Heritage Audit
Medway Navigation

Environment Agency

2007 Revised 2024

Contents

Allington Lock 1937

Environment Agency

Preface

The original Heritage Audit of the Medway Navigation was undertaken in 2007 by Michael Trueman BSc MA MIFA and provided a snapshot in time of the navigation's historic and modern buildings and structures. It also summarised the navigation's historical development and the relevant heritage legislation and provisions affecting it.

This 2024 revision amends and updates the 2007 heritage audit report with new information related to the operation of the navigation and its infrastructure. It also outlines current national and local heritage legislation and policies, some of which have changed since 2007.

The Environment Agency operates the Medway Navigation within the terms of the **Environment Act** (1995) and the **Protocol for the Care of Government Historic Estates** (Historic England, 2017). The former places a duty upon the Agency "to pay regards to the desirability of protecting and conserving historic buildings, sites and objects of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest and maintaining public access" (Env. Act. 1995 sec. 7.1 & 7.2).

These heritage assets are referred to in the Protocol for the Care of Government Historic Estates which states that the Government is committed to setting a good example in the care of its historic estate, and that departments and agencies should adopt and implement a framework to put this commitment into practice. Among other points the Protocol requires Departments and Agencies to ensure that the significance of any heritage asset is taken into account when planning change or development and ensure that the design quality of any new works enhances the historic environment.

The Medway Navigation is an active and well used river navigation that requires maintenance and health and safety works for it to remain open for public use. The new Medway Design Handbook, which is informed by this 2024 heritage audit report, demonstrates the Environment Agency's approach to its duties and its appreciation of the historic environment and heritage assets of the Medway Navigation.

Executive Summary

This report amends the results of an audit of heritage assets along the Medway Navigation. The audit took place in 2007 and was revised in 2024. The study area is a 31km (19 miles) length of the freshwater river above its tidal limit, stretching from Allington Lock near Maidstone to the footbridge immediately downstream of the Leigh Flood Storage Area, just west of Tonbridge. The study includes detailed audit of 10 core areas, focussed on the 10 operational lock and weir sites of the navigation. It also identifies other riverine structures that may have been linked to the navigation both under the Environment Agency's control and outside it. Part of the purpose of the 2007 heritage audit and its 2024 revision was to inform and be a part of the Medway Navigation Environmental Design Handbook (MNEDH).

Historically, the study area divides between the Upper Navigation, between Tonbridge and Maidstone where 14 locks and weirs were built following an Act of 1740, and the Lower Navigation, below Maidstone where Allington Lock was built following an Act of 1792. The management of these locks and weirs was only united under a single navigation authority in the 20th century.

Together with a summary of results of the heritage audit, the report includes a review of primary and secondary sources for the history of the Medway Navigation, an outline of that history, and an outline of the historic character of the area through which the navigation passes (including a review of known heritage resource for the area). The report is illustrated with a selection of field inspection photographs and early depictions of the navigation. A Gazetteer of sites which revises and amplifies the 2007 results is appended to the report.

The heritage audit's conclusions highlight the importance of viewing the Medway Navigation's features as a historic group. The various buildings, structures, earthworks and buried remains dating from the 18th century through to the 21st century represent an accumulated history. Their study can contribute to a better understanding of both the Medway Navigation and of English river navigations in general.

1. Introduction

Environment Agency

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Allington Sluice, 1937

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of Report

The heritage audit was designed in 2007 and revised in 2024 to inform the **Medway Navigation Environmental Design Handbook** (MNEDH).

The study area is referred to as the Medway Navigation, specifically a 31km (19 miles) length of the freshwater river above its tidal limit, stretching from Allington Lock near Maidstone to the footbridge immediately downstream of the Leigh flood regulating barrier just west of Tonbridge.

The aims of the 2007 project were to define the historic character of the Medway Navigation and to complete an audit of heritage assets along its length. The project specifically included detailed audit of 10 core areas, focussed on the 10 operational lock and weir sites of the Medway Navigation. It also identified other riverine structures that may have been linked to the navigation both under the Environment Agency's control and outside it, where heritage remains could potentially be affected as a result of the Agency undertaking its duties as set out in the Environment Act 1995.

Allington Sluice, 1937

1.2. Methodology

Define Purpose and Desk Study

Collating secondary source literature on the history of the navigation and compiling a list of primary source material. Collating existing documentation on the historic environment. This part of the project was undertaken in parallel with stage 3, as information for these different aspects of the work was drawn from similar sources.

Analysis and Reporting

Analysis of collated data and setting out a summary account of the history of the navigation, highlighting the potential of primary source material for enhancing that account. Summarising the historic character of the navigation.

Collating information

Collating information necessary to identify sites and preparation for fieldwork, specifically: collating historical documentation on the lock and weir sites; collating conservation documentation relevant to the Medway Navigation; making access arrangements for site visits.

Research & Site Visits

Site visits to lock and weir sites to compile site inspection notes and photographs. The 2007 site visits were repeated and information updated for the 2024 revision.

Analysis & Reporting

Data input resulting from the site visits. Preparation of site maps and processing of site inspection photography. Report writing that drew together results from stages 3 to 4. New photographs were taken and amendments made to the report in the 2024 revision.

Access Database

In 2007 the site summaries for the 10 core areas were collated on a Microsoft Access database. This database is no longer in use and theAgency's records are now stored on a Microsoft SharePoint site, in line with the Agency's data management policies and procedures.

1. Introduction

Twyford Bridge

The 10 operational lock and weir sites on the Medway Navigation are those at Allington Lock, East Farleigh Lock, Teston Lock, Hampstead Lock/Yalding Weir (aka Anchor Sluice),[1] Sluice Weir Lock, Oak Weir Lock, East Lock, Porter's Lock, Eldridge's Lock, and Town Lock at Tonbridge. There are six further specific sites where navigation component features have been identified: the still functioning Yalding Cut, the disused Stoneham Lock (abandoned in the 1930s), the site of College Lock (removed in 1881), and the three former stations that were dismantled by the Conservancy Board in 1911–15 –Branbridges Lock, New Lock (aka Old Stairs Lock), and Child's Lock.[2]

The results of the 2007 heritage audit, revised and expanded in 2024 are summarised in this report. An Appendix to the report is a Gazetteer of sites which evaluates the heritage value, setting and significance of each site in turn.

1. All the other sites have the lock and weir in closer proximity but Hampstead Lock and its associated Yalding Weir are at opposite ends of the Yalding Cut and so have been entered to the heritage audit database as separate 'sites', so that 11 sites represent the 10 core areas.
2. For historical completeness, the survey database also includes features associated with the Penshurst Canal scheme of the 1830s. This abortive scheme produced the extraordinary linear earthwork of the Straight Mile, the later used channel of the Long Reach and the rather fine but never used Stone Lock, all features that are now accessible to the public as part of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's Haysden Country Park.

2. Sources

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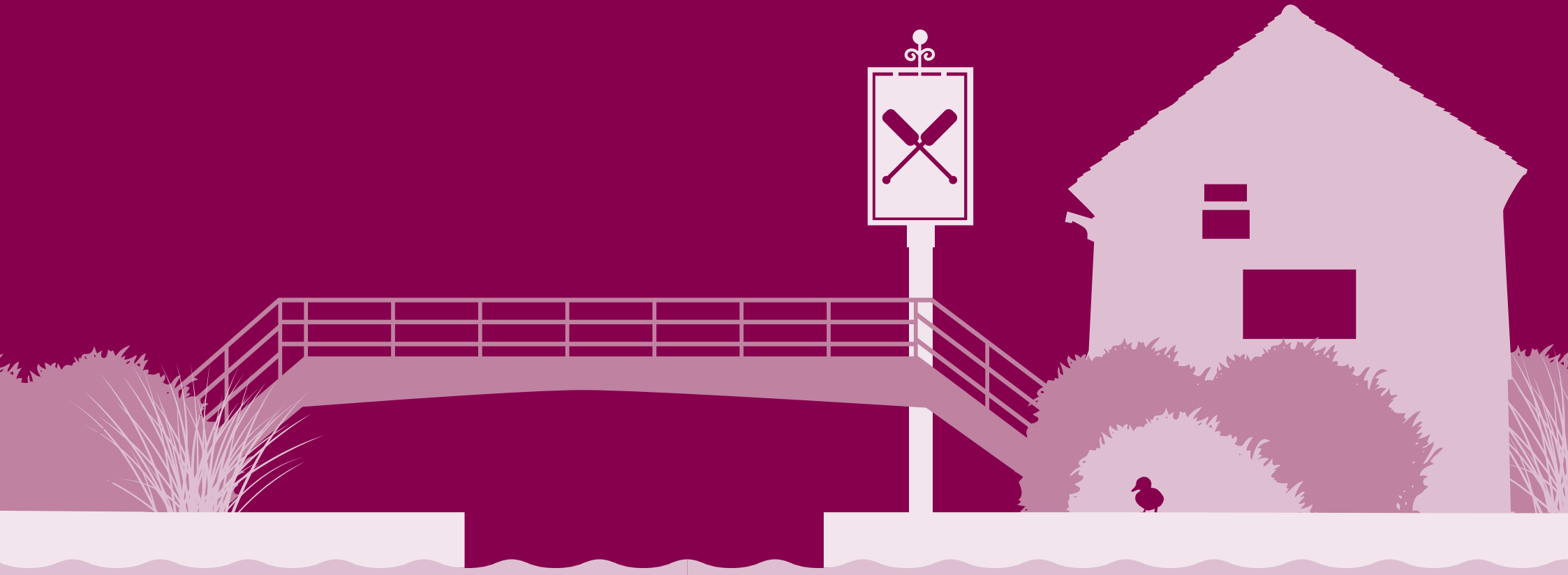

2. Sources

2.1. General

General source material relevant to the history of river navigations, locks, weirs and weir gates was described in the Thames report (Trueman 2004, 6) and can be found in literature listed in the Bibliography (updated in 2024) to this report.

East Farleigh Bridge Lock & Sluice

2.2. Medway Navigation

The outline history of the Medway Navigation presented in this report draws heavily on readily available secondary sources. Hence use was made of the brief published accounts by Hadfield (1955, 26–29, 101–108, 275–279 and 1969, 60–80), Hilton (1977), Paget-Tomlinson (2006, 151), Pratt (1982, 42–49), Vine (1989, 94–109) and Willan (1936, 17–18). Use was also made of several books that celebrate the river and contain scattered references to the navigation; these include Biggs (1982), Goodsall (1955), and Penn (1981).

More detailed works were identified from bibliographic searches which were not consulted. These include studies by Chalkin (1961) and Hood (1981) of the 17th century navigation schemes, together with the broader titled studies of Hood's PhD thesis of 1979 and Watson's 1964 manuscript on the navigation covering the period 1600–1842.

There are major collections of primary source material relating to the Medway Navigation at two Kent record offices. The Medway Archives Centre at Strood hold records of both the Upper and Lower Navigation companies with material dating from 1627 to the 20th century (class SMn).[3] The Kent History and Library Centre, which includes Kent Archives, at Maidstone holds records relating to the River Medway Catchment Board (class: S/CM), the Kent River Board and the Kent River Authority (classes: A/KR & S/KR/A). The Centre also holds copies of relevant tithe maps (CTR), in both original and digitised forms; many of the relevant 25" Ordnance Survey maps (1st to 4th editions); copies of some of the Medway Bills and Acts and a miscellany of other records (some may be identified from their online catalogue).

Copies of relevant Acts of Parliament are available for reference at the British Library and several other locations (including, varyingly, the two named Kent record offices together with various local studies library). The British Library also holds manuscripts relating to the 17th century navigation scheme proposals. Other collections of relevance are in the National Archives at Kew and in the Parliamentary Archives.

For the 2007 study, use of primary source material was limited to that which was most likely to aid in identifying significance and for informing development of the Medway Waterways Design Handbook, as defined in the project brief. Hence, with regard to cartographic sources, collation of data was limited to relevant tithe maps (which give qualitatively varying snapshots of the river in the 1830s/40s) and OS map coverage from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries. OS 25" maps were consulted for Maidstone and Tonbridge (in 2024 these are available on the National Library of Scotland Maps website). Otherwise, use was made of the 6" survey editions, as published (2007) on the K-LIS website.[4] Relevant documentary material also includes a large number of early pictorial representations of Medway Navigation features.[5] These images are available to the researcher in various collections with varying degrees of accessibility.

3. These records were transferred to Strood from the Maidstone office in 2004. The Strood office also holds records of the Medway Conservators, who took over authority of the river below Hawkwood in 1881 and who were absorbed by the Medway Ports Authority in 1969–70 ('Records of the Conservators of the River Medway (1727) 1881–1969').
4. http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/home.htm (2007)
5. Quantity and quality of pictorial sources obtained was limited by the imposed schedule of the project, with research and report writing restricted to a two month time slot.

2. Sources

For the 2007 study, only readily available material was gathered – essentially meaning that time-consuming trawls of uncatalogued collections was simply not done. Most of the images utilised were located as material published in book form or on websites. In particular, Biggs (1982), Goodsall (1955), Penn (1981), Pratt (1982, 42–49), and Vine (1989, 94–109) all include relevant pictorial illustrations. The Kent History and Library Centre contains many 1,000s of items for the county, arranged by place – and in 2007 a partial index to this material reportedly showed several 100s of items so far identified relating to the River Medway (2007). Some of these are photographs which were published on the Here's History Kent website.[6] Maidstone Museum also has a collection of illustrative material and again some is published on their website.[7] Other images were identified from the websites of the Frith collection (Weald of Kent, Surrey & Sussex) the National Maritime Museum, the Historic England Archive (formerly the National Monuments Record) in Swindon, ThamesPilot, and the CORBIS archive.[8] In addition, the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership holds an album of photographs taken before and during reconstruction of the Allington Sluices in 1935–36, together with other material.

As the current navigation authority, the Environment Agency holds a variety of records scattered amongst its local offices. At Allington Lock, the 1833 lock house is currently used as an office, where there are Health and Safety files for recent works on the locks (for example the report by Scott Wilson KP 2000) (2007). There is also a variety of ledgers and boxes of other material (including calculations for the radial gates at Oak, East, Porters and Tonbridge).
At the Leigh office there is a wall display of photographs of the locks taken during the 1911–15 reconstruction, together with an assortment of other photographs (2007). The office beside the Yalding lifting bridge includes several museum pieces such as an 1880 datestone (set in a partition wall within the building) and various signage (2007). From a heritage point of view these items appear insecure – priority should be given by the EA to ensuring that these records are gathered together and secured as archival material. As further works are undertaken on the navigation, any appropriate documentation should be added to this archive.

The final and invaluable set of information utilised in 2007 (and again in 2024) was the oral history recollections and knowledge of Environment Agency navigation and engineering staff.

