

# CHINAMANS BRIDGE



CHINAMANS BRIDGE SOHE  
2008



1 chinamans bridge over  
goulburn river nagambie side  
elevation dec1987



chinamans bridge over  
goulburn river nagambie  
carriageway jun1998



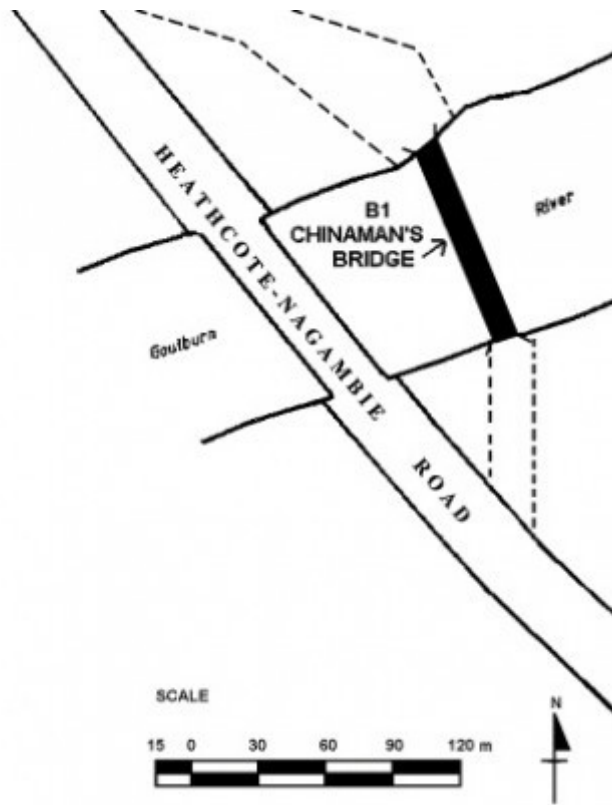
chinamans bridge over  
goulburn river nagambie  
siding detail dec1987



chinamans bridge over  
goulburn river negambie  
pylons dec1987



chinamans bridge over  
goulburn river negambie side  
detail dec1987



chinamans bridge over goulbourn river nagambie plan

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## Location

OVER GOULBURN RIVER, NAGAMBIE-HEATHCOTE ROAD NAGAMBIE, STRATHBOGIE SHIRE

## Municipality

STRATHBOGIE SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1449

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO8

## VHR Registration

December 21, 1988

## Amendment to Registration

January 7, 1999

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 12, 2023

#### What is significant?

Chinamans Bridge is an extensive timber bridge which spans the Goulburn River 2.7 kilometres west of the Goulburn Valley Highway. It is believed to have been constructed in 1891 and at the time was known as Kerris Bridge. The bridge was funded with a joint grant from the Public Works Department and the Water Supply Department. It was designed by the Goulburn Shire Council Engineer and constructed by the contractor JB Parkinson at a cost of £4188 3s 6d. The bridge included a lift span to enable sawmill and recreation steamers to continue to utilise the Goulburn River. The Nagambie Sawmill steamer passed through the bridge six times a week during the 1890s. Chinamans bridge originally carried the Nagambie-Heathcote Road across the Goulburn River, however the road has now been re-aligned to be carried over the river by a new bridge nearby. Chinamans Bridge was given its name because the Nagambie-Heathcote Road, once known as Chinamans Road, was in an area populated by Chinese market gardeners up until 1916. Chinamans Bridge is a timber girder bridge with hand hewn squared timber stringers strutted to the piers and timber corbels and deck. The arrangement of spans supports the view that the bridge at one time incorporated a lift span to provide for the passage of river traffic, however only the timber fenders remain. The drawbridge span was replaced, around 1940, with a steel span.

#### How is it significant?

Chinamans Bridge, Nagambie is of architectural and historical importance to the State of Victoria.

#### Why is it significant?

Chinamans Bridge, Nagambie is of architectural importance as one of the earliest completely timber road bridges in Victoria. It is important for its use of hand hewn timber in its construction and details. Although it has lost much of its mechanism, the bridge is a rare surviving example of a bridge which included a vertical lift span.

