

CHURCH STREET BRIDGE



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SOHE 2008



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church street bridge plan

Location

CHURCH STREET CREMORNE AND CHURCH STREET RICHMOND AND CHAPEL STREET SOUTH
YARRA, STONNINGTON CITY, YARRA CITY

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1917

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO19

HO239

VHR Registration

August 9, 2001

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 27, 2024

What is significant?

The Church Street Bridge, completed in 1924, is one of the five major metropolitan bridges over the Yarra River. The crossing between Chapel Street and Church Street was negotiated by punt until a narrow single span iron box-girder bridge was erected in the 1850s. By the early twentieth century the bridge was inadequate in terms of structure and traffic capacity, and furthermore an upgrade was needed to provide a tramway connection across the river. The Prahran, Richmond and Melbourne Councils, the Tramway Board and the State government each agreed to contribute to the cost and an Act of Parliament was passed in 1919 to enable the Prahran and Richmond Councils to construct a new bridge.

The new bridge was to be 66 feet (20.1m) wide with a 44 foot (13.4m) carriageway and two 11 foot (3.4m) footpaths. The waterway was to be 300 feet (91.5m) wide to accommodate the reappraisal of flood levels in a contemporary Yarra Floods Board report. A three arch design was called for, following the lead of the earlier Princes Bridge. A competition for a design for the bridge was won by Harold Desbrowe-Annear and engineers J.M. Ashworth and A.I.L. Galbraith. The architects Harold Desbrowe Annear and Thomas Ramsden Ashworth and engineer John Albert Laing (who had also made an entry in the competition) in conjunction, were commissioned to design a bridge based on the winning entry, but adapted to the requirements of the competition adjudicators .

The bridge was constructed by the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company. The bridge was opened by the Governor, the Earl of Stradbroke, on 8 July 1924.

The Church Street Bridge has three spans of ribbed arches, with the central span slightly wider for visual balance. The pier bases are brought up to large moulding below the arch springing level and are formed into prow-like cutwaters. The piers above are formed into pilasters on the outside with the panel between displaying large coats of arms in low relief. The coats of arms of Victoria and Melbourne remain on the piers. The coats of arms of the Cities of Prahran and Richmond which originally graced the faces of the abutments have been removed.

Slender cross walls in the open spandrels carry the load of the roadway deck to the arch ribs. Concrete arches link the crosswalls at the sides of the bridge. The ends of the cross walls are formed into brackets to support the walkway and balustrades above. Above each of the piers and abutments are lamp standards, which also support the overhead tramway power supply. Engaged Ionic columns either side of a square column are topped by an entablature and a finial decorated with wreaths. An elaborate metal mounting holds four torch-like lamps. Plaques referring to the opening of the bridge are fixed to the roadway sides of the outer standards. The arches of northern span were rebuilt in the late 1990s with a higher springing point and in new material to accommodate road widening for the Monash Freeway.

How is it significant?

The Church Street Bridge is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Church Street Bridge is of historical significance as one of the major metropolitan bridges and as a major crossing of the Yarra River. The bridge committee insisted upon a substantial, beautiful and permanent structure that would be an investment in the future, against the government push for a frugal project. The Bridge was seen as having an important functional role in linking the two densely populated inner suburbs, and this is reflected in the design of the concrete structure to give greater than normal load carrying capacity. But equally the bridge was credited with a civic role in promoting the beautification of the city, particularly as it spanned a polluted river in the midst of the industrial back yards of Richmond and Prahran. Melbourne already boasted a considerable architectural legacy. The use of classical forms and ornament, symbolising a relationship to a glorious past, was seen as appropriate for what was expected to become one of the busy thoroughfares of a great city.

The Church Street Bridge is of architectural significance as a fine example of the application to a reinforced concrete bridge structure of a classically inspired decorative treatment. The technology of steel reinforced concrete construction was clearly expressed in the separate ribs of the main spans and the open spandrel above, clearly distinguishing it from a bridge of traditional masonry construction. However, through composition, proportioning and ornamental treatment in a grand, if sparse, classically inspired manner the bridge gained a processional quality and symbolic importance as major urban river crossing.

The Church Street Bridge is of architectural significance as an example of a large institutional work by important Melbourne architects Harold Desbrowe Annear and TR Ashworth. Annear was involved in town planning issues and espoused the principles of the City Beautiful. He published a City Beautiful inspired planning proposal for South Melbourne. The Church Street Bridge is the only remaining built expression of Annear's interest in this field.

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act*

1987 and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

* Repairs and maintenance to the bridge which replace like with like.

* Emergency works.

* Repairs to the cycleways and north west stairs.

* Repairs to river banks and removal and control of vegetation on the registered land.

Construction dates	1924,
Architect/Designer	Annear, Harold Desbrowe,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	11458
Property Number	

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Criterion B

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

Criterion C

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

Criterion D

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

Criterion E

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Criterion F

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

Criterion G

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

Extent of Registration

1. All the bridge known as the Church Street Bridge including the bridge structure, piers, abutments, balustrades and lamp standards shown as B1 on diagram 1917 held by the Executive Director
2. All of the land to a distance of 5m around the outside of the bridge and its abutments as shown on diagram 1917 held by the Executive Director

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>