
ERICA STEEL TRAMWAY



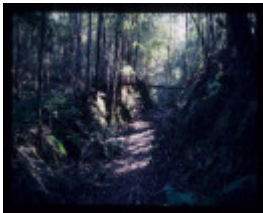
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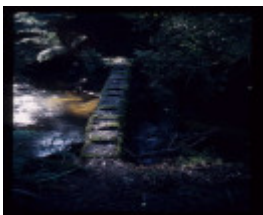
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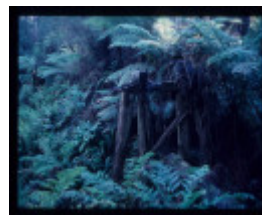
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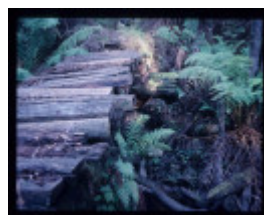
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Location

OLD GOVERNMENT ROAD ERICA AND WALHALLA ROAD CARINGAL, BAW BAW SHIRE

Municipality

BAW BAW SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8122-0077

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation
of Site

Heritage Inventory Interpretation: The only tramways owned by the Forests Commission were the Erica Steel Tramway, the upper section of the Thomson Valley Tramway, the West Tanjil Steel Tramway, the Lock Valley Tramway (after the 1926 fires) and a short section of the Rubicon to Alexandra Tramway. Of these they provided the motive power on and were directly responsible for the operation of only the Thomson Valley Tramway and the Erica Steel Tramway. Of the Forests Commission operated tramways, only the Erica Steel Tramway used a steam locomotive and it has the best surviving remains along the route. The Erica Steel tramway was the only timber tramway in Victoria to use a Climax locomotive, and one of only five to use articulated steam power. Two of the locomotives used on these tramways were made in Australia, the other three being imported. Only two articulated steam timber tramway locomotives survive in Victoria, the Climax used on the Erica Steel Tramway and an incomplete "Shay" locomotive from the VHC tramway at Powelltown. The remains of the Erica Steel Tramway demonstrate well the sharp curves and steep grades which differentiated timber tramways from government railways and required the use of articulated steam locomotives. The roadbed of the tramway is largely intact with only the rails, sleepers and ballast missing. Several different bridging methods are demonstrated by the remains. The survival of the Climax locomotive and one of the TACL tractors, albeit not on site, complements the surviving relics of the tramway. The tramway, especially those branches along the Western and Eastern Tyers Valleys, is set in an aesthetically pleasing forest. It played a vital role in timber production in the Tyers Valley and served 12 sawmill sites.

Hermes
Number

10787

Property
Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: Also known as the Tyers Valley tramway, this line was built by the Forests Commission of Victoria expressly for the extraction of timber from the Tyers Valley. In July 1925, several Tyers Valley sawmillers approached the Forests Commission and requested the construction of a steel tramway to replace the run-down wooden tramways serving the district. Construction of the line had commenced in a northerly direction from Erica when a bushfire on 5 March 1926 swept the area, killing most of the standing timber in the valley. This increased the need for the tramway in order to salvage the timber, but at the same time it was discovered that the route chosen running north-west from Collins siding south of Erica, and construction along the

new alignment commenced on 24 May 1926. The work was supervised by Forest Engineer Bill Lakeland and was largely carried out by the millers themselves. The route of the main section of the tramway paralleled Collins' old tramway route for some distance before skirting the ridge separating Middle Creek and the Tyers Rivers and descending to Tyers Junction where the three branches of the Tyers River met. Here two branch tramways were built to connect the main tramway with Ten Acre Block on the Eastern Tyers River and Growlers Creek on the Western Tyers River. The line was completed to Ten Acre Block in April 1927 and to Growlers Creek three months later. The tramway was built to the gauge of two feet six inches, the same as that of the Victorian Railways narrow-gauge line with which it connected. This facilitated the transfer of locomotives to and from Melbourne as rolling stock suitable for this purpose already existed. After an Australian-built "Harman" articulated steam locomotive was tried on the line and proved to be a failure, a "Climax" locomotive was ordered from the USA. While this was being delivered, service was commenced using two "TACL" rail tractors built by Malcolm Moore of Port Melbourne. When the Climax arrived in September 1928 it was found to answer the requirements perfectly but was prone to break axles. When this occurred the TACL tractors, which were normally confined to the two branch tramways, took over the operation of the line. An engine shed, workshops and housing for the tramway employees were erected at Tyers Junction which became the centre of operations on the line. The tramway operated at a loss for most of its working life, but it played a vital role in the timber industry in the area, transporting 120 million super feet of timber during its lifetime and large quantities of non-sawn timber products such as poles and firewood. The last revenue trip on the line was made on July 1949 and on 14 December 1950 the Climax locomotive was transferred to the state mill at Erica, (McCarthy, M 1983, pp8-11). The Climax Locomotive and one of the TACL tractors were acquired by the Puffing Billy Preservation society. The Climax has been restored, and is the only one operational of two surviving in Australia. (There were between 1,000 and 1,100 Climax locomotives built. Seventeen survive in the world of which only six are operational). The TACL tractor is presently under restoration. Only two complete TACL tractors are known to survive, the other is in a park in South Australia. (Markwick, H. 1988).

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/>