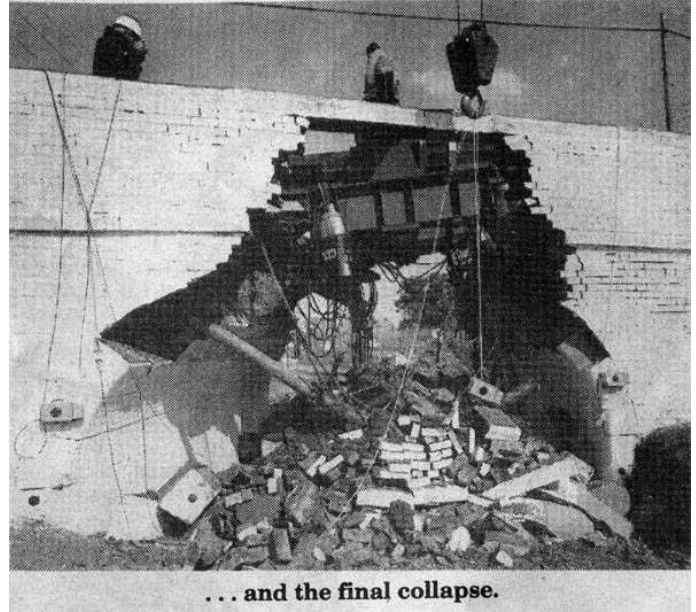


OLD BRIDGE FEELS THE STRAIN OF MODERN LIFE



Showing the strain. . .



. . . and the final collapse.

Going... going... gone. This was the end of a 150-year-old canal bridge at Preston-on-the-Weald-Moors, Telford, after an unsuccessful campaign by villagers to save it.

The bridge was destroyed in engineering research prompted by national concern about the effects of the increasing weight of traffic on old arch bridges.

The Preston bridge proved a tough old nut, taking just over 200 tonnes before failing.

A video and time-lapse photographs were taken during the tests, and engineers looked on. The results will be analysed and a research paper produced.

Shropshire County Council will fill the hole and reinstate the road.

County chief bridge engineer Mr John Fisher said the reinstatement would be done in the next week.

The test was conducted by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, the research arm of the Department of Transport.

Mr Fisher said old arch bridges were complicated structures to analyse mathematically.

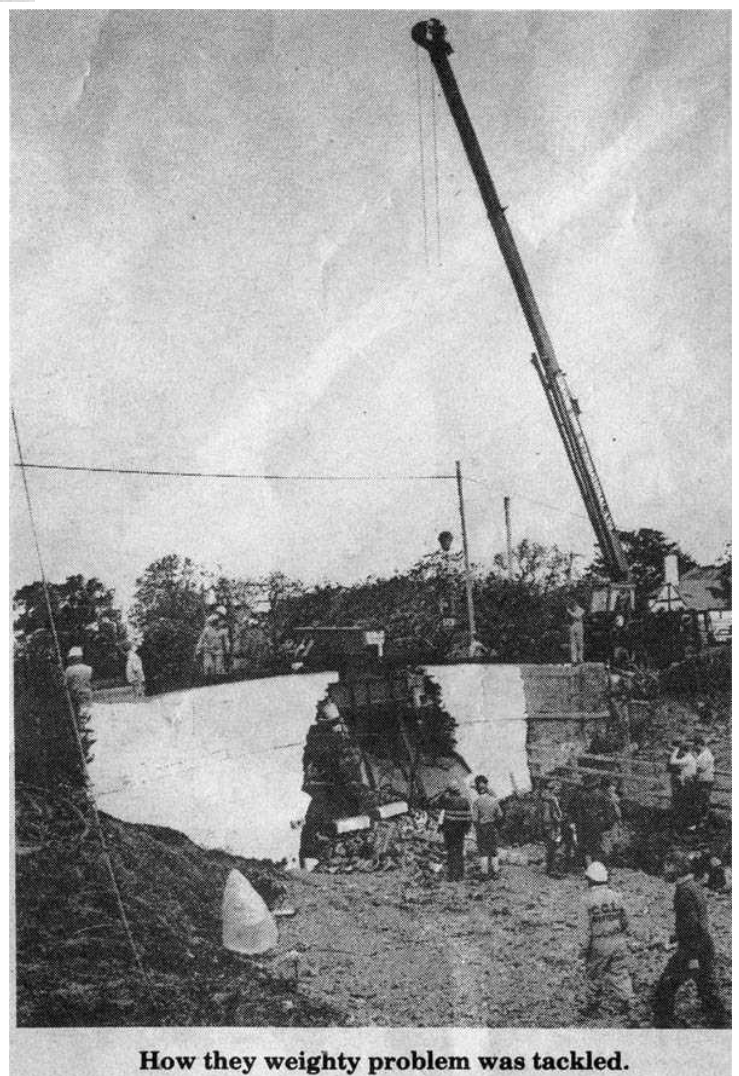
"You can't beat the real thing," he said.

The county had been approached by the laboratory for candidates for destructive load-testing, and the Preston bridge, which was redundant, was offered.

The canal was long defunct and filled in, he said.

In the testing, the bridge was pulled downwards by jacks against ground anchors. Witnessing the test were engineers and scientists from the laboratory, engineers from the county council, and interested members of the profession.

Villages had campaigned against the destruction of the bridge, because they felt they would lose a bit of their heritage, and also because it was close to a school and they felt it helped slow down traffic.



How they weighty problem was tackled.