

# BRIDGE



BRIDGE SOHE 2008



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H1446 Newlands Road  
Bridge 3 Sep 2008



bridge newlands road coburg  
detail of arch may1997



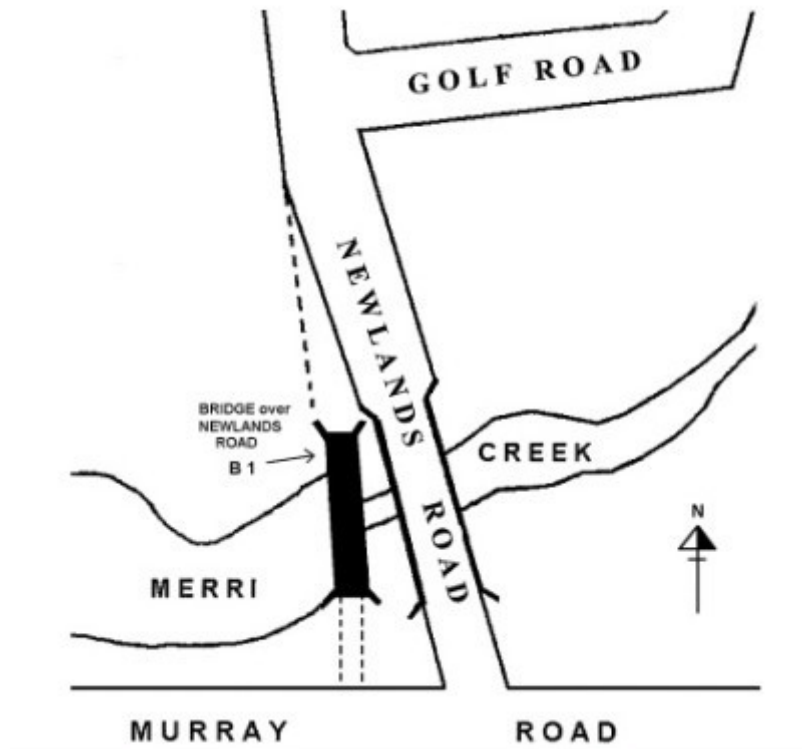
bridge newlands road coburg  
side view



bridge newlands road coburg  
side detail



bridge newlands road coburg  
side elevation sep1984



bridge newlands road coburg plan

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### **Location**

OVER MERRI CREEK, NEWLANDS ROAD COBURG, MORELAND CITY

### **Municipality**

MERRI-BEK CITY

### **Level of significance**

Registered

### **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H1446

### **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO125

### **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

### **Amendment to Registration**

January 7, 1999

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 19, 1999

What is significant?

The Bridge, over Merri Creek was constructed in 1865 by convict labour from nearby Pentridge Prison. It was built under the administration of William Champ, the third inspector General of Penal Establishments in Victoria who had earlier been the first Premier of Tasmania. During his time as Inspector General he was responsible for the building of much of present day Pentridge Prison, transforming it from a makeshift stockade to the central penitentiary for Victoria. His name is inscribed on a foundation stone of the bridge. The bluestone for the bridge was quarried from within the Old Penal Reserve along the Merri Creek. Newlands Road Bridge was originally built as a road bridge and was open to traffic up until 1961 when a new concrete bridge was opened along side it. Newlands Road Bridge is a triple span bluestone segmental arched bridge with integral balustrades and parapets. Each span is 9.1 metres and the bridge is in total 27.4 metres long. It is currently used as a pedestrian bridge across the Merri Creek. The bridge runs in a north-south direction and follows the course of an old section of Newlands Road.

How is it significant?

The Bridge, over Merri Creek is of historical, social and architectural importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Bridge, over Merri Creek is historically and socially important for its close connection with Pentridge Prison, as one of only a few examples existing of public works constructed by penal labour. The bridge is an important indication of penal reform in Victoria, being built when there was a new belief that prisoners should work to reform themselves. The bridge is historically and socially important for its associations with Inspector General William Champ, first Premier of Tasmania, noted prison reformer in nineteenth century Victoria, and the man responsible for much of the existing buildings, walls and gates of modern Pentridge Prison.