Chinamans Bridge is of historical importance for its associations with the expansion of Victoria's infrastructure in the 1890s and for its role in the development of transport systems. It is especially associated with the growth of the township of Nagambie and is an indication of the district's prosperous sawmilling industry during the 1890s. Chinamans Bridge is of historical importance as a reminder of the steam boat era in Victoria during the 1890s, when rivers were still used in preference to roads for recreational and commercial purposes.

## 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 Chinaman's Bridge

\* No permit required to replace like with like on the Chinaman's Bridge

Construction dates	1891,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	KERRIS BRIDGE,
Hermes Number	869
Property Number	

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## **History**

#### Contextual History:History of Place:

The Goulburn River was vital to the development of the district, and bridges were eventually built to replace Old Crossing Place punt, as well as Murchison punt, but the one at Day's Flour Mill was not replaced. The 1880s and 1890s was an era of steam boats and transport took to the river in preference to bullock teams on unmade roads. If bridges were to be built, it was important that they did not obstruct the river so that river boats could take passengers from Seymour to Nagambie and Chateau Tahbilk, thus opening up the area and bringing progress to Nagambie. Steam ships were also used by the local sawmills .

The timber bridge was estimated to have been built c.1865 in Professor Colin O'Connor's study of Historic bridges. This would make it the oldest existing timber bridge in Victoria and the third oldest in Australia. Further research has shown however, that the bridge was more likely to have been built at a much later date, c1891.

#### History of Place:

Edwin Carton Booth in his two volume work, 'Australia' (Virtue and Co. 1873-6), does not mention the town of Nagambie and says that between Seymour and Echuca the only practicable crossing of the Goulburn River was at Murchison. In 1879-80 a bridge was built at Nagambie, known as Kettle's bridge. The Goulburn Weir was completed in December 1890. The construction of the weir was to have considerable impact on the bridges upstream of it at Nagambie .

The completion of the weir and the consequent flooding of land near Nagambie had the effect of reducing the useful life of Kettle's Bridge. Waranga and Goulburn Shires proposed in 1889 to build two bridges across the Goulburn River at Nagambie, one to be downstream of the town and one upstream .

In 1890, the Honourable Alfred Deakin, Minister of Water Supply, who later became Prime Minister, urged in Parliament for Kerris Bridge, as with any other bridges obstructing the river, to be altered and equipped with a drawbridge so that river boats could take train passengers from Seymour to Nagambie and Chateau Tahbilk, thus opening up the area and bringing progress to Nagambie. Kerris Bridge was later pulled down altogether .

There was an expressed need to retain a navigable river, therefore new bridges should be drawbridges. One of the bridges at Nagambie had already been built. This bridge known as Kirwans on Lobbs Lane, had been started by the contractors Dainton and Hesford on 24 February 1890. The whole work was finished by November 1890. There were 20 tonnes of ironwork. The bridge was unusual in having been built with an angle in its alignment.

Just when Kirwans bridge was being finished, though with a large road cutting still to be done on the Goulburn Shire side, tenders were called for building the second bridge across the Goulburn River at Nagambie, known as Kerris Bridge .

Tenders were presented for this work at the October 1890 meeting of the Goulburn Shire Council, which was the constructing authority. The tender of J.B. Parkinson was accepted. A month later Parkinson had signed the contract and was starting work with two engines and two gangs. By 19 December 1890 the approaches to Kettles Bridge were impassable .

In March 1891 an inspection was carried out on the site of the works at Kerris bridge. On the way Mr Graham examined a plan of a lift span prepared by Mr Godecke, manager of the sawmill company, which he had drawn from memory of a bridge over the Murrumbidgee River, NSW. The minister was highly pleased with Kerris Bridge and there upon authorised the erection of a lift span providing it did not cost more than 1000 pounds .

