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# Bridge No 7 - Castlemaine/Maldon Railway

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## Location

Walmer Road near Muckleford Station., MUCKLEFORD VIC 3451 - Property No B6926

## Municipality

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 15, 2005

The Bridge at Walmer Road is historically, scientifically and aesthetically significant at the state level as a representative example of the once common longitudinal decked timber bridge. Although 74% of the over 2000 standard all timber bridges constructed by the Victorian railways had a longitudinal timber deck, nearly all have been replaced by culverts, reconstructed into a more "permanent" type of bridge, or lie decaying along the formations of disused railway lines. With maximum height of 5 feet (1.52m), a length of 132 feet (40.23m), and constructed in 1884, No 7 bridge on the Maldon line is the lowest, second longest, and second oldest surviving example of a longitudinal timber decked railway bridge designed and built by the Victorian Railways. Fifty percent of the more than 2000 standard timber railway bridges built by the Victorian Railways were no higher than 5 feet (1.52m). No 7 bridge on the Maldon line is the only surviving example of such a low bridge identified in the Trust timber bridge survey.

The bridge demonstrates a simple, economical, all timber design generally used for bridges up to 10 feet high that has remained essentially unchanged in basic design since it was first used by the Victorian Railways in the early 1870's. No 7 bridge demonstrates more about the structural variation found in bridges with longitudinal timber decks than any other surviving bridge, because the left hand side appears to date from the 1920's, while the right hand side demonstrates more modern detail that probably dated from the 1960's. Of particular interest is the 1920's style kerb on the left side of the bridge that demonstrates "overlap" joints and square washers; features not seen on any other intact bridge with a longitudinal deck today. Another now rare feature is the guard rail that was mandatory on all bridges with a radius of 20 chains or less.

The quiet rural setting and almost symmetrical shape of this very low curved bridge has the potential to become a favourite location for viewing and photographing steam trains from the nearby road, when the bridge is restored as part of the Castlemaine and Maldon operational railway museum.

No 7 bridge is one of a diverse series of six timber bridges on the Maldon line which, together with an original 1884 iron girder bridge, are recognised to be of state significance as the most representative collection of nineteenth century branch line bridges to survive intact in Victoria.

The significance of the bridge is enhanced by its presence on the short, 10 mile (16.1 km) long, heritage-rich Maldon branch line. Built in 1884 to service the gold mining town of Maldon, the 10 mile branch line terminated at Maldon. Even when the railway was extended a further 10 miles, Maldon station retained the characteristics of a small terminal station, with all trains arriving and departing at the same end. As the gold industry went into decline, so did the township of Maldon and its railway. The early insignificance of the railway resulted in virtually no modernisation of the line nor its infrastructure. When the line closed in 1976 it retained major items of outstanding heritage significance, which, combined with its short length, resulted in the Maldon line being selected for restoration and preservation as a working museum by a group of railway enthusiasts. A few weeks after the line closed the Castlemaine and Maldon Railway Preservation Society was formed and most of the heritage assets of the railway were reserved for preservation, including its outstanding collection of small to medium sized timber bridges.

Today half of the Castlemaine to Maldon railway, now marketed as the "Victorian Goldfields Railway", has been restored and every week tourists experience the historic railway items and heritage classified structures at the Maldon end of the line in the context of an operating "steam-era" railway museum. When the second half of the Maldon line is restored, No 7 bridge will be the lowest all timber bridge built by the Victorian Railways still in railway service, and its intrinsic heritage significance will be maintained and enhanced as steam trains once again cross over it, providing tourists with interesting visual and photographic opportunities while demonstrating the dominant role timber bridge and steam railway technologies once played in the transportation needs of Victoria. Classified: 03/08/1998

Hermes Number 69124

Property Number

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*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/>*