The Bridge, over Merri Creek is architecturally important as an early example of a substantial bluestone bridge. It demonstrates skilled stonemasonry in its construction with prominent voussoirs to the arches, substantial piers with carved breakwaters, rusticated bluestone string course at road level, and capping stones to the parapet walls. The bridge is important for its contribution to the complex of visually linked prison related structures, which include the Murray Road Bridge and the Pentridge Prison walls.

### 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:**

#### **EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMITS:**

(Classes of works or activities which may be undertaken without a permit under Part 4 of the Heritage Act 1995)

#### **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.
5. 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.

\* No permit required for routine maintenance of the Bridge, over Merri Creek

\* No permit required to replace like with like on the Bridge, over Merri Creek

Construction dates	1865,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	MERRI CREEK BRIDGE, NEWLANDS ROAD BRIDGE OVER MERRI CREEK,
Hermes Number	305
Property Number	

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## **History**

### **Contextual History:History of Place:**

Early Melbourne was dependent on ways of transporting supplies to feed its growing population and building the cityscape. By the mid 1860s the region around the Merri Creek became important economically to the colony for two reasons; agriculture production and quarried bluestone for building supplies.

Temporary crossings built by white settlers to cross the Merri were initially simple fords built from basalt outcrops. The first of these was built near modern St Georges Road. Early timber bridges were also built at High Street by prison labour from the stockade at the corner of Nicholson and Reilly Streets.

The Merri Creek region is noted for its basalt plain, which was formed as a result of volcanic activity beginning four and a half million years ago and ending as recently as eight hundred thousand years ago. It was these layers of basalt which became the basis of a large quarry industry in the area. 'Merri Merri' had been a derivation of an Aboriginal word meaning stony. Large commercial quarries began operating in the area in the 1850s and by 1875 the 41 quarries surpassed the production of bluestone in Footscray and Brunswick.

Another bridge built by prison labour from the Pentridge Stockade was completed in the mid 1850s close by to the subsequent Newlands bridge. A local residents committee had approached the stockade's first Inspector General, Samuel Barrow, to provide the labour, while residents supplied timber, iron, lime, cement and cartage. Both sides were to gain from the arrangement as the residents required passage over the Merri for commercial reasons and the Stockade was anxious to obtain cheap wood supplies from the opposite banks. Work on the bridge was shoddy with claims that the foundations were only eighteen inches deep. The bridge was soon demolished for safety reasons.

#### HISTORY OF PLACE :

Pentridge Stockade was established in October 1850 as a temporary facility to house prison labour used in maintaining and upgrading Sydney Road. Pre-empting the local civilian bluestone industry Inspector General Samuel Barrow in March 1852 planned the extension of the stockade to include the systematic quarrying of bluestone, mainly around what is now known as Coburg Lake. These quarries were extensive and the stone was easily worked. Prison road gangs used crushed stone from these sites until April 1853 when Barrow suspended all work done outside the stockade due to the local pressure about the number of escapes from work parties.

Local residents of Pentridge (as Coburg was known until 1870) were concerned with the original 1850 siting of a temporary prison stockade in their midst and became increasingly unsettled after a number of escapes.

The general decrepitude of the stockade, harsh leadership, lack of organisation, underfunding and high turnover of prison staff due to the gold rush culminated in the assassination of Inspector General John Price in 1857 by rioting convicts on one of the prison hulks. His replacement, William Champ marked a turning point in prison administration in Victoria, and the rebuilding of Pentridge Stockade into a modern prison. Champ had been appointed commandant of Port Arthur penal settlement in 1844 and had won a seat in the Tasmanian parliament in 1856. He was appointed the third Inspector General in 1857. Using the 1857 Select Committee on Penal Discipline recommendations that a central penitentiary be established at Pentridge Stockade he embarked on a radical building program using material from the stockades quarries and prison labour to build the six metre high main prison walls, a panopticon (now B division), cell blocks, warders quarters and workshops.

During the next seven years Champ transformed the flimsy wooden stockade into a model mid nineteenth century prison. Discipline was changed from harsh arbitrary physical force to that of strict moral discipline. Solitary confinement was used instead of floggings and a factory system perfected to inculcate work as a method of reform.