6. www.hereshistorykent.org.uk
7. www.museum.maidstone.gov.uk
8. Frith collection: www.francisfrith.com; 'Weald of Kent Surrey & Sussex': www.theweald.org, National Maritime Museum: www.nmm.ac.uk, National Monuments Record: http://viewfinder.englishheritage.org.uk/, Thames Pilot: www.thamespilot.org.uk CORBIS archive: http://pro.corbis.com. (2023:gettyimages.co.uk)

3. Outline History

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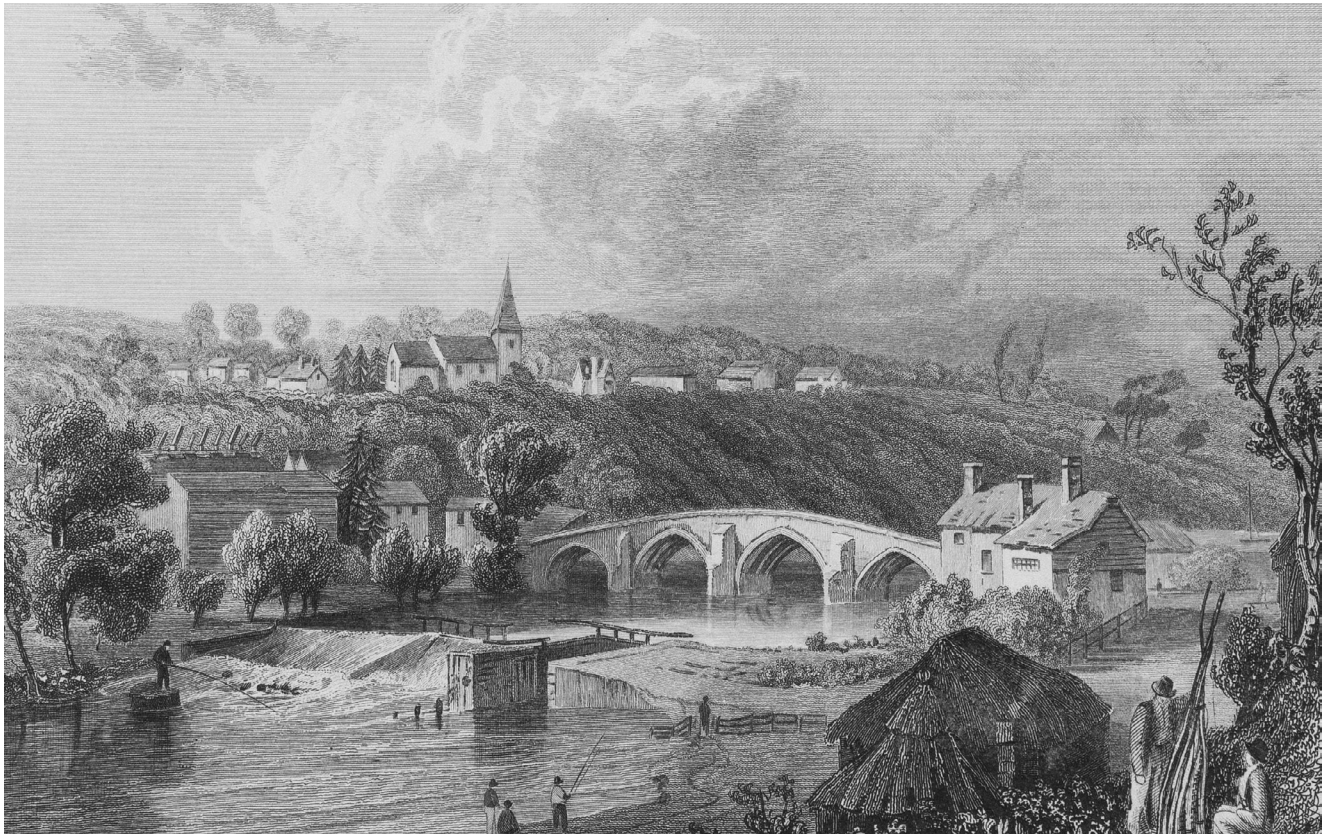
3. Outline History

3.1. Introduction

A detailed account of the history of the Medway Navigation is beyond the scope of this study. However, the following summary of major events is intended to provide a basic historical context.[9]

The River Medway has long been navigable to Maidstone, as evidenced by the settlements and fortifications along its course. From the 16th century, responsibility for navigation was divided between the upper and lower reaches (above and below Maidstone). At this time, specifically from 1571 to 1626, a series of Commissions of Sewers appointed by the King were mainly concerned with maintaining free flow of the river to reduce flood risk, but clearance work by them allowed limited navigation above Maidstone. Commissions specifically for navigation were appointed in 1627 and 1664. That of 1627 resulted in small barges being able to reach Yalding (by 1630) although that of 1664 failed to raise sufficient capital to undertake any works.



East Farleigh Lock and Weir, engraving, c1830 (Tombleson). Viewed to the south west, with backdrop of the Medieval Farleigh Bridge and the village of East Farleigh.

9. The account is drawn from analysis of sources as set out in Section 2 – hence it has been put together from cautious use of secondary source texts combined with limited analysis of primary source material.

3. Outline History

Genuine navigation of the river above Maidstone followed the 1740 Act. This established the Company of Proprietors of the Navigation of the River Medway, who were authorised to make the river navigable from Maidstone to Forest Row, Sussex. Over the next three to five years the Company built a series of fourteen locks and associated weirs from Town Lock at Tonbridge to College Lock at Maidstone.[10] They also made the canalised stretch at Yalding, cutting off a 2-mile loop in the river. The Company was a huge financial success for the next 150 years. Its decline was seeded in the arrival of the competing South East Railway in the 1840s (which finally prompted the Company to build a horse towpath). Its decline worsened progressively from the 1880s, with financial collapse coming in the winter of 1911 following the physical collapse of Farleigh Lock. The Company was replaced by a publicly funded Conservancy Board that rebuilt 10 of the original lock and weir sites, and closed and removed three others (a fourth, College Lock, had been removed in 1881), the navigation reopening in 1915. The Upper Navigation passed through the hands of a series of public bodies in the 20th century, coming under the authority of the Environment Agency in 1996.

For the river below Maidstone, the Company of Proprietors of the Navigation of the Lower River Medway was established following an Act of 1792. This company was also successful and persisted, albeit with authority over a reduced length of the river from 1881 and a shortened name from 1935, until the formation of the Medway Ports Authority in 1969. It was the Lower River company that built and maintained Allington Lock following the 1792 Act. There was little interaction between the Upper and Lower navigation companies for most of their existence, so that Allington had a rather different history of development, maintenance and appearance to that of the other locks of the current navigation.

Allington Lock, 1937 (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership).

10. The scheme, at least in part, was driven by the argument that it would reduce the cost of transporting timber from Penshurst for use by the Royal Navy.

3.2. Historical Sequence for the Medway Navigation

The following summary of **major events** in the **history of the Medway Navigation** is intended to provide a basic historical context for the heritage audit.[11] Dates refer to salient or notable events.

11. Based on the sources described in Section 2.

1571–1626	**Various Commissions of Sewers**
1571	Appointment by Crown of **Commission of Sewers**. In regard to flooding – primarily concerned with maintaining free flow of river.
1580	Appointment by Crown of **Commission of Sewers**. In regard to flooding – primarily concerned with maintaining free flow of river. Some clearance done that therefore allowed limited navigation.
1591	Appointment by Crown of **Commission of Sewers**. In regard to flooding – primarily concerned with maintaining free flow of river. Some clearance done that therefore allowed limited navigation.
1600	Very serious flooding led to disputes over cause – weirs or ironworks – and over possibilities for navigation (supported by the Commissioners of Sewers). Commission order to remove weirs was allowed, but effectively surrendered any claim to deal with navigation.
1627–1739	**Commissions for Navigation**
1627–1630	Charles I appointed **Commission to make river navigable** from Penshurst to Maidstone in two years. 52 members. Met on 23 May 1627 at The Bull, Tonbridge, agreed to put work to Mr Michael Cole (or Coale), to make river navigable for small boats (to 4 tons) within two years by building locks. Gave Cole monopoly of carriage for 33 years. But no power to remove obstructions. By 1630, small barges able to reach Yalding. Scheme came to halt.
1664	Act under Charles II granted certain landowners right to make river navigable, 'forcarriage of Iron, Ordinance, Balls, Timber, Wood, Corn and grain, Hay, Hops, Wool, Leather and all other Provisions there had growing and accruing from thence, as of Coals, Lime Stone, Wares and all other Necessaries and Commodities thither …. Capital was not raised and scheme halted.'
1740–Late 18c	Upper Navigation Company established 1740–43 Act (30 April 1740) **Company of Proprietors of the Navigation of the River Medway** to make river navigable from Maidstone to Forest Row, Sussex, part driven by seeking to reduce cost of transporting timber for Royal Navy use. Survey by John Bowra. Made suitable for barges of 40 tons with 14 locks built, cut at Yalding, and wharves at Branbridge and Tonbridge. Completed in sections moving upstream. Locks built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches). Towing by men (no horse path). Tonbridge Wharf built on land called Outfield Mead, leased from George Walter with 2 houses – one house became The Six Bells Inn (or The Castle), the other demolished to make a road to the wharf. At Yalding, cut off 2 miles of river with cut on line of old road. Cost £11,500. No provision for Company to borrow money. Company made money from carriage plus merchanting (esp coal from Wales and NE, continuing into late 19C).

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Late 18c	Late 18c on Upper Navigation as a Company of Merchants.
1768	Upper Medway Company started importing iron and deals from Russia and Norway, plus buying and selling of chalk for lime burning (in kilns to be established at Tonbridge Wharf), plus road-stone trading.
1778	Concerns by Upper Medway Company about coal being stolen.
1780	Concerns about Upper Medway company staff being press-ganged (4 taken in Dec 1780).
1787	March 1787 proposals (led by George Burr) for Lower Medway Navigation, below Maidstone.
1792	**Lower Navigation Company established**
1792	Act for Lower Medway (below Maidstone) established Company of Proprietors for the Navigation of the Lower River Medway, with provision for lock to be built at Allington, Aylesford Bridge to be rebuilt and towpath to be made. Upper Medway company had clauses inserted giving it preferential tolls for their own craft. Thereafter, little contact between the two companies. Act established Trustees to run the navigation.
1792	Lock built by Lower Medway company at Allington following Act of Parliament for Lower Medway.
1798	Hasted describes trade passing through Maidstone. Refers to products from local corn mills, fulling mills, paper mills being sent to London. Also notes timber sent from Weald to Chatham Dock.
1800	Upper Medway Company had ceased trade in iron.
1802	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1802, for Lower Medway (below Maidstone). Repealed and replaced Act of 1792. Authorised reconstruction of Aylesford Bridge (and, according to Vine 1989, this allowed Allington Lock to be built). Replaced Trustees with the Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the River Medway (s2). 1802 Upper Medway Company began to deal direct with Norway for deals and fir timber and with pits for coal.
1802	In December 1802, Upper Medway Company bought a ship (Tonbridge and Medway) to carry coal from NE (7/8 profits to Company, 1/8 to the captain).
1803	Jarvis Wharf (40 yards above the Big Bridge, Tonbridge) in use in 1803 (according to witnesses in Christie's dispute in c1830).
1807	Upper Medway Company advertised they had fitted a barge to carry shop goods, ironmongery and goods in general from Maidstone to Tonbridge and places between.
1812	Upper Medway Company sold lime business to Thomas Boorman for £5,000.
1818	Two new coal depots opened by Upper Medway Company (for expanding coal business). One at Sevenoaks, one at Tunbridge Wells.
1824	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1824, to improve lower river (probably in response to construction of Thames & Medway Canal, which opened that year). Authorised raising £12,000 for improvements, including cuts. In fact, worked on new towpath from Maidstone to Millhall (Aylesford), new navigation arch through Aylesford Bridge and dredging of channel (removed shoals below Allington Lock). Cuts not made until 1842.
1830s	**Penshurst Canal Company Dispute**
1828–1836	Dispute between the Upper Medway Company and Mr James Christie (founder of the Penshurst Canal Company), who began to make the river navigable above Tonbridge, wanted preferential rates for his barges and asked to lease the Company. Made cut (the Straight Mile in 1829–30), but unfinished and Christie went bankrupt in 1832 (emigrated to America). His creditors continued the dispute and claimed the Company was a monopoly and illegally trading in coal. One result of this was that the Company contracted an engineer to suggest improvements to the navigation – some were carried out. On 7 March 1834, two petitions put to parliament, complaining about the navigation and asking for a bill to amend the Companys Act. As a result a warehouse for goods belonging to the public was built at Tonbridge and tolls were reduced. Bill was thrown out but introduced again in 1836. As a result tolls reduced again and subsequently a horse towing path commenced.

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1829–1830	Cuts (the Straight Mile and the Long Reach) made 1829–30 by Mr James Christie, founder of the Penshurst Canal Company, in attempt to make this part of the Medway navigable. Two locks planned. Workforce (100 excavators) based in Haysden. Work done March 1829 to winter and restarted March 1830, stopped shortly after. Never completed – only The Long Reach was filled with water. Cost £30,000. Christie bankrupted in 1832 and emigrated to America.
1829–1830	Stone Lock built within the Long Reach of the Penshurst Canal Company. Built of large blocks of stone (from Tonbridge Castle).
c1830	Before 1830, Upper Medway locks in a bad state of repair. All repaired. After two more years had to be repaired again. Christie's works blamed as having made the river run faster so the locks needed to be opened more often. 1830 Illustration shows the Allington site, with the north bank of the river on the left, some sort of masonry structure against this, then a fixed-level weir and then a single pair of timber gates against a spur of land (perhaps a lock island) with a channel to the right of this, between the spur of land and the south bank.
1830s	Hartlake Bridge (or Upper Lake Bridge) reportedly rebuilt due to a large load becoming stuck under it and demolishing some spans.
1833	Datestone on main lock house at Allington Lock.
1834	Upper Medway Company applied for Act to make towing paths and reservoirs (local farmers used the river for watering livestock and opposed the towpath). November 1834 Company AGM considered proposal towpath and reservoirs proposal and rejected it.
1834	A warehouse for goods belonging to the public was built at Tonbridge following two petitions put to parliament, complaining about the navigation and asking for a bill to amend the Upper Medway Companys Act.
1836	Tonbridge gasworks opened in 1836, alongside the Medway Wharf – brought extra trade to the Upper Medway Company.
1836	Upper Medway – Towing of barges described to Standing Committee looking at proposed Act of 1836. Three-man team pulled barges upstream from Maidstone using ropes attached to their bodies. Had to climb 100 fences. New gang took over at Branbridges. Paid £1 between the three.
1830s–40s	Tithe maps depict the various pound locks and weirs.
1840–1892	**Railway Competition and Decline**
1836–1842	Upper Medway – In 1836 South Eastern Railway authorised by Parliament, to run from Croydon through Tonbridge to Dover. Line opened 1842.
1842?	Towpath finally built for Upper Medway, following dispute with Penshurst Canal Company.
1843 – 1847	Attempt by Upper Medway Company to expand coal business and link up with SER. Borrowed £6,000 to finance this and to enlarge Tonbridge Wharf. Land for wharves also bought at Edenbridge, Penshurst, Marden, Godstone, Paddock Wood and Tunbridge Wells. Under agent Mr Bull, bought steam tug. Also bought steam locomotive supposedly to haul coal on South Eastern Railway (SER) line, but never allowed to by SER, who gave Mr Bull a better paid job. Negotiations in 1846 for SER to lease the navigation failed. Steam loco and tug sold in 1847.
1844	Upper Medway Company bought steam tug to tow barges, Tonbridge. Sold in 1847.
1844	Upper Medway – 25 September 1844, opening of Paddock Wood to Maidstone stretch of SER branch line, first part of Medway Valley Line.
1844	Edenbridge Wharf extended.
1844	Company built tramway linking Tonbridge wharf with SER line (ie Tonbridge Station).
1845	Upper Medway Company bought a locomotive to run on South Eastern Railway (SER) line. Built shed to house it and cottage for driver at Paddock Wood. Required certificate from Railway Company to run it. Navigation Company failed to get it and sold locomotive in 1847.
1845	Tunbridge Wells Wharf agent Mr G Wells appointed 1 June 1845. Sited near station at Jacks Wood Spring.