In March 1891 Goulburn Shire council approved its engineer's design of a timber lift span for Kerris bridge and the contractor's price to build it was accepted. (Nagambie Times 27/3/1891). By June 1891 Kerris Bridge was finished. The Goulburn Shire engineer Richard Fennelly stated his satisfaction with the contractor's work. In September 1891 the manager of the Nagambie Saw Mill claimed that it was impossible to raise the lift span of Kerris bridge with anything less than four men. As the company's steamer was passing through the bridge six times a week and sometimes there were only two men aboard he asked for extra counterweights to be fitted so that it could be worked by two men .

In November the Goulburn Shire Council received permission from the Water supply department to fence the road through Vicker's property near Kerris bridge. This road must surely be known as Vicker's Lane (RCA Map of Victoria/Road No. 5378) which connects the Goulburn Valley Highway with Chinamans bridge. If this is so then

Kerris Bridge and Chinaman's Bride are one and the same bridge .

A map of the Nagambie region in the military map series at a scale of 1 inch to a mile was published with information correct up to January 1922. This shows a wooden bridge across the river, but does not name it. However the road from the bridge to the Goulburn Valley road is named Chinaman's Road. A Parish plan of Bailleston, County of Rodney, dated 15.12.1941, shows a bridge (unnamed) and the road leading eastwards from it is named Vickers Road. The County Roads Board visited Goulburn Shire in 1914. After this visit a number of roads within the Shire were declared main Roads. They were Sydney Road, Goulburn Valley Rd and "Vickers Road from its junction with Goulburn Valley Road thence westerly to and including the bridge over the Goulburn"(Nagambie Times 19.6.1914) .

The documentary evidence then leads to the conclusion that Vickers Road, Vickers Lane and Chinamans Road are synonymous and that Chinaman's Bridge, at the time of its construction, (Nov 1890-June 1891), was known as Kerris Bridge .

Chinamans Bridge, was so called because of the many Chinese market-gardeners established in the area before the great 1916 flood put an end to this activity. The Chinese lost faith in this spot when they saw their wooden idols, joss house, and all their vegetables washed away together with furniture, including pianos, in this terrible flood .

Chinamans bridge was first built as a draw-bridge to allow river traffic to pass through. It was then the era of river steam-boats and transport took to the river in preference to bullock teams on unmade roads. When river transport ceased, Chinaman's drawbridge was no

Other examples of Timber Bridges currently on the Victorian Heritage Register are as follows;

Railway Bridge, South of Noojee-Powell Town Rd, Noojee, 1919, 18 span, timber trestle

Railway Bridge, Orbost-Bairnsdale Line, Nowa Nowa, 1916, timber trestle

Railway Trestle Bridge over Monbulk Creek, Selby, 1899 timber trestle

Railway Bridge over Curdies River, Timboon, timber trestle

Railway Bridge over Hanfords Creek, Wandong-Bendigo Railway Line, Pyalong, timber trestle

Railway Bridge over Mollison's Creek, Wandong-Bendigo Railway Line, Pyalong, 1889, 26 span, timber trestle

Brunton's Bridge over Thomson River, Old road between Cowarr and Walhalla, Narracan

Railway Bridge over Mollison's Creek, Wandong-Bendigo Railway Line, Pyalong, 1889, 26 span, timber trestle

Hopkins River Bridge, Hopkins Point Rd, Warrnambool, 1894-1895, timber

Hinnomunjie Bridge, Mitta Mitta River, Omeo, 1910, timber trestle

Chinamans Bridge still remains as one of the earliest timber bridges constructed in Victoria and is rare for its timber girder construction. It is a rare example of a bridge which once included a lift span, another example is yet to be found.

used as such, the drawbridge span was replaced, around 1940, with a steel span-the bridge being all timber previously-and the bridge re-decked .

## **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 1449 in the category described as a Heritage Place, is now described as:

Chinamans Bridge, Across Goulburn River, Nagambie-Heathcote Road, Nagambie, Strathbogie Shire Council.

### **EXTENT:**

1. To the extent of: All the structure known as Chinamans Bridge including all of the structure, its approach spans and abutments as marked B1 in Diagram 600859 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/>*