Champ also had to deal with the fallout of the Select Committee's recommendations on local residents which included not only making the stockade permanent but also extending its area to two hundred acres. Reaction by an already disgruntled population was swift with two petitions sent in late 1857 to the Victorian government protesting about falling land prices due to the penal Department's plans and requesting the restriction of the stockade to its original forty acres. Both petitions were rejected. The January 1859 prison break-out renewed local protests with a deputation meeting Gavan Duffy and John O'Shannassy in February 1859. Champ for his part reminded the government of the seventy thousand pounds already spent on the prison, the further fifty thousand pounds voted to it in the future, and the employment of seven hundred prisoners.

Finally a compromise was reached between Champs and a residents committee on March 10 1859. The penal reserve was to be limited to 143 acres and would extend only as far as the Merri Creek and two bridges were built across the creek. One was Newlands Bridge and the other Murray Bridge which was completed in 1871.

No details exist of who engineered the Newlands Bridge or how it was built. Champ's building program in the stockade, which was his priority was only completed in 1864, so work on the bridge probably commenced

immediately after this. The flood of 1863 was recorded as the worst ever which would have interrupted any earlier work. Champs personalised many of the criticisms aimed at him during his administration at Port Arthur and later in Victoria and took an almost pedantic interest in all forms of Penal Administration. This perfectionism no doubt drove the building of the Newlands Bridge and having his name inscribed on a prominent memorial stone added to the attention Champ would have given the project.

The bridge's name was derived from the same place as the road it carried. James Campbell purchased 640 acres north of the bridge's later site in 1839 and called the estate Newlands. A road built to the farm in 1853 was first known as North Road then West Newlands Road and later simply Newlands Road.

Newlands Bridge was open to traffic up to 1961, when a new concrete bridge Newlands Road Bridge is a triple span bluestone segmental arched bridge with integral balustrades and parapets. Details include a rusticated string course, cut stone breakwaters, rusticated parapet capping and prominent voussoirs. Each span is 9.1 metres and the bridge is in total 27.4 metres long. It is currently used as a pedestrian bridge across the Merri Creek. The bridge runs in a north-south direction and follows the course of an old section of Newlands Road. It was originally built as a road bridge, but is currently used as a footbridge.

A carved stone has been built into the bluestone parapets above the middle arch and faces west (upstream). An inscription is surrounded by carved leafing. The inscription reads "Newlands Bridge, Erected by the penal Dept, August 1865, W.T.N. Champ Inspector General".

A plaque has recently been mounted on a large basalt boulder on the southern bank next to the bridge bearing the same inscription.

#### COMPARISON:

Other Bluestone Bridges currently on the Victorian Heritage Register

H1433 Railway Bridge over Barkers Creek, Harcourt, 1859, Granite, 3 Span arch  
H1434 Railway Bridge over Coliban River, Malmsbury, 1859, Bluestone, 5 Span arch  
H1441 Railway Bridge over Kismet Creek, Sunbury, 1861, Bluestone, 5 span  
H1445 Bridge over Hughes Creek, Avenel, 1859, sandstone, 5 span  
H1198 Bridge, Murray Road and Merri Creek Coburg, 1870-71, Bluestone, single span  
H1426 Bridge over Jackson Creek, Sunbury, bluestone, 2 span elliptical arches  
H1456 Bridge over Barwon River, Winchelsea, 1887, bluestone, 3 span  
H1115 Bridge over Moorabool River, Batesford, 1859, bluestone, 5 arch

There are other multi span bluestone bridges on the Victorian Heritage Register, as noted above, however the Bridge, over Merri Creek is elevated by its historical and social importance. Murray Road Bridge constructed in 1871 was also constructed by prison labour and is situated near Pentridge Prison. It is constructed of bluestone, but is a single arch span. The Bridge, over Merri Creek was also constructed by prison labour, from Pentridge, and is an earlier and more substantial example of such a structure. Both bridges are important as there are only a few public structures built by prison labour known to survive.

opened along side it. Traffic had increased along Newlands Road with the sale of farm land to Kodak and the opening of the Coburg Drive-In Cinema.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 1446 in the category described as a Heritage Place is now described as:

Bridge, Newlands Road, over Merri Creek, Coburg, Moreland City Council.

### EXTENT:

1. To the extent of: All the structure known as the Bridge, over Merri Creek including all of the structure, its approach spans and abutments as marked B1 in Diagram 602301 held by the Executive Director.

Dated: 3 December 1998.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 41 7 January 1999 p.35]

*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/>*