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1845	Wateringbury Wharf opened on land leased from Alderman Lucas.
1846	Tonbridge Wharf (in New Wharf Road) advertised to let in Maidstone Journal on 8 September 1846.
1847	Allington Lock rebuilt c 1847.
1853	Hartlake Bridge disaster (20 October). Wagon carrying 40 hop workers home came off the timber bridge. Inquest jury judged that Company should rebuild bridge in stone.
1856	18 June 1856, opening of Strood to Maidstone stretch of SER branch line, the Medway Valley Line.
c1860	Management of Castle Inn passed from Company to Kendward & Barrett of Hadlow Brewery.
1861	Marden Wharf discontinued.
1861	Tonbridge Wharf lease sold for £400.
1864	Godstone wharf given up.
1860s/70s	OS map 1st edition depictions of locks and weir 1860s/70s
1869	Company did not pay a dividend for first time in 100 years.
1869	Penshurst Wharf disposed of in July 1869. 1869
1869	Paddock Wood Wharf disposed of in July 1869.
1870s	Upper Medway problems with sewage being discharged into the river.
1871	Anchor Inn, Yalding sold for £350.
1872	Attempt to dispose of tramway to SER.
1874	Traffic in gunpowder halted (opposed by inhabitants of Maidstone).
1877	Tunbridge Wells coal depot sold to Mr Weare for £4,730.
1880	Allington Lock deepened and lengthened.
1880 – 1881	College Lock, at Maidstone, partially washed away by floods of 1880. Company forced to remove it after Allington Lock enlarged.
1881 – 1935	**Lower River Medway Division of Authority**
	Lower Medway authority divided between the CPNLRM (6 miles between Maidstone and Hawkwood) and the Medway Conservancy (Hawkwood to Sheerness).
1884	Creosote business started by Upper Medway Company. Passed to William Stow in 1990s and Company then bought its creosote from Beckton Gas Works.
1889	Kent County Council formed. Upper Medway Company assumed this relieved it of duty to maintain Hempstead Lane (which it built in 1740 to replace the old road that they removed in making the Yalding Cut). Courts ruled they should hand over responsibility to KCC with a capital sum of £300.
1889	South of England Telephone Company placed posts on the towpath between Tonbridge and Maidstone, allowing Upper Medway Company free use of a telephone.
1890s	Mr A Warwick (chief clerk of Upper Medway) account of working the barges from Tonbridge to Maidstone. Men engaged (hufflers) to haul, captain steered. Tonbridge to Yalding a day's haul through 11 locks. Yalding to Allington next day aiming to meet high tide. Round trip Tonbridge-Rochester about 1 week. London run was 3 weeks.
c1890	Upper Medway paraffin trade grew.
1891	Upper Medway hop traffic discontinued after 1891 season.
1892 – 1911	**Decline of Upper Navigation**
1892	Medway (Upper) Navigation Act renamed company as Medway (Upper) Navigation Company; legalised the £6,000 loan of the 1840s; raised capital and gave new Company powers to deal in various commodities.
1894	Upper Medway Steam dredger purchased (for £385 in instalments) to keep river channel clear and to sell gravel. Payments not kept up and returned in 1901. 1890s OS map 2nd edition depictions of locks and weirs
1896 – 1900	Mr H F Stephens appointed engineer to Upper Medway. Left in 1900.

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1898	Upper Medway Coal business (and creosote business) disposed of to Wm Stow. Included land at Yalding, Branbridge, Hartlake Wharf, plus coal pens and stabling at Tonbridge.
1899	Works to Allington Weir.
1900	Upper Medway boat, Pioneer, sold for £1600. Money used to buy Hobby and steel barges.
1902	Tonbridge Gas Company started getting its coal delivered by train.
1903	Upper Medway plans and estimates to increase size of locks and build wharf beside Slade Depot (of local council). Issue of £24,000 of preference shares to pay for this. Only £2,000 raised and ideas dropped.
1903 – 04	Locks in poor state (Branbridge Bridge and Hempstead lock in very bad state).
1904	Tonbridge Gas Company asked to pay tolls in advance to help pay for repairs to East Farleigh lock.
1904	Sites of Whitefriars Press and Mayhams Wharf sold.
1904	On 2 August 1904, tug Keston of Kaiser Steam Tug Company started towing barges from Yalding to Aylesford. By February 1905 tug company was suing navigation company for non-payment.
1904	Receiver appointed for Upper Medway in July.
1905	Upper Medway – By 1905 all (17) barges mortgaged in order to raise money: Alice, Lucy, Farleigh, Davenport, Wave, Industry, Rat, Spray, Resolution, Medway, Wellington, Victoria, Dauntless, Endeavour, Sarah, Kent, Ellen.
1906	Branbridges bridge rebuilt.
1907 – 23	OS map 3rd edition depictions of locks and weirs.
1907	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1907, to extend the jurisdiction of the Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the Medway and for other purposes. Extended jurisdiction of Lower Navigation to the College (p3 & s2).
1908	Hartlake Bridge rebuilt, paid for by local councils and landowners.
1909 – 10	Farleigh Lock collapsed in winter of 1909–10. River closed for 3 months. Precipitated end of the Company.
1911 – 34	Conservancy Board
1911	Conservancy Board created by Upper Medway Navigation and Conservancy Act (promoted by Kent County Council) and took over river on 12 June 1911, immediately closing it for repairs that cost £93,000. Reopened 1 September 1915.
1911 – 15	Conservancy Board works carried out: Rebuilt locks and weirs at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, and Town Lock. Removed locks and weirs at Branbridges, New and Child's Lock.
1915	Conservancy Board re-opened river to traffic on 1 September. In January 1916 first two toll paying barges passed from Maidstone to Tonbridge.
1929 – 1952	OS map 4th edition depictions of locks and weirs.
1934 – 1952	**River Medway Catchment Board**
1934	Upper Medway Navigation passed to control of River Medway Catchment Board, created under 1930 Land Drainage Act.
1930s	Major flood relief works to weirs on Upper Medway by River Medway Catchment Board. Included closing of Stoneham Lock, vertical gates at Farleigh, and Teston, radial gates at Sluice, weir channel added at Eldridges.
1935	**Lower Navigation Company – Change of Name** Medway Lower Navigation Act 1935, to amend the Acts relating to the Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the River Medway; to change their name; and for other purposes. Changed name to the Medway Lower Navigation Company (section 21).

3. Outline History

1935 – 37	Automatic flood control sluices (vertical gates) installed at Allington Lock as joint work by Upper and Lower Medway authorities. Opened 4 August Board engineer, C Cubley Crowther.
1940 – 41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the River Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund ('Tiny') Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1950	Last attempt to use Upper Medway for freight. Tug towing 200 ton barge passed to Tonbridge as experiment by Gas Board to supply coal to gas works. Idea abandoned.
1951	Yalding radial gates installed. Yalding radial gates (also known as Anchor Sluice), Medway Catchment Board about 1951, designed and built by the Board.
1952 – 68	Kent River Board
1952	Upper Medway Navigation passed to control of Kent River Board, established by the River Boards Act 1948 (11 & 12 Geo. 6., C. 32).
1958	New steel sluice gate at East Lock built by Kent River Board.
1968	Major flood in September 1968. Cannon Bridge carried away in floods.
1968 – 1974	Kent River Authority
1968	Upper Medway Navigation passed to control of Kent River Authority, established by the Water Resources Act 1963 (1963 C. 38).
1969 on	Medway Ports Authority
	Lower Medway Navigation passed to control of Medway Ports Authority, which replaced the Medway Conservancy and absorbed the Lower Medway Navigation Company.
1974	Upper Medway Flooding in February.
1974 – 1990	Southern Water Authority
1974	Upper Medway navigation passed to control of Southern Water Authority, established by Water Act 1973 (1973 c.37).
1980s	Radial gates installed by Southern Water (in-house design) at Oak Weir Lock, Porters Lock, East Lock and Town Lock. Rebuilt Teston Sluice.
1981	Leigh Flood Barrier completed. Large linear earth embankment with radial sluice gates at the west end of new channel (New Cut, running between a stretch of old river channel and the Long Reach). Old weir demolished with weir pool (the Tonbridge Lido) and part of old river channel infilled (area planted with woodland in 1987).
1988	Haysden Country Park opened, encompassing important historical features of, or associated with, the Medway above Tonbridge – includes the Straight Mile (of 1830), Stone Lock (1830), the Leigh Flood Barrier (1981), old river channels and part of the South Eastern Company Railway Line (1842).
1988–89	Allington Lock refurbished.
1990 – 96	National Rivers Authority
1990	Upper Medway navigation passed to control of National Rivers Authority, established by the 1989 Water Act.
1996 –	Selective dates and events exemplifying works since the EA's inception.
1996	Upper Medway navigation passed to control of Environment Agency, established by the 1995 Environment Act.
1997–99	New weirs at Sluice Weir Lock.
1998–99	Allington Lock Refurbishment: Consultant Atkins, Contractor Geoffrey Osborne Ltd (Chichester).
1998	New radial gate fitted to sluice at Sluice Weir Lock (widest single gate of its kind): Hunton Engineering, Maidstone.
2007	Works to Eldridges Weir, removing old penstocks.
2007	Yalding Lifting Bridge renewed.

3. Outline History

2008–10	Gates (x3) and hoist replaced at Allington: Hunton Engineering, Maidstone.
2009	Fish/canoe passes built at Porter's & Eldridge's locks.
2010	Fish/canoe pass built at East Lock.
2010	Allington Lock converted to hydraulic operation.
2011	New radial gate fitted to sluice on Eldridge's Weir by Hunton Engineering, Maidstone. Fish/canoe passes built at Town & Oak Weir locks.
2014	Fish/canoe pass built at Teston Lock.
2016	Official opening of enhancements to Tonbridge Wharf & riverside, 13 May.
2021–22	Sluice gates refurbished at Yalding Weir (aka Anchor Sluice).

More detailed site-specific timelines for lock and weir sites are found in Appendix A Gazetteer.

4. Historical Character

Environment Agency

Medway Navigation Heritage Audit

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4.1. Listing and Scheduling Designations

None of the lock and weir structures of the core areas of the current study have listed building status or scheduled status.[12] Three navigation features have listed building status, all at Allington – the 1833 Lock Keepers Cottage (listed in 2006 as Lock Cottage, GV Grade II), the associated small lock office (listed in 2006 as Toll House on Island at Allington Lock, GV Grade II) and No 3 Lock Cottage (listed in 1984 as Lock Cottage GV Grade II). The Medieval bridges at Farleigh (scheduled in 1928 as East Farleigh Bridge and listed GV Grade II in 1987) which lies adjacent to Farleigh Lock, Teston (scheduled in 1928 and listed Grade I in 1987) which lies close to Teston Lock and Twyford (scheduled in 1928 and not listed) which lies adjacent to Yalding Weir are significant historic structures with high heritage value.

However, apart from waterways owned by the Canal & River Trust, existing representation of historically and archaeologically important river navigation sites on local and national heritage registers (including the lists of scheduled monuments and listed buildings) remains patchy.[13] The lack of any designation does not necessarily indicate low heritage value or significance of the Medway's historic sites.

Farleigh Bridge, 2023

12. Historic England online National Heritage List for England (NHLE).
13. English Heritage/British Waterways Board Architectural Heritage Survey 1988–1995.

4.2. Historic Environment Information Resources

Relevant registers are the Historic England Archive (formerly the National Monuments Record (NMR) and the online Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) (formerly Kent Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)).

No 3 Lock Cottage, Allington Lock, 2023

Online Heritage Gateway has a generic record for the River Medway Navigation (HERR Uid:1341701). Kent HER has a larger number of map-linked entries for Medway sites than was the case at the time of the 2007 Heritage Audit, e.g., for Allington Lock (HER No TQ 75 NW 117), for a Second World War pillbox at Allington Lock (HER No. TQ 75 NW 200), for the Toll House on Island (HER No. TQ 75 NW 347) and a findspot record for a Palaeolithic handaxe found near Allington Lock before 1904 (HER No. TQ 75 NW 207).

On the Kent HER there are some 40,000 records of archaeological discoveries[14] including a considerable number of entries within a 500m corridor either side of the river navigation.[15]

It is also important to highlight the issue that Historic England Archive/HER coverage for industrial sites across England is patchy. Recognition of the archaeological remains of Britain's Industrial Revolution, much of it in the form of standing buildings (whether ruined or re-used) and hence to be entered onto HERs, has only slowly gained ground over the past 50 or so years (see above).

There are large numbers of non-designated archaeological sites along the Medway and around the lock sites, where there is potential for archaeological remains and deposits. Farleigh Lock and Yalding Weir are especially sensitive sites because of their proximity to the Medieval scheduled bridges.

14. Based on Kent HER data.
15. Heritage Audit 2007.

4.3. Defence of Britain Sites

During World War II, the River Medway was an important part of the home defences that were set up in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund ('Tiny') Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces. As a consequence, a line of pillboxes and other defence features were built beside the line of the river as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the 'GHQ stop-line').

Surviving examples of these features were recorded by the Defence of Britain Project, undertaken by the Council for British Archaeology between 1995 and 2002.[16] The results of this project are available online, and interrogation of their database indicates that large numbers of pillboxes survive along the length of the Medway (with some 107 entries recorded during the 2007 Heritage Audit).

16. Defence of Britain Archive archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/dob/

Pillbox at East Lock, 2023

4.4. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DLUHC 2023) and its accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) sets out Government planning policies for England and how these should be applied in locally-prepared plans to ensure that local plans are consistent with national policy.

The NPPF sets out Government policies for the historic environment in 16 paragraphs 195–214 Conserving and Enhancing the historic environment. Particular regard is given to the 'significance' of heritage assets, which has particular salience to the River Medway historic sites:

Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance…These assets…should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. (NPPF 16. Para 195).

In addition, the NPPF places great emphasis upon raising the quality of the built, natural and historic environment and this will be reflected in local plan policies affecting the River Medway.

4.5. Local Plans

Relevant Local Plans include the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (up to 2031), affecting the locks Allington, Farleigh, Teston, Hampsted and the Yalding Weir site, along with the former lock sites of College and Stoneham. The Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan (up to 2031 and under development) affects the locks Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East Porter's, Eldridges and Town and the former lock sites of Branbridges, New and Child's.

Both Borough Councils maintain online interactive maps that can be used to search for heritage assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas, ancient monuments, etc, along the Medway Navigation corridor.

The Maidstone Borough Council map link is:
services.maidstone.gov.uk/maps/astun.ishare.web/mymaidstone.aspx

The Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council map link is:
mapsat.tmbc.gov.uk/maps/heritageassets/

4.6. Conservation Areas

None of the Medway lock sites are conservation areas, but Town Lock lies just within Tonbridge Conservation Area and Yalding Weir (aka Anchor Sluice) lies at the western edge of Yalding Conservation Area.

4.7. Kent Historic Landscape Character Study

A Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation Study was undertaken in 1999 – 2001.[19] The resulting report is available on the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) website.[20] The study set out historic landscape types for Kent, based upon a desktop study of historic maps.

The landscape character of the Medway is underpinned by local geology. Hence, geologically, the heritage audit area broadly divides in two. From Tonbridge to Yalding the river runs through the Weald Clay of the Vale of Kent and from Yalding to Maidstone it cuts through the Lower Greensand ridge.

In the upper region, the highest lock is Town Lock, which stands within the post 1801 settlement area of Tonbridge, but close to the Medieval centre. The next five lock sites – Eldridges, Porters, Oak Weir, East and Sluice Weir – all lie on the Weald Clay and hence within the Medway Valley – an area of low gradients and broad flood plain. Amongst the irregularly shaped fields of the farmland here, there are occasional small areas of valley floor woodland (as to the north and west of Oak Weir, and south of Sluice Weir), gravel pit workings (to the south-west of Eldridges and west of Stoneham, and formerly to the south of Oak Weir and west of Branbridges). Further out from the river there are orchards of the Low Weald.

19. Produced by Oxford Archaeological Unit for Kent County Council and English Heritage.
20. archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/kent_hlc_2014/downloads.cfm

4. Historical Character

From Yalding to Maidstone, the river runs in a narrower floodplain with a more defined river valley and undulating landscape, as it cuts through the Lower Greensand. Here there is also a great density of settlement areas flanking the river, both pre 1801 and post 1801, the latter including industrial growth associated with river and railway.

At the junction of these two areas, Yalding Weir (at the south end of Yalding Cut) stands adjacent to the Medieval river crossing of Twyford Bridge and the seventeenth-century Anchor Inn. Hampstead Lock (at the north end of the cut) is adjacent to a later bridge, with industrial growth around it.

Teston and Farleigh locks are firmly in the narrower river valley, flanked by large orchard areas of the Greensand fruit belt. Both are next to ancient river crossings – with their two scheduled Medieval bridges.

The lost College Lock was close to the pre 1801 settlement core of Maidstone, immediately adjacent to the scheduled and listed buildings of 'The College'. However, beyond this, Allington is at the north edge of the post 1801 development of the town, amongst parkland associated with Allington Castle.

Town Lock, Tonbridge, 2023

Allington Lock cut, with 1 and 2 lock cottages in the background

5. Heritage Audit

Environment Agency

Medway Navigation Heritage Audit

2007 Revised 2024

5.1. Introduction

From the 17 identified navigation sites[21] the 2007 survey recorded 174 components, broken down as below.

Bridge	10	Lock Office	5
Canoe Pass	1	Mooring Bollards[22]	10
Cut	1	Paddle Gear (ground)	12
Fish pass	1	Paddle Gear (head)	10
Lay-by	20	Paddle Gear (middle)	1
Lock-pound	15	Paddle Gear (tail)	10
Lock furniture	10	Pillbox	7
Lock gates (head)	10	Signage	1
Lock gates (middle)	1	Towpath	2
Lock gates (tail)	10	Weir	11
Lock house	5	Weir	6
Lock island	9	Weir	6

21. Made up of 11 sites representing the 10 core areas, plus 6 further navigation sites (see section 1).
22. The '10' entry here refers not to the number of actual mooring bollards, but to the number of bollard component entries on the 2007 audit database. Within each entry a summary description is given of the bollard types present at each lock. Hence, for example, Allington Lock has in excess of 50 individual bollards, but they are described within a single component entry. The upper locks have between 10 and 20 bollards flanking each lock chamber and varying numbers of the 1912 barge bollards (typically 4 to 6 at each site).

