canal company therefore funded construction of a 960 ft long timber road bridge. This bridge was built on piles of African oak and had a 40 ft swing section in the centre to allow vessels to pass through.

Tolls to pay for the construction were established at the outset. The toll house was at the northern end and tolls continued to be charged for the first and later the second bridge until 1960. The first bridge described in its heyday as 'one of the finest structures of the kind in the Kingdom' gradually deteriorated but remained in service until the 1950s. First pedestrians, horses, carriages and carts used the bridge but in time a weight limit had to be fixed with the advent

of lorries, buses and cars. After WW2 only single-decker buses were allowed across and if they were carrying too many passengers some had to get out and walk regardless of the weather to reduce axle weight.

The replacement concrete bridge opened in 1956. Both road bridges and the now defunct railway line have transformed life on Hayling Island. In 1811 there were just 778 inhabitants living on the island. Today Hayling is home to more than 17,000 people.



*Sir Dymoke White's coach and four taking Hugh Molson and party across the new Langstone Bridge the day after the opening in 1956*