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# Kilcunda Bridge



B2949 Trestle Bridge  
Kilcunda



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## Location

Bass Highway (beside), KILCUNDA VIC 3995 - Property No B2949

## Municipality

BASS COAST SHIRE

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 26, 2004

What is significant?

The Kilcunda Bridge was constructed in 1911 for the Victorian Railways as part of the Woolamai-Wonthaggi railway. It is a single-track fifteen span all-timber railway bridge, with a total deck length of 91 metres and a maximum height of twelve metres. Kilcunda Bridge came into use with the opening to traffic of the permanent coal-fields railway in 1911. The line was closed in 1978. The bridge is now part of the Bass Coast Shire Rail Trail, opened c. 2006.

### **How is it significant?**

Kilcunda Bridge is historically, technically, socially and aesthetically significant to the State of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

Kilcunda Bridge is historically significant as the most spectacular surviving artifact from the historic Woolamai-Wonthaggi railway, built specifically to access locomotive fuel from the State Coal Mine at the Powlett Coal Fields. Until 1978 much of the steam-locomotive fuel that serviced the Victorian Railways network passed over this bridge, en-route to Melbourne and other parts of the State. It has therefore played a more central and essential role in Victorian Railways history than most other Victorian twenty feet span timber-trestle railway bridges.

Kilcunda Bridge is technically significant because of its unusual pier structure. It was originally built with angled two-pile timber piers, an innovation on the earlier tradition of vertical two-pile piers. Because of the unusually heavy haulage to which this bridge was subject, two more vertical timber piles were later added to the centre section of each pier, distinguishing these tall piers from those of other surviving timber bridges. Beam spans were also strengthened by adding an extra timber beam under each side to give a total of six beams per span: a very unusual feature.

Kilcunda Bridge is socially significant to Victorians because of its historical importance, combined with easy public access beside a coastal State highway much used by tourists. It is significant more particularly to those who identify with the Wonthaggi district's unique place in Victorian coal-mining and railways history.

Kilcunda Bridge is aesthetically significant and set apart from all other Victorian Railways timber bridges by being uniquely situated in a magnificent ocean context and very visible and accessible beside a State highway. Being situated right at the mouth of Bourne Creek, its immediate context is provided by dune grasses and shrubs, and an adjacent sandy beach. It is one of the most exposed to public view of any major Victorian timber-trestle railway bridge.

Classified: 10/11/1998

Hermes Number 67367

Property Number

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## **Physical Description 1**

### **Description:**

Kilcunda Bridge is a single-track fifteen span all-timber railway bridge, with a total deck length of 91 m and a maximum height of twelve m. Its timber-beam spans are uniformly of the standard Victorian Railways twenty feet (6.1 m) design. It has tall 'three-storey' four-pile piers, and unusual longitudinal-timber stays.

### **Context**

Kilcunda Bridge is the only significant Victorian Railways timber bridge to be situated on coastal dunes in an ocean context, at the mouth of Bourne Creek, and also alongside a State highway (Bass Highway). Its immediate context is provided by dune grasses and shrubs, and an adjacent attractive sandy beach.

Intactness:

Kilcunda Bridge is intact and in very good order: as part of the Bass Coast Rail Trail it is used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Assessment against criteria:

importance to the course or pattern of Victoria's history

The Woolamai to Wonthaggi railway played a very significant role in Victorian Railways history as the route along which coal was carried to fuel the State's steam locomotives. Much of the coal that serviced the Victorian Railways network passed over Kilcunda Bridge, en-route to Melbourne and other parts of the State. It has therefore played a very more central and essential role in Victorian Railways history than most other Victorian twenty feet span timber-trestle railway bridges.

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

Kilcunda Bridge is the most spectacular surviving artifact of the historic Woolamai-Wonthaggi railway.

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural objects

Kilcunda Bridge is one of the tall medium-sized all-timber railway bridges built to a uniform twenty feet (6.1 m) timber-beam-span pattern. This span length was the maximum for all-timber Victorian Railways bridges built since 1880.

Because of the heavy coal haulage, Kilcunda Bridge's beam spans were strengthened by adding an extra timber beam under each side to give a total of six beams per span: a very unusual feature.

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Kilcunda Bridge is the only significant Victorian Railways timber bridge to be situated on coastal dunes in an ocean context, at the mouth of Bourne Creek and accessible beside a State highway. It is probably the most exposed to public view of any major Victorian timber-trestle railway bridge, and traversed daily by pedestrians and cyclists.

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

Kilcunda Bridge has several interesting features which distinguish it from other comparable surviving timber bridges. The bridge has tall 'three-storey' four-pile piers, and unusual longitudinal-timber stays. It was originally built in 1911 with angled two-pile timber piers, which was an innovation on the earlier tradition of vertical two-pile piers. Because of the unusually heavy coal haulage to which this bridge was subject, two more vertical timber piles were later added to the centre section of each pier, at four feet centres, which distinguishes these tall piers from those of other surviving timber bridges. Beam spans were also strengthened by adding an extra timber beam under each side to give a total of six beams per span, a very unusual feature.

Strong or special association with a particular community

Kilcunda Bridge is significant particularly to those people who identify with the Wonthaggi district's unique place in Victorian coal-mining and railways history.

## **Usage/Former Usage**

former rail bridge; currently part of rail trail

## **Physical Conditions**

excellent

## **Intactness**

excellent

*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/>*