5.2. Pound Locks

Amongst the group, there are physical remains representing the development of the pound lock structures over 270 years from their introduction on the river in the 1740s up to and including major rebuilds of the late twentieth century and repairs in the 21st century.

Although other authors have suggested that the original 1790s Allington Lock was of the flash type[23] re-examination of evidence cited for this interpretation suggests that, like the other Medway locks, it has always been a pound lock. An engraving of c1830 by Tombleson shows part of the Allington site, with the north bank of the river to the left. Against this bank stands a masonry structure, to the right of which, in turn, is a fixed-level weir, a single pair of wooden gates, a spur of land, a channel of water and then the south bank of the river. It is the depicted gate structure that has previously been interpreted as a flash lock. However, the presence of the channel to the right implies that what is actually being depicted is the weir complex, incorporating a gated sluice against the lock island (all located on the 1840s Allington Tithe map by a single line). The pound lock itself (which, with the 1833 lock house, is clearly depicted on the 1840s Allington Tithe map) is presumably 'out of shot' to the right. Hence the c1847 'rebuild' at Allington was presumably the refurbishment of a pound lock rather than replacement of a flash lock.[24]

23. See Vine 1989, plate 98.
24. Note also that OS labelling of the weirs as a 'lock' might be taken to imply that these structures were used as flash locks. However, this seems unlikely given the presence of the pound lock – and the OS continued to label the weir this way from 1936 even though the weir structure in place from that date was certainly designed for flood control and not for the passage of boats.

The current appearance of Allington Lock (with concrete chamber, lock-sides of concrete paviours and tarmacadam, lines of iron bollards, a variety of fence types, and hydraulic operation) stems from the late 1990s and 2010 and 2020–1 refurbishment works, presenting a very different visual character to that of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, fabric from the earlier formation was retained behind the concrete cladding.[25]

The earliest visible pound lock remains on the navigation are probably the fragments at Branbridges and New Lock, which were abandoned by the Conservancy Board in 1911–15, although on current evidence it is not possible to give an actual date for these fragments. Furthermore, all the locks may have earlier fabric surviving behind the concrete cladding; the substantial refurbishment at Allington having clearly established such survival there.

All the pound locks from Farleigh to Town Lock appear to be essentially the 1911–15 fabric, with a variety of repairs and alterations. However, Stoneham has the least altered form of the 1911–15 rebuild, owing to its abandonment in the 1930s. Its concrete structure is slowly decaying and will eventually require conservation work if it is to be preserved.

Allington Lock, engraving, c1830 (Tombleson)

25. Scott Wilson KP 2000, section 4.4

Undated ‘Scene with Locks’, tentatively identified as Eldridge’s Lock, prior to the 1911–15 rebuild. The image shows the typical appearance of Upper Navigation locks at the end of the 19th century (Maidstone Museum Archives).

Lock Gates

The lock gates divide between beam-operated (18 gate pairs surviving) and hydraulically operated (3 gate pairs). All the gates are of timber. The heavy wear and tear on lock gates means that they are subject to a programme of repeated repairs and replacement. The date of the last re-sheet or replacement is not always clear. Six gate pairs had dates on the beams, which were all between 1987 and 1999.

Gate Paddle Gear

Allington Lock (now preserved in-situ following mechanisation) tail gate paddle gear was spoked-wheel operated with white-painted indicator rods, a form that (in 2007) precisely matched those used on the upper Thames.[26] The paddle gear of the other locks is a mixture of 1911–15 gear and later replacement. All the tail gates have direct worm drive paddles from 1911–15 (although often only 2 or 3 are still in place rather than the original 6). The head gates at Sluice Weir Lock, Oak Weir Lock, East Lock, Porter's Lock, and Eldridge's Lock retain their 1911–15 open geared drive. Those at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead and Town Lock have been replaced with enclosed-gear drive paddles. Early photographs show that both the head and tail gates of the upper navigation locks had simple sluice rod paddle gear.[27]

26. Trueman, 2004
27. See for example Maidstone Museum, MC158 (Farleigh Lock).
28. Neither feature could be inspected.
29. See Scott Wilson KP 2000.

Ground Paddle Gear

The gear from the 1911–15 rebuild was set in recesses at the heads of the Upper Navigation locks. These recesses are mostly still in place, although that at Farleigh has been filled in. The supporting bracket for the gear survives in situ at Teston. The gear itself remains in situ at Oak Weir and East, though lacking its top cover, whilst at Town it is complete. It is presumed that the associated culverts, and possibly the paddles that they operated, also date from 1911–15.[28]

At Allington, the ground paddle gear is recent. However, the culverts of the early lock remain in place - that for the tail chamber disused but preserved behind the concrete lining.[29]

View of the tail end of College Lock in the 1870s with Maidstone bridge in the distance. The photograph records the enduring simplicity of form of the Upper Navigation's locks (Maidstone Museum Archives, OMRS087).

Mooring Bollards

The locks have a variety of forms of mooring bollard of varying dates. There are no clear survivals from prior to the 1911–15 rebuild and the evidence of early photographs suggests what few bollards were used were simple timber posts (both at Allington and the upper locks). One clearly identifiable group of bollards are the barge posts installed in the 1911–15 rebuild and still largely in place (except at Allington), that are stamped, **Arnold East Peckham 1912.**

East Farleigh–1912 bollard (MED/MT SV104188).

Lock Furniture

The increased quantity of railings at the lock sites (particularly at Allington) is a late twentieth century phenomenon. Early photographs suggest that for most of the history of the navigation the locks had no railings at all. In its 1911–15 rebuild the Conservancy Board strung chains between iron posts on the gate walkways (as seen on contemporary photographs).

Lock Islands

The lock islands are a mixture of the artificial (created by the lock cuts), and naturally occurring islands of varying sizes utilised by the lock and weir builders. Of the latter some were modified in size and shape in the 1911–15 Upper Navigation rebuild. The Allington Lock site was considerably narrowed in 1935–6 in relation to the new sluices.

5.3. Weirs

Weir structures are subject to greater wear and tear than other components of lock sites. Partly as a result of this, and partly in response to a history of developing new (and safer to operate) technologies, weirs have undergone more frequent repairs and rebuilds than locks.

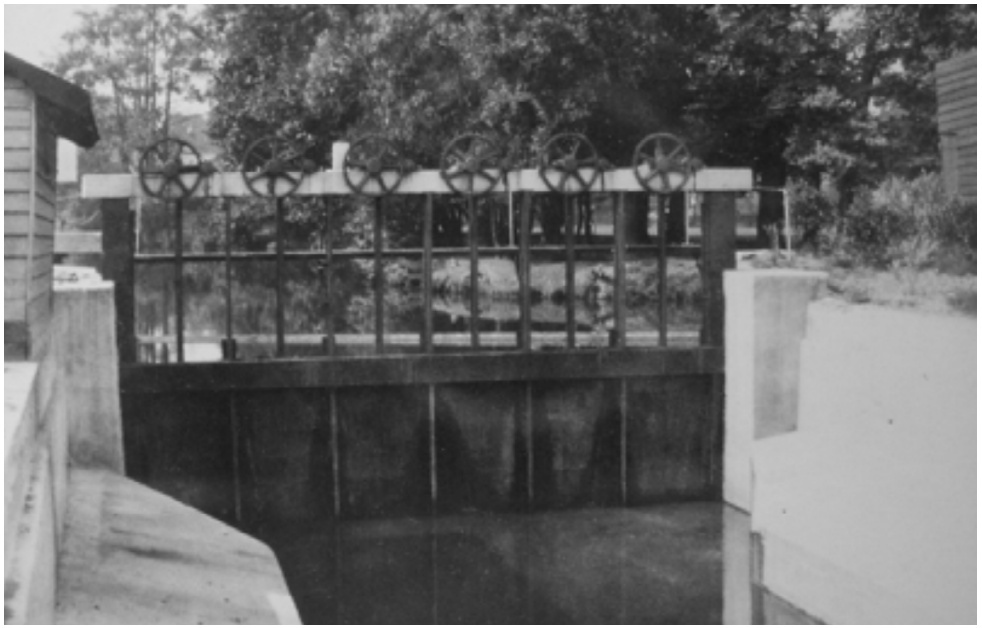
Few depictions have been located of the pre 1911 weirs. The 1830 engraving of Allington suggests a gated weir at that time and certainly the pre 1936 twin weir at Allington was of this form.[30] The current weir at Allington is the 1936 concrete Modernist structure that houses a trio of vertical gates.

The early engravings of Farleigh possibly show gated sluices beside fixed weirs, a couple of early photographs of Teston give a glimpse of the fixed weir and an 1870s photograph of the College station shows a simple set of vertical sluices.[31] The 1911–15 Conservancy Board works programme saw installation of standardised vertical gates at all of its lock sites. Several have since been replaced with radial gates, beginning in 1933 at Sluice Weir (which was an early radial gate installation for the UK). The Yalding radials were installed in the 1950s, and are still in place. A major programme of installing radial gates came in the 1980s – with Oak, East, Porters and Town Lock each being given a single radial. The 1930's sluice pair was replaced by a single radial gate and broad crested Weir in the 1990's with a tilting control gate added to the crest of the Weir in 2007. Vertical gates replaced other Upper Navigation weirs on the Medway. Those at Farleigh and Teston were replaced in the 1930s, although the current structures reportedly date from the 1960s and 1980s.

College Lock and Weir (of simple sluice gates). Note building on right with notice board displaying Upper Navigation Tolls (Maidstone Museum Archives, OMRS089).

30. Vine 1989 and the photographs of the 1935–6 Allington sluice construction work held by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.
31. Maidstone Museum Archives OMRS089

The 1911–15 sluices at Eldridges remained in place until 2007, when they were finally replaced with three new penstocks. The single survival of the 1911–15 gates appears to be at Yalding Weir, the 1950s radials having been built to one side of the existing structure. Of the various fixed weirs, the long stepped weir at Town Lock appears to retain the form of the 1911–15 build.



View of Town lock new weir of 1911–15 (Environment Agency).

Modernist vertical gate sluice structure under construction at Allington in 1936 (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership album, A168).

5.4. Lock Houses

There are only a handful of lock houses associated with the Medway locks. At Allington, the busiest of the locks, the Lower Navigation Company invested in a series of houses. Its original 1833 house was built adjacent to the lock (possibly as a navigation office) and its mid-19th century house adjacent to the weir. The late-19th century pair of semi-detached houses was presumably associated with the large 1881 expansion of the lock. All are of architectural interest.

The majority of the Upper Navigation Company's locks seem not to have had a lock house. The one clear early exception is East Lock. For this lock site, Eel House can be seen on early photographs and maps, beginning with the 1842 Hadlow Tithe, and its foundations survive on site. A photograph from the time of the 1911–15 rebuild shows a large brick house with hipped tiled roof and substantial chimneys in its end walls. A lock house was also eventually built at Farleigh; this post-war house remains in use, although not by a lock keeper and screened from the river (in 2023) by trees.

1833 lock house seen in 1936 (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership album, B20)

5.5. Lock and Toll Offices

The small mid-19th century Gothic building at Allington is the only lock toll office proper on the lock sites, although it is no longer used for this purpose (the 1833 house currently acts as an office and, according to its list description, originally acted as a navigation office). In addition there are late-20th century plain brick sheds at Oak, East, Porter's and Eldridges; used for storage and for housing telemetry equipment. However, there have previously been other buildings at the locks. For example, an 1870s photograph of College Lock shows a 2-storey brick building bearing a sign displaying the Navigation Company's tolls.[32] At Teston, as seen on a 1920s photograph,[33] there was a small timber building (with signage) that presumably acted as an office.

32. Maidstone Museum, OMRS089.
33. Maidstone Museum, MC152.

Lock house at East Lock seen during 1911–15 rebuild programme (Environment Agency)

5.6. Other

Canoe and fish passes

There are modern passes at the following: Sluice Weir Lock (1997–99), Anchor Sluice/Yalding Weir (canoe portage renewed 2008), Porter's Lock (2009), Eldridge's Lock (2009), Town Lock (2010), East Lock (2010), Oak Weir Lock (2011), Teston Lock (2014), East Farleigh Lock (fish pass only 2018), Allington Lock (fish pass only 2022).

Boundary Markers

No boundary markers were noted during the study, although a run of 'posts' is marked on early OS maps for Town Lock. The area where these are indicated was not accessed.

Bridges

The bridges associated with the locks are either footbridge or access bridges. They include the remains of two lifting bridges from the 1911–15 rebuild, at East Lock and Town Lock, the latter including part of the lifting mechanism.

Lay-bys

Lay-bys were built at all the locks in the late-20th century; either a mixture of steel piling and concrete against the bank or offshore landing stages. Landing stages were renewed or built at Sluice Weir, Eldridges, Town and Porter's (all in 2007) and at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Oak Weir and East (all in 2009).

Pillboxes

The River Medway was extremely important as a defence line during World War II, when many concrete pillboxes were built along or close to the river. Many of these remain in place and six were included within the 2007 site assessments. They are at Allington, Teston, Yalding Weir (or Anchor Sluice), Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, and East Lock.

Towpath

The former towpath is now the Medway Valley Walk.[34]

Yalding Cut

This canal cut was built following the 1740s Act. In its current form it is lined with a mixture of steel piling and stonework.

34. Reynolds, K; Hood, A & Eagles, H 1996.

6. Conclusion

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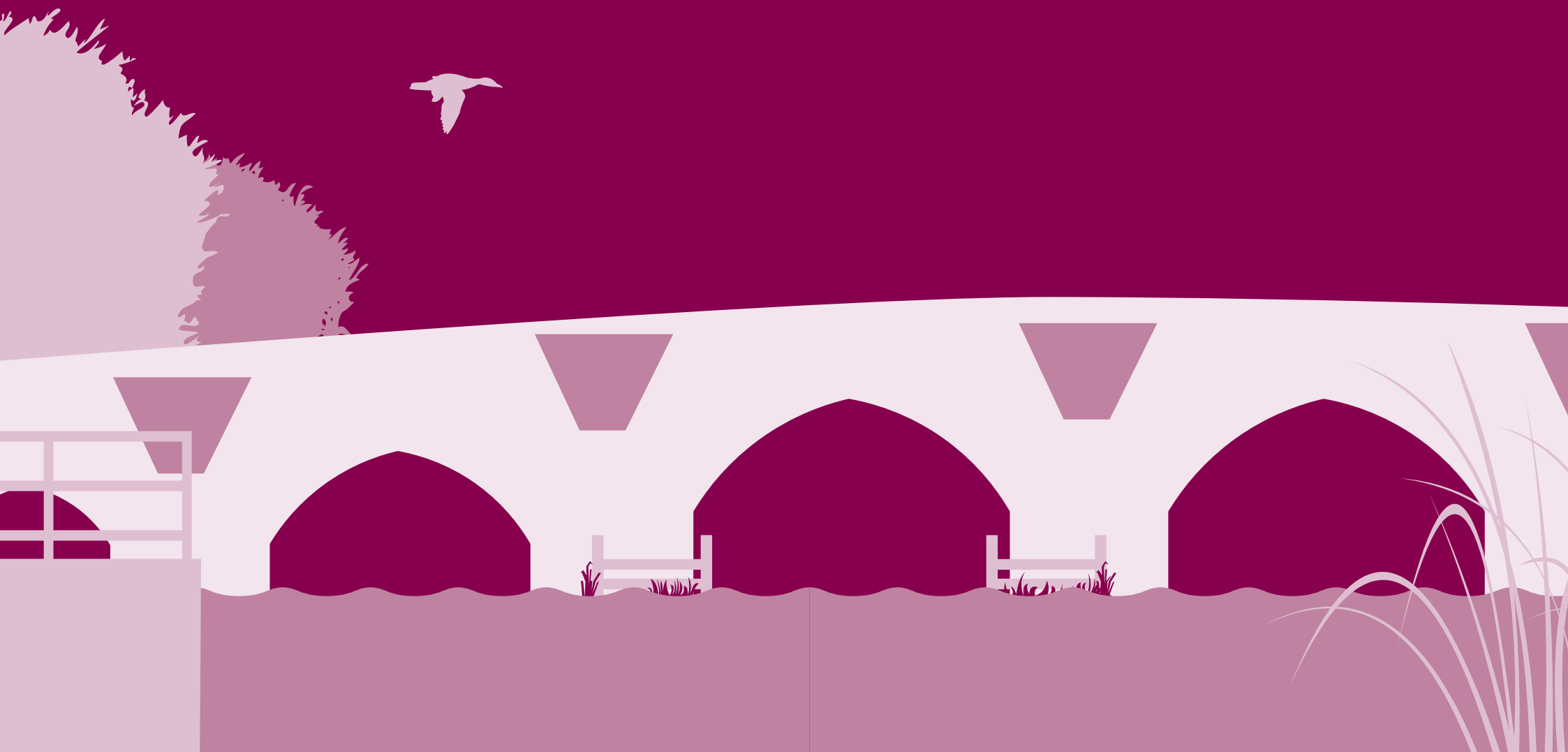

6. Conclusion

6.1. Historical and Archaeological Importance

The Medway has always been navigable between Maidstone and the sea. In the Medieval period it was used extensively as a transport route. Along with other inland navigations it played an important role in Britain's economic development from the 17th to the 19th centuries. It was that development that drove the improvement of the upper river in the 18th century and allowed it to play a fundamental role in Britain's Industrial Revolution and beyond. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries numbers of leisure craft increased and steadily replaced commercial traffic and the non-tidal river continues to be an important route for the inland waterways' leisure business.

