

BEARDS MILL VIADUCT

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Coincidentally, following Jim Simmon's article on the "Stonehouse Railway Accident on Beards Mill Viaduct" in the 1988 Journal, whilst looking for information on Beards Mill itself, I came across some information on its actual construction. The following passage was unearthed from the Eastington Parish Magazine. This was produced on a monthly basis by Eastington Temperance Society of which, local mill owners Charles and Charles Henry Hooper were leading lights. It appears to have been produced during the last two decades of the 19th century. This particular passage is from the October issue of 1884 and reads as follows:

The new M.R. Viaduct - Not a few of our readers will remember the erection of the timber viaduct, which for some forty years has carried the Midland Railway past Beard's Mill. For the past 2 years the Company's engineers have been preparing its removal and the substitution of a more permanent structure of brick and iron. At the close of July last year this work was brought to successful completion, and it is very satisfactory to know that it has been accomplished without the slightest accident. It has, moreover, been done without interruption to the traffic, though a clear passage had to be daily provided for over a hundred trains. It has been stated, on authority of the engineer, that the massive piers contain about three-quarters of a million bricks, weighing about 2000 tons, and resting on a mass of concrete below ground of equal weight. The thirty wrought iron girders weigh 200 tons, being in three spans of 50 ft. and two of 30ft. each, and are at a height from the ground of 35ft. Mr W.L. Meredith, company's engineer, conducted the operations throughout.

I was rather intrigued by comments in Jim's article which referred to Police Sergeant Townsend's statement that "being Sunday, the mill was not working". The accident happened in April 1913; I was under the impression that the mill, having been in the hands of the Beard family, and latterly, the Hoopers, had been closed and demolished around 1910 - 1911! Can anyone shed any light on this?