The Historic England Canal and River Navigations National Overview (2017) only gives the Medway an Overall Heritage Value score of 1 (low), partly owing to its lack of designated heritage assets. In 2017 the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) listed some 280 designated heritage assets across 34 river navigations. 98 of these 280 heritage assets were locks, with a small handful of weirs and sluices included. None of the designations were on the Medway Navigation. Despite this, the Medway has heritage significance as a medium scaled river navigation, not as impressively engineered as the Thames, the Trent, the Severn or the Weaver, but larger than others such as the Avon, the Kennet, the Don, Chelmer & Blackwater and so on.

Over time, river navigations have been constantly improved and had their infrastructure and equipment upgraded or replaced. The Medway is no exception, and its 1911–15 improvement campaign saw the construction of mass-concrete locks with distinctive gate paddle gearing; both historic features that survive on many of the lock sites today.

These improvements came late in the day, in terms of waterway history; the last canal built in England, the New Junction Canal, opened in 1905, by which time many inland waterways were in serious decline.

The use of concrete in the 1911–15 Medway lock chambers, and on structures like Allington Sluices, is noteworthy. Concrete was used in the 1920s re-engineering of large locks and weirs on the Trent Navigation and again in the 1930s modernisation of the Grand Union Canal. As time moves forwards such formations (much like the 1970s lock control cabins and traffic lights on the Aire & Calder Navigation) create the heritage of the future and begin to acquire historic value. A consistent programme of improvement or modernising works along a waterway can also result in the works having group value.

It is important that all the navigation features of the Medway are seen as a group. The various structures, earthworks and buried remains of locks, lock houses, weirs and other features dating from the 18th century through to the present have importance as an accumulated history of past construction, development, and usages. These heritage assets contribute to an enhancement of our understanding of the history of the River Medway as well as to a better understanding of river navigations at a national level. There is archaeological value in the remains of abandoned locks and there is surviving early fabric behind the modern lining of the operational locks. Taken singly and variously, the Medway's lock and weir sites (whilst in no way historically outstanding) should be recognised for owning some heritage and archaeological value in their own right.

6.2. The Character of the Medway Navigation

A key point in describing the historic character of the Medway is the contrast between the Upper Navigation Company's locks, dating from the 1740s, and the Lower Navigaton Company's Allington site, dating from the 1790s. The locks were only run as a single entity from the mid-20th century and so have quite different sequences of development and historical appearance.

Essentially, the particular character of the Upper Medway Navigation is the combination of modestly sized locks and predominantly rural setting. Historically, the upper locks were simply laid out with a minimum of furniture and simple operating gear – balance beams and sluice rods on the early gates and balance beams and standardised windlass-operated gear on the post 1911–15 navigation.

They contrast with the large and complex site at Allington Lock. Serving as a tidal lock, and located on the edge of the county town of Maidstone, Allington generally experienced a greater volume of traffic, a fact reflected in the 1880s expansion of the lock to three sets of gates and by the presence of three lock houses. It is perhaps also reflected in the more recent developments at Allington, with major refurbishment works at the lock at the very end of the 20th century and in the early years of the 21st century that have given the site a quite different appearance to that of the previous 150 years.

A further distinction to make is in the setting between the lock sites immediately west of Maidstone, situated on the Lower Greensand (Farleigh and Teston) and those in the Weald Clay area, with their contrasting landscapes. Farleigh and Teston also stand out for their proximity to Medieval bridges, and Farleigh for its village setting.

Farleigh Lock and Weir, seen from the medieval bridge (from W) (MED/MT/SV103868).

6. Conclusion

In the Weald Clay area, Hampstead Lock and Yalding Weir, whilst not urban are close to settlements and industrial areas. By contrast, Sluice Weir Lock has a rural setting but is within easy walking distance of East Peckham. Oak Weir, East, Porter's and Eldridges have a more isolated feel in the open landscape of the Medway Valley.

The visual appearance of the locks has changed quite considerably in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The construction of large flood gates is perhaps the most obvious change – with the large radial and vertical gates of the 20th century offering greater flood control, but standing out in the local landscape much more strikingly than did their predecessors. A more superficial change, but equally striking is the increase in peripheral lock-side furniture largely related to modern usage and health & safety requirements. Examples include the large orange weir booms, the Kee-Klamp railings on lock islands and lock-sides, and the wide variety of modern signage.

Finally, in addition to the wealth of Medway Navigation archive material held in public archives, in 2021 the Environment Agency had its own records scanned to create a searchable database; now stored on a Microsoft Sharepoint site, in line with Agency policies.

The revised Medway Navigation Design Handbook that this Heritage Audit accompanies is evidence of the care that the Agency takes in both maintaining its lock sites to modern standards and conserving historic features where possible.

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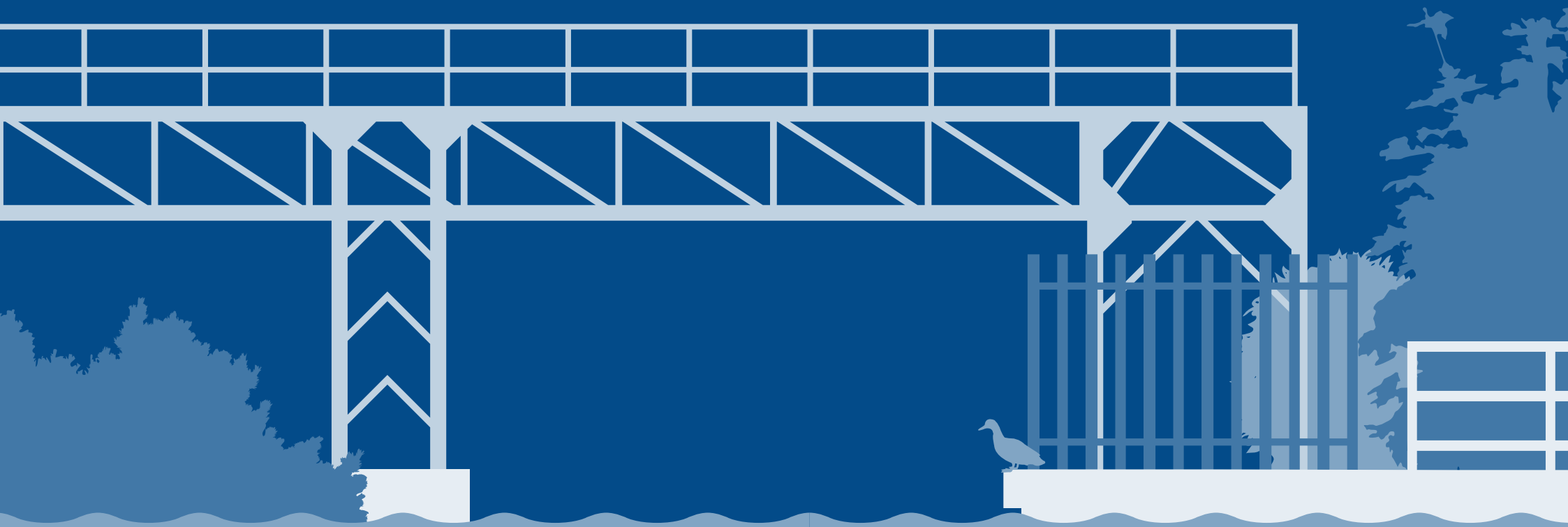
Medway Navigation Heritage Audit

2007 Revised 2024



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Building Stones of England: Kent, 2023, Historic England.

Acknowledgements

The following provided information and comments for the **2007 Heritage Audit** and are included here for consistency and courtesy:

Joshua Peacock (NEAS Landscape Architect), who co-ordinated the Environment Agency's input to the project and prepared the base maps used for the assessment maps.

David Read (Kent Area Principal Engineer), Environment Agency.

Tom McManus (Navigation Team Leader), Environment Agency.

The Navigation Officers and Lock Keepers, Environment Agency.

Steve Kemp (NEAS archaeologist).

Clare Caless and **Giles Guthrie** of the Maidstone Museum and Bentlif Art Gallery (several photographs from the museum's archives are reproduced courtesy of the museum).

Staff of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.

Staff of the Kent Record Office at Maidstone plus local studies libraries at Tonbridge and Maidstone.

Chris Fox of Tonbridge & Maling Borough Council.

Ian Coulson, Historical Advisor at Kent County Council (in relation to Here's History Kent web site images).

Liz Dyson, Heritage Conservation Group, Kent County Council.

Carol Morgan of the Panel for Historic Engineering Works.

Local Authority planning staff for Maidstone and for Tonbridge & Malling.

In addition to the above, the following provided information and assistance for the **2023 revision** and updating of the Heritage Audit:

Richard Glen, Senior Landscape Architect, Environment Agency

Jonathan McArthur, Navigation Technical Advisor, Upper Medway Waterways Team

David Payne, Navigation Technical Advisor, Upper Medway Waterways Team

Disclaimer

Appendix
Gazetteer

Environment Agency

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Gazetter

The Gazetteer is aligned with and uses the criteria contained in the comprehensive Canal and River Navigations National Overview: An appraisal of the heritage and archaeology of England's present and former inland navigable waterways, Historic England, 2017.

The gazetteer assesses each lock site in terms of the following:

Overall Heritage Value

A rating based upon a sliding scale:

5 – Exceptional
4 – High
3 – Medium/High
2 – Medium
1 – Low
0 – Insignificant

Summary Description

A description of the main features of each, lock, weir and other accompanying structures, linked to photographs taken in 2023 and 2024.

Setting

The Medway lock and weir sites have some heritage and archaeological value in their own right; a sensitivity reinforced by their context and setting. Each site is given a short description of the landscape character and surroundings in which it is experienced (which may be positive or negative). In 2007 the sites were categorized in terms of four Character Areas: Victorian Delight (Allington), Ragstone bridges (East Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead), Wetlands (Yalding, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's) and Industrial heart (Town). Essentially, but with some changes, these Character Areas prevail.

Significance

An assessment of the heritage significance of each site, linked to its setting and including:

Elements of considerable significance
Elements of some significance

Site History

A summary of the known history of each site.

Timeline

Important dates in the history of each site.

Allington Lock

Overall Heritage Value

3 – Medium/High

Summary Description

Allington is the largest and most complex of the Medway lock sites. Built by the Lower Medway Navigation Company and maintained by them for most of its history, it has a sequence of development that is distinct from the other Medway locks.

The current appearance of Allington Lock (with concrete chamber, three sets of wooden gates, walkways of concrete paviours and macadam, lines of iron bollards, different variety of fence types, and automated operation) (1–4) stems from the refurbishments in the late 1990s and in 2020–21 – giving a very different character to the appearance of the lock in the 19th and 20th centuries. Fabric from the earlier lock survives behind the concrete facing of the lock chamber.

The fine modernist concrete sluice structure of Allington Sluices (5,6) with its three vertically lifting gates dates from 1936 and was formally opened in August 1937. A mounted plaque celebrates its official opening (7). The sluice gates (which are 10m wide and 4.5m tall) and hoists were replaced by Hunton Engineering in 2008–10.

Three lock houses associated with the site retain exterior characteristics of their various build dates – the main lock house from 1833 (8,9) (listed GV Grade II, although its Tudor-style upper chimneys have been removed), the house adjacent to the weir (10) from the mid-19th century (listed GV Grade II) which bears a record of flood waters carved into its stonework, (11) and the pair of semi-detached houses from the late 19th century (12).

Other features are the mid-19th century Gothic-style stone-built toll house (now the Little Old Toll House Café) (13) (listed GV Grade II), and the 1940–41 concrete Type FW3/28A anti-tank gun pillbox on the south bank of the river opposite the weir (14).

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Setting

Allington lies in the Lower Greensand river valley in a partially wooded green corridor on the northern edge of Maidstone. Despite its proximity to main roads and the urban fringe, its tree-lined riverside (with linear moorings) lends it a semi-rural character, with views of the site from the river as well as cross-river views from both banks. Its character changes with the ebb and flow of tides and it is at Allington that man-made river navigation meets natural river.

Significance

Allington Lock is an historic site on the Medway Navigation and is unusual (for an inland waterway) for having three sets of lock gates for tidal working. The lock has been heavily modernized, but retains (now disused) shrouded, wheel-operated gate gear on its bottom gates. Allington Sluices is an impressive 1930s structure and has similarities with large inter-war sluice and weir formations on the River Trent Navigation. The cluster of Navigation-related buildings, old and new, on either side of the lock complete an important scene of accumulated history on the Medway Navigation.

Elements of considerable significance: Listed Lock House (EA office) /No.3 Lock House/former toll house/1930s sluices.

Elements of some significance: Modernised lock/semi-detached lock houses /Type FW3/28A pillbox.

Site History

Allington Lock is the tidal river lock of the Medway Navigation. It was built by the Lower Medway Navigation Company following an act of parliament in 1792. It was apparently rebuilt in c1847 and deepened and lengthened in 1880. Rebuilding and refurbishments were carried out in 1989 and 1999 and conversion of the lock to fully automatic operation took place in 2010. The most recent lock refurbishment, which involved re-facing the concrete chamber, was in 2020–21. The original weir complex was modified before 1865, and refurbished in 1899. The current weir (with automatic flood control sluices) was completed in 1937. The main lock house (EA office) has a datestone of 1833, the lock house adjacent to the weir dates from the mid-19th century and the pair of semi-detached lock houses on the south bank date from the late 19th century.

The layout of the site can be traced on maps from the Allington Tithe survey of the 1840s to the Ordnance Survey (OS) 4th edition map, surveyed in 1936–38. On the Tithe map, the pound lock (with its gates drawn by the surveyor pointing the wrong way) stands between the south bank of the river and the western end of a long narrow island. A house stood south of the lock. The weir ran from the eastern tip of the island to the north bank. At the time of the OS 1865 survey, the form of the island and pound lock was apparently unchanged. Posts are indicated flanking the lock, a small building is shown on the island (level with the head gates) and the lock house appears to have gained a small western extension. On the OS map the weir is shown in greater detail than on the Tithe, and is mis-labelled Lock; there appear to have been two gated sluices either side of a small island or buttress, the larger sluice to the north.

By 1895 there had been substantial change at Allington. Although the OS map shows the same basic layout, the lock had been extended to the west and a third set of gates added. The pair of semi-detached lock houses to the south had also been built. Other changes are a longer set of outbuildings to the main lock house and the addition of what appears to be a footbridge behind the weir sluices.

There was little change by 1906–07. Further outbuildings had been added to the main and semi-detached lock houses and there was a new small building at the southeast corner of the site. In addition, a Wharf is labelled on the south bank opposite the weir sluices. However, the 1936–38 OS survey shows substantial change, with the weir completely rebuilt (with the current vertical gates, still mis-labelled Lock) and the lock island cut back severely on its north side. There are also further additions to the lock house outbuildings and three buildings are shown at the southeast corner of the site.

A series of drawings and photographs of the site from the 1830s to the present day put flesh on this cartographic skeleton.

An illustration of c1830 (Vine, 1989) shows part of the site, with the north bank of the river on the left, with a masonry structure against this. Adjacent to this is a fixed-level weir and then a single pair of timber gates against a spur of land (presumably the lock island), with a channel to the right of this between the spur of land and the south bank. Several writers have interpreted this illustration as showing a flash lock. However, the presence of the channel to the right implies that what is actually depicted is the weir complex (as located by a line drawn on the 1840s Allington Tithe map) incorporating a gated sluice. The pound lock itself (which, with the 1833 lock house, is depicted on the Allington Tithe) is assumed to be to the right and not visible. Hence the c1847 'rebuild' was presumably a refurbishment of a pound lock rather than a replacement of a flash lock (the OS mis-labelling of the sluices as a Lock might be taken to imply that these structures were used as flash locks, although this is unlikely, given the presence of the pound lock – and the OS continued to mis-label the 1936 sluices this way (even though that structure was clearly designed for flood control and not for the passage of boats).

No early pictorial evidence is known for the appearance of the pound lock prior to its 1880 extension. However, the extended lock is shown on several paintings by William Lionel Wyllie, dating to around 1905. These busy views show the island with light tree coverage and wooden fencing, a pointed downstream nosing the island, red and white painted balance beams to the lock gates, horizontal timber cladding to the lock chamber, white-painted timber mooring bollards, a weather vane on a tall pole on the island, and elegant gas-lamps along the south side of the lock. The lock-side appears unpaved and the lock house and the Malta Inn are also visible.

The inter-war appearance of the lock is seen in two undated tinted photographs and a 1926 photograph. Essentially, the scene remains unchanged from the 1905 paintings by Wyllie.

Other details are also clear from these photographs. The lock gate walkways had simple iron post fencing, whilst the fencing from the lock to the weir and in front of the lock house was square-section timber strapped to wooden posts; there was plain timber signage beside the toll house and beside the weir; the lock-sides look to be tarmac, and the grassed areas appear well-maintained. Windlass-operated ground paddle gear can also be seen adjacent to the middle gates. On the 1926 photograph, the land around the pair of semi-detached houses was quite wooded, the houses were fronted by a timber shed and lifebuoy housing, and their boundary wall was topped by ball finials.

Photographs taken during the course of the 1936 sluices re-build show the form of the lock little altered, with its timber-lined chamber, painted balance beams, timber bollards, weather vane, and windlass-operated ground paddle gear. The photographs also show a selection of restrained timber signage. However, some changing detail is apparent. Lock-side fencing had changed to horizontal poles through timber uprights, and the poles and wires of an electricity supply are apparent. These photographs also show the lock island being cut back on its north side with piling forming its new edge, and a temporary bridge from the western end of the island to the north bank. A photograph of 1982 shows the same fencing and the same ground paddle gear, together with a raised kerb edging the lock chamber. The tarmac lock-sides appear in poor condition.

Record photographs of the 1998–99 refurbishment reveal the lock construction details - with its mainly brick walls, topped with stone coping, and masked by vertical timbers carrying horizontal planking; a brick invert with brick cills, and brick and stone-edged paddle culverts (included a disused and back-filled culvert near the tail gates). Much of this fabric was apparently retained behind new concrete cladding. The refurbishment also incorporated ducts for future conversion to hydraulic operation, which was carried out in 2010.

The 1830 engraving described earlier shows the Allington weir complex as stone-built, incorporating a fixed weir and a gated sluice. OS map coverage shows that two gated sluices were in place by 1865 and this arrangement seems to have survived through to the 1936 rebuild, although a memorial plaque just visible on a photograph from 1935 includes the date 1899 (the rest is illegible) implying that some refurbishment took place at that date.

One of the (assumed 1920s) undated tinted photographs shows these sluice gates, as do several photographs taken in 1935 just prior to their replacement. Some photographs from a 1930 repair show the gates in further detail. Hence it is clear that the pre-1936 weir consisted of two pairs of large gate sluices separated by a substantial brick buttress. The wooden gate frames of these sluices incorporated vertically lifting sluice doors set between cast iron uprights.

The current sluices were built in 1936 by joint arrangement between the Lower Medway Navigation Company and the River Medway Catchment Board. Formally opened in 1937, the rather fine concrete superstructure with its 1930s modernist detailing houses three electrically operated vertical gates that function as automatic flood control sluices.

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Timeline

1792	Lock built at Allington following Act of Parliament for Lower Medway.
1792	Act for Lower Medway (below Maidstone), under which provision for lock to be built at Allington, Aylesford Bridge to be rebuilt and towpath to be made. Upper Medway company had clauses inserted giving it preferential tolls on their own craft.Thereafter, little contact between the two companies. Act established Trustees to run the navigation.
1802	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1802, for Lower Medway (below Maidstone). Repealed and replaced Act of 1792. Authorised reconstruction of Aylesford Bridge (and, according to Vine 1989, this allowed Allington Lock to be built). Replaced Trustees with 'The Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the River Medway' (sec 2).
1824	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1824, to improve lower river (probably in response to construction of Thames & Medway Canal, which opened that year). Authorised raising. £12,000 for improvements, including cuts. In fact, worked on new towpath from Maidstone to Millhall (Aylesford), new navigation arch through Aylesford Bridge and dredging of channel (removed shoals below Allington Lock). Cuts not made until 1842.
1830?	Illustration shows the Allington site, with the north bank of the river on the left, some sort of masonry structure against this, then a fixed-level weir and then a single pair of timber gates against a spur of land (perhaps a lock island?), with a channel to the right of this, between the spur of land and the south bank.
1833	Datestone on main lock house.
1840s?	Allington tithe map depicts pound lock and adjacent lock house, with weir at north end of Allington Tithe Map (?18405). substantial lock island.
1847	Lock rebuilt, c1847.
1865	OS map shows pound lock (with head and tail gates) between south bank and large lock island and lock house to south. The island is depicted as wooded and has a small building near the head gates. At the east end of the island are twin gated sluices (labelled 'lock') with a small island between them. On the north bank is a second house.
1880	Lock deepened in 1880.
1895	OS map shows pound lock (with head, middle and tail gates) between south bank and large lock island and lock house to south. The island (slightly longer than in 1865 to accommodate the additional gates) has a small building near the head gates. At the east end of the island are twin gated sluices (labelled 'lock') with a small island between them and a narrow bridge behind them (ie downstream). On the north bank is a second house. A further, pair of semi-detached houses stands on the south bank, east of the pound lock.
1899	Works to Allington Weir.
1906–07	OS map shows same arrangement as OS 1895 map, but with additional outbuildings to lock houses on south bank and a small additional building at the south-east corner of the site.
1907	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1907, 'to extend the jurisdiction of the Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the Medway and for other purposes'. Extended jurisdiction of Lower Navigation to the College (p3 & section 2).
1935	Medway Lower Navigation Act 1935, 'to amend the Acts relating to the Company of Proprietors of the Lower Navigation of the River Medway; to change their name; and for other purposes'. Changed name to 'The Medway Lower Navigation Company' (section 21).
1935–37	Automatic flood control sluices (vertical gates) installed. Opened 4 August 1937. Board engineer, C Cubley Crowther.
1936–38	OS map shows same broad arrangement as earlier OS editions, but with lock island

	substantially narrowed (by cutting back its north side), some remodeling of the north bank of the river, the sluices replaced by a triple-gated structure (clearly the 1937 vertical gate), further additional outbuildings to the south bank lock houses and additional buildings at the south-east corner of the site.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940 – 41 under Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1988–89	Lock rebuilt.
1990	Lock tail gate works.
1990	Allington Lock River Wall-Refurbishment-Lock Cottage Frontage SSP 1996 – 97, Consultant Atkins, Contractor Hynes- Division of Edmund Nuttall. £305K
1999–2000	Works on towpath and moorings in front of Malta Inn. Allington Lock-Malta Inn Frontage. David Read. Refurbishment 1999 – 2000, Consultant Atkins, Contractor Dean and Dyball £476K
2010	Conversion of lock to hydraulic operation.
2020–21	Lock refurbished
2021	Collars renewed. Wire ropes to sluices renewed. Facilities refurbished
2022	Sluice gates refurbished

Allington Lock looking east. (Photograph R. Glen)

Allington Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Lock from head gates

3. Tail gates

5. Sluices from south bank

2. Middle gates

4. Preserved paddle gear on tail gates

6. Sluices from north bank

Allington Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

7. Commemorative plaque on sluice

9. Outbuildings to 1833 Lock House

11. Flood water marks at No.3 Lock House

8. 1833 Lock House (EA office)

10. No.3 Lock House

12. Late 19th century pair of lock houses

Allington Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

13. Old Toll House Cafe

14. Type FW3/28A anti-tank pillbox

East Farleigh Lock

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

(East) Farleigh Lock (1) became the lowest lock site of the Upper Medway Navigation Company after the removal of College Lock in 1881.

The current lock chamber was refurbished in 2018 and prior to that appears to have been essentially the concrete construction of 1911 – 15, with repairs and patching. Wooden gates. Head gates have ×6 Rotork gate paddles and tail gates have ×6 probably 1911 – 15 gate paddles. The tail gates were replaced in 1987 (date carved into balance beam) (2,3). The lock has dated bollards of 1912 (4).

The weir appears to follow the line of the 1911 – 15 rebuild, but the two tall, steel-framed sluices are inscribed RANSOM & RAPIER LTD 1937 IPSWICH ENGLAND (on a hoist shroud) (5,6). Reportedly, further works to the sluices were carried out in the 1960s and there were some further refurbishments in 2021.

Setting

Set in the undulating Lower Greensand river valley, the site occupies a green space in the centre of East Farleigh village. It forms a strong visual group with the river-crossing Medieval East Farleigh Bridge (listed GV Grade I and a scheduled ancient monument), the former Maidstone Waterworks (listed Grade II) and East Farleigh railway station (not listed). A former early-mid 20th century lock house (not listed) stands on the south bank, its view from the lock obscured by trees. There are mature trees on the right bank downstream of the weir, and views downstream from Farleigh Bridge.

East Farleigh bridge, lock and sluice looking North East. (Photograph R. Glen)

Significance

Farleigh is a less busy lock site than Allington. It presents a typical river navigation formation of lock with weir and sluices. The lock has been modernized and retains few historic features, although a number of cast-iron bollards, stamped ARNOLD EAST PECKHAM 1912 remain. The weir has been modernized to an extent, but retains elements of its 1937 construction and is one of a suite of 1930s weir structures on the Medway Navigation.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1912 bollards/ 1937 weir/sluice structure.

Site History

One of 14 locks originally constructed on the Medway Navigation in the 1740s. Collapse of the lock in the winter of 1909–1 led to closure to traffic for 3 months and precipitated the folding of the Navigation Company. The lock was rebuilt by the new Conservancy Board in 1911–15. New vertically-rising sluice gates (by Ransome and Rapier) were installed in the 1930s. Current gates reportedly date from the 1960s (?) with later alterations to the weir.

East Farleigh Tithe map (1842) depicts the pound lock against the south bank of the river, with its adjacent weir running to the north bank, a form that persists on later OS map editions. Engravings of 1790 and 1839 show the basic form of the early lock and adjacent (possibly gated) weir, although details of construction and material are not discernible from the image available.

The appearance of the lock site in the late 19th/early 20th centuries is revealed in an early (undated) photograph. It shows a loaded barge just entered into the lock, with its stone copings, rough cut wooden balance beams and sluice rod paddle gear. To the right, beyond the narrow lock island, is a line of vertically lifting sluice gates. To the left the towpath can be seen snaking away towards Teston.

The 4th edn OS map shows little change of layout resulting from the 1911–15 rebuild. However, a series of photographs subsequent to this rebuild show the new structures, with concrete lock chamber, adjacent fixed weir, vertically lifting sluice gates (3 sets of 3 between concrete piers) and a stepped weir.

21st century works to the lock include a renewed landing stage (2009), refurbishment of the lock, re-skinned gates and refurbished fish pass (2018) and works to the weir with refurbished sluice gates and wires (2021).

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1830?	Engraving of Farleigh Lock and weir, viewed from north bank, showing open tail gates and closed head gates of pound lock. Beyond is a long weir in two distinct parts, with water cascading over it (and so hiding details of the form). That adjacent to the lock island has a curvilinear fencing across the top, perhaps the beam of a gated sluice.
1842	East Farleigh tithe map depicts pound lock against south bank of river, with adjacent weir running to north bank.
1843	Maidstone Tithe shows weir and end of very narrow lock island.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' and weir shown east of bridge. Railway 'Station' to north; 'Water Works' adjacent to bridge.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Lock' and weir shown east of bridge. Railway 'Station' to north; 'Maidstone Water Works' adjacent to bridge.
1904	Tonbridge Gas Company asked to pay tolls in advance to help pay for repairs to East Farleigh lock.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Lock' and 'Weir' shown east of bridge. Railway 'Station' to north; 'Waterworks (Maidstone Corpn)' adjacent to bridge; 'Landing Stage to SW of bridge. 'Towing Path' on north bank.
1909–10	East Farleigh lock collapsed in winter of 1909–10. River closed for 3 months. Precipitated end of the Company.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows Lock' and 'Weir' shown east of bridge. Railway 'Station' to north; 'Reservoirs (Disused)' adjacent to bridge. 'Towing Path' on north bank.
1937	East Farleigh Sluice Gates, Medway Catchment Board, gates Ransome and Rapier.
1987	Farleigh lock gates replaced.
2009	Landing stage renewed
2018	Lock and fish pass refurbished
2021	Sluice gates refurbished

East Farleigh Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Lock and weir with sluices

3. Tail gates with x 6 paddle gears & dated beam

5. Two sluice gates

2. Head gates with x 6 gate paddle gears

4. 1912 bollard

6. Manufacturer's name on sluice

Teston Lock

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

Teston lock and weir (1) stand immediately adjacent to the ruins of a former oil mill and close to the ancient river crossing of the Medieval Teston Bridge (listed Grade I and a scheduled ancient monument) which connects the villages of Teston and West Farleigh.

The current lock chamber is concrete (refurbished in 2014) (2, 3) with bullnose brick copings. Wooden head and tail gates, with balance beam dated 1988 (4). Concrete lock-sides. Wooden gates. There are ×6 Rotork gate paddles on the head gates and ×5 probably 1911 – 15 gate paddles on the tail gates.

The fixed weir with sloping apron appears to follow the line of the 1911 – 15 rebuild, but the tall vertical sluice gate date superstructure dates from the c1930s (unknown manufacturer) and was rebuilt in the 1980s (5,6).

Setting

Set in the undulating Lower Greensand river valley, Teston Lock occupies a rural, tree-lined setting adjacent Teston Bridge Country Park. Immediately east of the lock are the substantial remains of the water-powered Tutsham Mill (aka West Farleigh Oil Mill). There is a pillbox above the lock on the south bank; a reminder that the Medway was part of the GHQ stop line in 1940 – 41. The site affords views up the river valley from the river and views of/from Teston Bridge. Teston has a tranquil rural setting, with a backdrop of fields and trees.

Teston Lock, Weir and Sluice looking South West. (Photograph R. Glen)

Significance

The 1911 – 15 lock has been modernized. It retains 1912 bollards, but little else. The site is of interest for its retained fixed weir and single vertical sluice gate in steel superstructure.

Elements of considerable significance: None

Elements of some significance: 1911 – 15 gate paddles/1912 bollards /fixed weir and vertical sluice gate.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911 – 15. Vertical sluice gate added (Medway Catchment Board) c1930s, and rebuilt by Southern Water in 1980s.

Teston Tithe of 1844 shows pound lock against north bank with sub-triangular lock island and weir line, a form that stays unchanged on the first 3 OS map editions, that is up to the 1911 – 15 rebuild. Two photographs prior to the rebuild show the brick lock chamber looking the worse for wear, with grass up the edges of the chamber and with rough cut wooden balance beams to its gates. The lock island was thickly wooded with, beyond it, the weir and an increasingly ivy-covered, ruined mill building.

The 4th edition map shows site after the 1911 – 15 rebuild, with the island narrowed and a longer, dog-leg weir. Photographs from after the rebuild show the fixed weir with the new sluice between it and the narrowed island. There were two sets of 3 vertical lifting gates between concrete buttresses reached by a short footbridge from the island. The lock island had its current long, narrow asymmetric form, the lock had sawn-timber gates, and on the west side of the lock was a timber office building.

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1844	Teston Tithe shows pound lock between west bank and a lock island with weir spanning from centre of island to east bank.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' and 'Waterfall' labelled, with asymmetric lock island between them. 'Foot Br' to north. 'Oil mill' on east bank.
1890	Photograph of lock from north bank shows barge just emerged from open tail gates, a very wooded lock island and a fixed weir beyond. The ruins of the oil mill are clear on the south bank.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Lock' labelled and weir shown, with asymmetric lock island between them. 'FB' labelled over weir and to north over side channel. Mill buildings on east bank shown but not labelled.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Lock' and 'Weir labelled, with asymmetric lock island between them. 'FB' labelled to north, side channel. Mill buildings on east bank shown but not labelled. 'Wharf labelled just south of Teston bridge.
1929–52	4th (1929–52) – 'Lock' and 'Weir labelled, with much narrower lock island between them. Small building on west bank. 'FB' labelled to north, side channel. Mill buildings on east bank shown as ruin.
1911	Lock rebuilt.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows Lock' and 'Weir labelled, with much narrower lock island between them. Small building on west bank. 'FB' labelled to north, side channel. Mill buildings on east bank shown as ruin.
1930s	Teston Sluice (vertical gate), probably Medway Catchment Board, circa 1930s.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1980s	Teston sluice rebuilt (vertical gate) by Southern Water in 80s – to in-house design.
1988	Teston Lock Gates replaced (dated balance beam).
2009	Landing stage built
2014	Lock refurbished, gates re-skinned and fish /canoe pass built

Teston Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Lock, fixed weir and sluice

3. Lock tail with details

5. Weir & sluice from upstream

2. Head of lock & island

4. Dated balance beam on tail gate

6. Weir & sluice from downstream

Hampstead Lock

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

Hampstead Lock has a rather cramped site against the B2162 concrete road bridge over Yalding Cut and adjacent to former industrial sites and the Hampstead Marina immediately to the north (1).

The current lock chamber is modern concrete construction, re-facing remnants of the 1911 – 15 chamber rebuild (2). Wooden gates, dated 1989 (3,4). Tail gates retain ×4 probably 1911 – 15 gate paddles (5). Head gates have ×6 Rotork gate paddles. Lock-sides are concrete, with modern steel bollards (6). Small brick hut with flat roof, housing telemetry.

Setting

A nondescript semi-rural/post-industrial setting at the start of the broad Medway Valley Weald Clay landscape. The site is cramped and enclosed by the road bridge over Yalding Cut.

Significance

The lock is isolated and with no accompanying weir and sluice formation, with little heritage significance.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911 – 15 gate paddles/1912 bollards.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act. Reported as in very bad state in 1903 – 04. Rebuilt in 1911 – 15.

OS maps show that until the early 20th century Hampstead Lane Bridge spanned the cut at a right angle to it - the bridge was then rebuilt on its current acute angle. A single photograph from before the 1911 – 15 rebuild clearly shows the new bridge beyond the brick-built lock chamber. A photograph of the lock during the 1911 – 15 rebuild shows the new concrete chamber plus head gates with gate and ground paddle gear in place.

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1845	Yalding Tithe map fails to depict the lock.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' shown adjacent to bridge with 'Hampstead Mill (paper)' to south and 'Railway Inn' to SW.
1903–04	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Lock' shown adjacent to bridge with 'Hampstead Mill' to south and 'Railway Inn' to SW.
1907–23	Locks in poor state (Branbridge Bridge and Hempstead lock in very bad state).
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Lock' shown adjacent to rebuilt 'Hampstead Lane Bridge' (andrealigned road) with 'Hampstead Mill' to south and 'Inn' to SW.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows 'Lock' shown adjacent to Hampstead Lane Bridge' with mill and inn building shown amongst much new build.
1951	Yalding radial gates (×2) installed. Yalding Radial gates (also known as 'Anchor Sluice'), Medway Catchment Board about 1951, designed and built by the Board.
1989	New lock gates fitted.
2009	Landing stage renewed
2010	Lock refurbished and gates re-skinned

Hampstead Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Lock from Hampstead Lane Bridge

3. Head gates with modern gate paddles

5. Tail gate paddle detail

2. Concrete chamber & details

4. Dated head balance beam

6. Lock-side from tail gates

Yalding Cut And Lifting Bridge

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

This canal cut was built following the 1740s Act. In its current form it is lined with a mixture of steel piling and stonework. It is crossed by Yalding Lifting Bridge (1). A former warehouse (EA office) stands adjacent (2). A disused inter-war overhead footbridge crosses on the approach to Yalding Weir (3).

Setting

The cut is set in a semi-rural landscape in the broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay and runs parallel to the B1262 Hampstead Lane before joining the river again at Yalding Weir. Yalding Lifting Bridge crosses at its southern end.

Significance

Yalding Cut is largely unchanged in over 200 years of existence, although centuries of maintenance and the impact of nature obscure its original appearance and any potential archaeology.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: Yalding Lifting Bridge.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act, to bypass 2 miles of river. Constructed on the line of a former road, the Navigation Company building a new road alongside it as a replacement.

A sequence of maps from the 1845 Yalding Tithe through OS map editions to the mid-20th century, show an unaltered line of cut. The lifting bridge was refurbished in 1974 and again in 2005–06. Adjacent the lifting bridge is the EA Yalding Navigation Office; a historic building (not listed) with a brick lower storey and timber-framed and weatherboarded upper storey. It appears to have originally been a warehouse. A modern, facilities building stands adjacent its north end.

Yalding Cut And Lifting Bridge Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Yalding Lifting Bridge

3. Disused footbridge

2. Former warehouse (EA office)

Yalding Weir (Anchor Sluice)

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

Yalding Weir maintains river level in relation to Hampstead Lock at the north end of the Yalding Cut. The standing structures appear to comprise the pre-1951 set of vertically lifting gates (4 iron penstocks which presumably date from 1911–15) and the fixed overflow (1,2) sitting alongside the twin 1950s radial gates (3,4). The concrete buttresses between the weirs and the road bridge over presumably all date from 1951.

Setting

The weir lies south-west of Yalding village in a semi-rural setting in broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay land. The weir forms part of a group of river-related buildings, including the Anchor Inn (listed Grade II) and the Medieval Twyford Bridge (a scheduled ancient monument) and the weir. A GHQ stop-line pillbox of 1940–41 stands slightly upstream. The weir lies just beyond the western boundary of Yalding Conservation Area. The site is cramped and near to a busy road, with constrained views.

Significance

The weir is an interesting structure and its formation includes disused vertical sluice gates, a small fixed spillway with sloping apron, and two radial sluice gates.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: Remains of early 20th century vertical sluice gates/mid-20th century radial sluice gates.

Site History

A weir was originally built here following the 1740 Act. It may have been rebuilt in 1911–15, along with the rest of the navigation, although there is evidence that it is an inter-war structure. The radial gates were added in 1951. The Yalding tithe map of 1845 fails to depict the weir and its earlier formation is unclear. However, the shape of the river as shown on the Tithe map matches the later sequence of OS maps from the 1860s to the mid-20th century. Each of these OS maps show a narrow Waterfall structure (i.e., a fixed masonry weir) without sluice gates.

Early photographs of the weir show that it had two parts – a fixed overflow separated by a narrow concrete buttress from a set of 4 vertically lifting iron sluice gates–both surmounted by a timber footbridge. The remnants of the 4 iron sluice gates (minus winding gear) remain in-situ and part of their top plate is stamped: W. WEEKS & SON LTD MAIDSTONE 1924. Beyond these disused gates and the fixed overflow, two concrete sluice channels were constructed and fitted with steel radial gates by the Medway Catchment Board in c.1951. The present road bridge across the weir is assumed to have been built at the same time. Anchor Inn, which overlooks the weir was formerly owned by the Medway Navigation company; they sold it in 1871 (when the fortunes of the company were declining) for £350.

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1871	Anchor Inn, Yalding sold for £350.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1951	Yalding radial gates (×2) installed. Yalding Radial gates (also known as 'Anchor Sluice'), Medway Catchment Board about 1951, designed and built by the Board.
2003–04	Yalding Temporary Moorings, 2003–04, Consultant Atkins, Contractor Mackleys, £250K
2007	Sluice gate winching system rebuilt
2008	Canoe portage renewed
2021–22	Sluice gates refurbished

Yalding Weir (Anchor Sluice) Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Disused vertical gates & fixed weir

3. Radial sluice gates from road bridge

2. Manufacturer's stamp on vertical gates

4. Radial gates & concrete buttresses

Stoneham Lock (Disused)

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

Disused lock with surviving chamber (1), remains of ground paddle gear (2) and overhead footbridge (3,4).

Setting

Isolated rural setting, with wooded areas giving way to arable fields.

Significance

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911 – 15 lock chamber/ground paddle /gate collar remains.

Site History

Originally constructed under 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911 – 15 with concrete chamber, which notably survives. Archaeological remnants of ground paddles and evidence of gate collars at head and tail. 20th century overbridge with wood and steel deck and handrails carried on brick piers, with concrete steps to deck.

Stoneham Lock (Disused) Photographs taken in February 2024

1. 1911–15 concrete lock chamber

3. Modern over-bridge

2. Remnant ground paddle gear and gate recesses

4. Concrete steps on over-bridge

Sluice Weir Lock

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

The lock island, weir and access bridge arrangement at the Sluice Weir Lock site were heavily re-modelled in the 1911–15 rebuild, but the radial gates subsequently built here (in 1933) were possibly the first of their type in Britain. The current lock chamber is essentially the concrete construction of 1911–15, with later repairs and patching (1). Wooden gates with ×6 1911–15 gate paddles with modern covers on head gates and ×6 probably 1911–15 gate paddles on tail gates (1,2). Disused gate paddle recess (3). Modern landing stage at tail with Type FW3/24 pillbox, part of the 1940–41 defensive GHQ Line (North West Kent) on bank above (4). The weir complex is essentially the rebuilt 1997–99 construction (5). Modern concrete footbridge at south-east corner of lock island (6).

Setting

Wooded rural setting in broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay land. Arable fields to north and west. Lying south of East Peckham village, the site has a large, open lock and weir area (70–100m wide across the river from woodland edge to edge). There are views downstream.

Significance

A typical river navigation formation of lock and weir with sluice.
The lock retains 1911–15 concrete in its chamber. The very large radial sluice gate in the weir, replaces two earlier gates and is unusually wide (11m).

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911–15 concrete lock chamber/1911–15 gate paddles/1912 bollards/ large self-acting radial sluice gate (although not historic).

Appendix A – Gazetteer

Site History

Originally built following the 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911–15. Two radial gates were built on the weir in 1933 (possibly the first radial gates in Britain, although Carpenter's Road Lock on the Bow Back Rivers in London is contemporary). These were replaced by the current single radial and a tilting crest weir in 1997–99 with a fish/canoe pass also added.

The early formation of the site is seen on maps from the East Peckham Tithe map of 1842 to the 3rd edn OS map of the early 20th century. The lock stood between the north bank of the river and a long irregular island. A weir and bridge were at the west end of the island and a bridge spanned from the east end to the south river bank. An undated photograph that is clearly pre- 1911–15 rebuild, shows a brick-built lock chamber (with some stonework in the outer tail wing walls). It also shows gate paddles operated by sluice rods.

The 4th edn OS map shows considerable remodelling of the lock site from the 1911–15 rebuild. The island was reduced in size and the south bank of the river cut back to create a bigger weir pool with longer, north-south weir, and longer bridge to the east of the island. Three photographs taken during the rebuild show the new lock chamber in great detail (one with the old bridge still in place). 1935 photographs show the 1933 radial gates. There is a GHQ stop-line pillbox of 1940–41 close to the tail of the lock.

The 1998 radial sluice gate, built by Hunton Engineering, is described as 'the widest of its kind' It is constructed with a box-section steel lattice framework. The gate is counterweighted and self-acting, to regulate river levels. It is also fitted with a hand-operated hydraulic jacking system.

Sluice Weir Lock looking West. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1842	East Peckham tithe map shows pound lock spanning river channel on north side of an island. Bridge shown at either end of island. Weir not labelled. Path marked on south bank. 1871–90 OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' shown between north bank and E-W running island. 'Weir' at west end of island. Bridge at east end
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Lock' and Weir' labelled as 1st edn, although weir may be to east of previous location. 'FB' labelled at east. 'Towing Path' labelled on south bank.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Lock', 'Weir' and 'FB' depicted in same arrangement as 2nd edn. 'Towing Path' labelled on south bank.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows 'Lock' depicted as 3rd ed, but island, weir and bridges remodelled – island reduced in size and south bank cut back to create bigger weir pool with longer, N-S weir, and longer bridge to east of island.
1933	Sluice Radial Gates (×2) 1933 Medway Catchment Board, design and build. Photographs (Leigh office) show these radial gates raised during floods in November 1935.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1997–98	Sluice Weir Lock, new weir 1997–98, Consultant Atkins, Contractor Dean and Dyball, circa £400K.
1998–99	Sluice Weir radial gate (xl) 1998–1999, Consultant Atkins and Jack Lewin, Contractor Mackley, circa £420K.
2007	Landing stage and casual mooring piles built.
2008	Sluice gate winching system built.
2021–22	Gates re-skinned.

Sluice Weir Lock Photographs taken in February 2024

1. 1911–15 concrete lock chamber from tail gates

3. Disused ground paddle recess

5. Weir with radial sluice gate

2. Head gates with concrete heel grips

4. Landing stage and pillbox

6. Footbridge at south-east corner of lock island

Oak Weir Lock

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

Oak Weir Lock is accessed via a footbridge over a feeder stream - lending it an island character. The current lock chamber is essentially the concrete construction of 1911–15, with later repairs and patching (1). Wooden gates. Head gates have ×6 1911–15 gate paddles with modern covers and tail gates have ×6 probably 1911–15 gate paddles (2,3,4). Grassed lock-side with modern concrete heel grips (5). A single disused cast-iron ground paddle survives in its recess, although missing its cover. Its large, hand-worked wheel is stamped: ADAMS – HYDRAULICS LTD YORK & LONDON (6). 1912 bollards (7). Weir with radial gate sluice and canoe and fish pass (8,9). Small brick hut with concrete flat roof, housing telemetry (10). Collapsed pillbox to north (11). The lock is on slightly different orientation to, and slightly larger than, the original 1740s lock. The small weir appears to be on the site of the original, but the radial gate sluice is a 1980s addition.

Setting

Irregular island site in rural location in broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay land. Enclosed, tranquil setting with surrounding woodland along river with arable fields beyond. The lock elements are visually distinct from the weir elements (with the 1980s radial gate hidden from the lock).

Significance

Oak Weir retains its 1911–15 concrete lock chamber. It has wooden gates with the maximum number of gate paddles, and a disused ground paddle.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911–15 concrete lock chamber/ 1911–15 gate paddles/surviving disused ground paddle.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911–15, on a slightly different alignment and slightly larger than the original. The early form of the lock site is seen on maps from the East Peckham Tithe map of 1842 to 3rd edition OS in the early 20th century. The lock stood between the south bank of the river and a sub-triangular island with a weir at the western end of the island.

The 4th edition OS map shows a re-modelled (and realigned) arrangement resulting from the 1911–15 rebuild, with the island reduced in size on its north side and the opposing north bank of the river cut back, to create a larger weir pool. A photograph of the head of the lock, taken during the rebuild, shows the concrete chamber and gate and ground paddle gear. The radial gate was added to the sluice, upstream of the original weir, in the 1980s.

Collapsed remains of GHQ stop-line pillbox of 1940–41 lie in the river to the north of the weir.

Oak Weir Sluice looking West. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1842	East Peckham tithe map shows pound lock spanning river channel on south side of an island. Weir not shown.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' between south bank and large sub-triangular island, with 'sluice' at west. Towing path on south side.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Oak Weir Lock' between south bank and large sub-triangular island, with 'FB' marked at west (site of sluice). Towing path on south side.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Oak Weir Lock' between south bank and large sub-triangular island, with 'FB' marked at west (site of sluice). Towing path on south side.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows a larger 'Oak Weir Lock' than on 3rd edn, still between south bank and island (reduced in size from the 3rd edn and weir pool enlarged), with 'FB' marked at west (site of sluice). Towing path on south side.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the General Headquarters Anti-tank Line (the GHQ stop-line), part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1980s	Radial gate installed at Oak Weir Lock by Southern Water – in-house design.
2007	Casual mooring piles built.
2009	Landing stages built.
2011	Canoe and fish pass built.
2021–22	Gates re-skinned.

Oak Weir Lock Photographs taken in February 2024

1. 1911–15 concrete lock chamber

2. Head gates with gate paddles

3. Tail gates with x 6 gate paddles

4. Head gate collar detail

5. Grass lock-side with concrete heel grips

6. Disused ground paddle gear

Oak Weir Lock Photographs taken in February 2024

7. 1912 bollard

9. Canoe and fish pass

11. Collapsed pillbox

8. Sluice with radial gate

10. Telemetry hut

East Lock

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

East Lock is the only lock station of the Upper Navigation Company identified to have had a lock house, the foundations of which survive as archaeology. The current lock chamber is essentially the concrete construction of 1911–15, with later repairs and patching (1) and incorporating traces of its former lifting bridge. Wooden gates with ×6 1911–15 gate paddles with modern covers on head gates and ×3 probably 1911–15 gate paddles on tail gates (2,3). Grassed lock-sides with concrete heel grips. Modern steel overhead footbridge across tail (4).

A single disused cast-iron ground paddle survives in its recess, although missing its cover. Its large, hand-worked wheel is stamped: ADAMS – HYDRAULICS LTD YORK & LONDON (5). The small weir, with canoe and fish pass and footbridge (6,7) appears to be on the site of the original, but is presumably a rebuild dating from the 1980s, when the current radial gate was built. Two Type FW3/24 pillboxes that formed part of the defensive GHQ Line (North West Kent) of 1940–41 stand north of the weir (8).

Setting

Irregular island site in remote rural location in broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay land. Wooded on island and along river to east, otherwise visually open and surrounded by arable fields.

Significance

Oak Weir Lock retains its 1911–15 concrete lock chamber, with wooden gates. Its northern landside approach is guarded by two Type FW3/24 pillboxes. The archaeological remains of a lock house lie immediately north of the lock.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911–15 concrete lock chamber/1911–15 gate paddles/surviving disused ground paddle/1912 bollards/ two pillboxes /archaeological remains of former lock house.

Appendix – Gazetteer

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911–15. A new steel sluice gate was built by Kent River Board in 1958. The present radial gate was installed in the 1980s by Southern Water.

The early form of the site is seen on maps from the Hadlow Tithe of 1842 to the early 20th century 3rd edition OS. The lock was built at the western end of a large, irregular island in the river, with the weir to its west. On the island, adjacent to the tail of the lock was a house (labelled as Eel House on 3rd and 4th edition OS maps). A north-south footpath is shown crossing the site, its route implying bridges across the weir and the tail of the lock. The 4th edition OS map shows little change of layout resulting from the 1911–15 rebuild, although the footpath route over the lock had slightly altered to cross it above the tail gates.

A photograph of the 1911–15 rebuild shows the concrete lock chamber and tail gates with a new lifting bridge beyond (presumably the footpath now crossed over this) and a substantial brick-built house with hipped roof and end-wall chimneys. A second photograph shows the sluice with three vertically lifting gates set in concrete buttressing, together with a second channel (with timber bridge over). A 1981 photograph shows a structure for a vertical gate on this channel, with the trio of penstocks beyond. The 1980s construction of the current radial gate appears to have been part of a major re-modelling of the Medway Navigation weirs.

East Lock and Sluice looking East. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1842	Hadlow tithe map shows pound lock between south bank and large lock island, with weir to west and lock house north of tail gates.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows Lock not labelled, but map appears to show layout similar to 2nd edn, including large weir pool and lock house.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'East Lock' shown with large weir pool and building north of tail. 'FB's marked at lock tail and location of current fixed sluice.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'East Lock' shown with large weir pool and 'Eel House' north of tail. FB's marked as 2nd edn.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows 'East Lock' shown with large weir pool and 'Eel House' north of tail. FB's marked as 3rd edn.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the GHQ Line (North West Kent) part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund 'Tiny' Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1940–41	Line of pillboxes and other defence features built beside line of the river Medway as part of the GHQ Line (North West Kent) part of the home defences established in 1940–41 under Sir Edmund 'Tiny' Ironside, Commander-in-Chief Home Forces.
1958	New steel sluice gate built by Kent River Board.
1980s	Radial gate installed at East Lock by Southern Water-in-house design.
2007	Sluice gate winching system built
2009	Landing stage built
2010	Canoe and fish pass built

East Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. 1911–15 concrete lock chamber

3. Tail gates and gate paddles

5. Disused ground paddle gear

2. Head gates and gate paddles

4. Modern steel footbridge

6. Sluice with radial gate

East Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

7. Footbridge over canoe and fish pass

8. Pillbox Type FW3/24 close to lock

Porter's Lock

Overall Heritage Value

2 – Medium

Summary Description

The current lock chamber is essentially the concrete construction of 1911–15, with later repairs and patching (1). The rebuilt lock occupies the same site as the original 1740s lock but is slightly larger. Wooden gates with ×6 1911–15 gate paddles with modern covers on head gates and ×3 probably 1911–15 gate paddles on tail gates (2,3). Grassed lock-sides with concrete heel grips (4). The form of the original weir appears to have been lost to the 1980s re-modelling of the weir complex (5). Small brick hut with concrete flat roof, housing telemetry (6).

Setting

Remote rural location in broad Medway Valley of Weald Clay land. Partially wooded island, arable fields to north and south. Lock and weir are distinctively set apart from each other in an open expanse set within the natural context.

Significance

Porters Lock retains its 1911–15 concrete lock chamber, with wooden gates.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911–15 concrete lock chamber/1911–15 gate paddles/1912 bollards.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911–15. A radial gate was installed on the sluice by Southern Water in the 1980s.The early form of the site is seen on maps from the Hadlow Tithe of 1842 to the early 20th century 3rd edition OS. The Tithe map gives a very basic depiction of the pound lock. The OS maps show the lock more clearly, spanning the north channel of the river midway along the length of a large island. The weir is labelled Waterfall, to the west where the river diverged into the two channels. The towpath is shown running along the north side of the river.

The 4th edition OS map shows the layout after the 1911–15 rebuild, the main change being an increased width to the lock and river channel to either end of it. A photograph taken during the rebuild shows the concrete chamber with its vertical timbers, head gates open, and ground paddle gear in place. A pair of large sheds (for storage during construction) are visible on the island. The 1980s construction of the current radial gate was part of a major re-modelling of the weirs on the Medway Navigation.

Porter's Lock looking North East. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1842	Hadlow tithe map shows pound lock. Weir not shown.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' on north side of large island with 'Waterfall' at west.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows same arrangement as 1st edn, but labelling 'Porter's Lock'. 'Towing Path' on north bank.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows same arrangement as previous edns with labels 'Porter's Lock' and 'Waterfall'. 'Towing Path' on north bank.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridges, Town.
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows same arrangement as previous edns with labels 'Porter's Lock' and 'Waterfall'. 'Towing Path' on north bank. Lock possibly widened?
1980s	Radial gate installed at Porter's Lock by Southern Water – in-house design.
2007	Landing stage built
2007	Sluice gate winching system built
2007	Gates re-skinned
2007	Canoe and fish pass built.

Porter's Lock Photographs taken in February 2024

1. 1911–15 concrete lock chamber

3. Tail gates with x 3 gate paddles

5. Weir with sluice & canoe and fish pass

2. Head gates with x 6 gate paddles

4. Grassed lock-sides with concrete heel grips

6. Telemetry hut

Eldridge's Lock

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

Eldridge's is the highest of the rural locks on the Medway (1). The 1911–15 lock was rebuilt in 2010–11. Its chamber is concrete, with wooden copings (2). Lock-sides and heel grips are concrete. Steel bollards. Wooden gates with ×6 1911–15 gate paddles with modern covers on head gates and ×2 probably 1911–15 gate paddles on tail gates (3,4). Radial sluice gate on small weir (5). Lengthy canoe and fish pass (6).

Setting

A remote site in the broad Weald Clay valley. The site is neatly designed and tightly-drawn, with an open character with views across adjacent arable fields, edged with woodland.

Significance

Eldridge's Lock can be considered as a tightly-drawn 20th and 21st century set-piece and may in future be seen as having similar heritage value to the 1911–15 locks on the Medway Navigation. It has an unusually long and winding canoe and fish pass.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 21st century set-piece lock with lengthy canoe and fish pass.

Site History

Originally built following 1740 Act (a 1743 accounts entry refers to carrying stones from the Castle to Old Weir for Mr Eldridges Lock). Rebuilt in 1911–15 and again in 2010–11.

The early form of the site is seen on maps from the Tonbridge Tithe of 1838 to the early 20th century 3rd edition OS. They show the lock spanning the river channel. A weir is shown at the head of a lesser channel where it branches off the main channel nearly a kilometre to the west. The towpath is shown running along the north side of the river.

An early photograph, taken prior to the 1911–15 rebuild and tentatively identified as of Eldridge's, shows a brick-built lock chamber and stone coping. The head and tail gates had a mixture of rough-cut and saw-cut balance beams, sluice rod operated paddles and narrow walkways. There appear not to have been any mooring bollards.

The 4th edition OS map shows the layout after the 1911–15 rebuild, with a narrow channel added to the south side of the lock. A photograph taken during the rebuild (mislabelled as Ston[e]ham) shows this to have been for a sluice with three vertically lifting gates set in a concrete frame. The photograph also shows the concrete lock chamber with its vertical timbers, and ground paddle gear, but gates not yet in place. The present-day formation of lock, sluice and canoe and fish pass is entirely modern (late 20th/early 21st centuries).

Eldridges Lock looking South East. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1743	4 June 1743 – accounts entry for 'carrying stones from the Castle to Old Weir for Mr Eldridges Lock £1 13s 4d'.
1838	Tonbridge tithe map depicts pound lock spanning channel. Weir not shown.
1871–90	OS 1st (1871–90) shows 'Lock' shown with rectilinear bay beyond lock tail. Path marked along north bank.
1897–1900	OS 2nd (1897–1900) shows 'Eldridges Lock' shown with rectilinear bay beyond lock tail. Path marked along north bank. 'FB' to east and over site of 'Stair' weir.
1907–23	OS 3rd (1907–23) shows 'Eldridges Lock' shown with rectilinear bay beyond lock tail. Path marked along north bank. 'FB' to east and over site of 'Stair' weir. 'Weir' at site of Waites weir.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1911–15	Weir channel added to Eldridges lock
1929–52	OS 4th (1929–52) shows 'Eldridges Lock' shown with narrow channel on its south side and larger curved bay beyond lock tail. Path marked along north bank. 'FB' to east and over site of 'Stair' weir. 'Weir' at site of Waites weir.
2007?	Works to Eldridges weir, three new penstocks replacing the old vertical lift gates.
2007	Landing stage built
2009	Canoe and fish pass built

Eldridge's Lock Photographs taken in August 2023

1. Lock and weir with sluice

3. Head gates with gate paddle gears

5. Sluice with radial gate

2. Concrete chamber & lock-sides

4. Tail gates with view towards chamber steps

6. Canoe and fish pass

Town Lock

Overall Heritage Value

1 – Low

Summary Description

Highest of the operational Medway lock sites (historically only the Penshurst canals were higher, but these never came into operation).

The current lock chamber is essentially the concrete construction of 1911–15, with repairs and patching (1). Wooden gates with x6 Rotork gate paddles on head gates (2) and ×3 probably 1911–15 gate paddles on tail gates (3,4). A disused 1911–15 cast-iron wheel-operated ground paddle gear survives (apparently intact) (5). Its wheel is stamped: ADAMS – HYDRAULICS LTD YORK & LONDON. Disused winding gear survives (next to a 1912 bollard) from a lift-bridge which formerly crossed the lock chamber (6).

The small weir appears to follow the broad form of the 1911–15 rebuild, with the radial sluice gate dating from the 1980s (7,8).

Setting

Urban area in broad Medway Valley Weald Clay landscape. The setting is one of riverside regeneration in which lock and weir (which is inaccessible behind palisade fencing) lose prominence. The north side of the river retains mature trees. The site lies within Tonbridge Conservation Area (designated 1969, extended in 1981, 1985, 1990). The Industrial heart Character Area label has been diluted by the withdrawal of past industry (i.e., the demolition of gasholders still present in 2007) and its replacement with riverside regeneration, largely in the form of residential accommodation.

Significance

Town Lock is the most fully urban of the Medway Navigation Locks. It retains an intact example of 1911–15 ground paddle gearing and 1912 bollards.

Elements of considerable significance: None.

Elements of some significance: 1911–15 concrete lock chamber/1911–15 intact ground paddle gear in recess/1912 bollards/good example of gate collar arrangement.

Site History

Originally built following the 1740 Act. Rebuilt in 1911–15 (lock widened, new sluice gates built and relief weir added). In the 1980s, the vertically lifting sluice gates were replaced by a radial gate.

The early form of the site is seen on maps from the Tonbridge tithe of 1838 to the early 20th century 3rd edition OS. They show the pound lock against the south bank of the river with a footbridge over the tail of the lock leading onto a large triangular island. There appears to have been a large building north of the lock, on the line of a sluice. North of this a second building is labelled as a Boat Building Yard from 1895 (the 1866 and 1895 maps also show a long narrow building to its north). Beyond this, at the north end of the island, there was a narrow weir.

The 1936–37 25-inch OS map shows the layout of the site as altered in the 1911–15 rebuild. The lock is now wider and the tail footbridge has been removed and replaced by a (swing or lift?) bridge over the main chamber (the winding gear remains). The sluice channel is also now wider and longer, with a bridge over it and a new sluice. The land between this channel and the lock chamber has been extended. To the north a long overflow weir has been added adjacent to the earlier weir.

A photograph of the sluice taken during the 1911–15 rebuild shows a set of six vertically lifting gates running between the concrete lined channel. The edge of a small timber shed is visible on the south side of the channel.

Town Lock, Tonbridge looking North West. (Photograph R. Glen)

Appendix – Gazetteer

Timeline

1740–43	14 locks built by new Company of Proprietors. Suitable for barges of 40 tons. Built of oak from Penshurst (floated downstream in batches).
1838	Tonbridge Tithe shows pound lock against south bank of river and large lock island. It depicts a small weir at the north end of the island, a small building close to the tail gates and what is possibly a large gated sluice north of the head gates.
1866	OS map shows pound lock against south bank of river and large lock island. It depicts a small weir at the north end of the island, a small building close to the tail gates, a large 'sluice' north of the head gates and a large rectangular building north of this. Several 'stones' (perhaps property markers) are marked north of the site. The site is adjacent to a gasworks and there is a wharf and coal pens to the west.
1895	OS map shows layout as in 1865, with the two sluices labelled 'S1', four distinct 'Stones' shown, and a there is a 'Boat Building Yard' label.
1911–15	Conservancy Board works to rebuild locks, weirs and associated structures at Farleigh, Teston, Hampstead, Stoneham, Sluice Weir, Oak Weir, East, Porter's, Eldridge's, Town.
1914–15	Town lock widened and broad relief weir added as part Conservancy Board works.
1936–37	OS map shows layout similar to 1895, but with the main sluice apparently remodelled to create a narrow lock island and a second island between the sluices. Narrow bridges are shown running over the tail of the lock and over the back of the main sluice. The small sluice may also have been remodelled. Three distinct 'Stones' are shown, and a there is still a 'Boatbuilding Yard' label.
1980s	Radial gate installed at Town Lock by Southern Water – in-house design.
2007	Landing stage built
2008	Sluice gate winching system built
2011	Canoe and fish pass built
2016	Facilities built (refurbished in 2022)

Town Lock Photographs taken in August 2023 & February 2024

1. Lock and sluice

3. Tail gates with x3 gate paddles

5. Disused ground paddle gear

2. Head gates with paddles closed

4. Tail gate paddles

6. Disused lift-bridge winding gear & 1912 bollard

Town Lock Photographs taken in August 2023 & February 2024

7. Fixed weir, sluice & landing stage

8. Radial sluice gate

Environment Agency