
BRIDGE STREET MALL, BALLARAT CULVERTS

Location

BRIDGE STREET MALL, BALLARAT

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7622-0470

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 12, 2023

What is significant?

The brick, bluestone and concrete culverts are part of a nineteenth century water management system that extend through Ballarat. They were originally constructed as a means to control and redirect sludge and to control water, especially during flood events. This section, at Bridge Street (under Coliseum Walk) was also the redirected alignment of the Yarrowee River which was originally to the west in what is now Grenville Street. It was initially constructed of timber and was depicted as a drain in an 1859 allotment plan of Bridge Street. A smaller branch culvert in Time Lane is also depicted in this plan but it does not appear to extend across Bridge Street and could be the alignment of an 1852 cut to redirect water for mining purposes.

How is it significant?

These sections of the channel / culvert are part of an extensive and interconnected channel system through Ballarat and is a substantial element of infrastructure that has been in use in various forms since the early 1850s.

Why is it significant?

The culverts are part of a large network in Ballarat and demonstrate the huge investment needed to manage the impact that the 1850s gold rush activity had on the landscape. They have historic fabric of brick and bluestone.

Interpretation of Site	These two sections of culvert are alignments of a larger network of channel systems in Ballarat initially constructed as sludge channels from the 1850s. The larger culvert under Coliseum Walk is the redirected alignment of Yarrowee Creek and has been at this location since at least 1858 (Bradby no date 4). The smaller culvert is most likely a section of a cut from the river made in 1852 to redirect water for mining purposes. Major works to the channel system in East Ballarat commenced from 1861 but the channels were modified throughout the nineteenth century. The base and invert lining for this section of channel was thought to have been constructed in 1895 and 1898 and the brick walls thought to be around 1867. The culvert is 8m wide and 3.15 in height and it is completely covered within the Bridge Street Mall area.
Hermes Number	209735
Property Number	

History

The culvert contains the redirected alignment of the Yarrowee River (also referred to as Yarrowee Creek), which was diverted eastwards in the 1850s. The original alignment is depicted in the 1852 township survey plans by W.S. Urquhart. It formed a natural buffer between the chaotic diggings in the east and the planned town centre to the west. In 1852 a new channel had been cut to the west (as depicted in the Feature 553 Ballarat plan) to redirect water for mining. According to historian A.W. Strange the original course of the river had been significantly impacted during the gold rush years and had virtually been 'obliterated' by the impact of mining and flooding. The original alignment was originally under what was to become Grenville Street, but by 1859 it had been straightened and diverted eastwards as indicated in the 1859 Yuilles Swamp plan. This new alignment would become part of an extensive network of channels throughout Ballarat, constructed initially to manage sludge but also water especially during floods as the original natural pathways had been destroyed or clogged by sludge and debris. Featr665A, Ballarat (sic.) First Survey, W.S. Urquhart 1852 PROV Feature 553 Ballarat (sic.) Township Reserve, W.S. Urquhart 1852.with study area overlaid Yuilles Swamp, J.H. Taylor 1859 PROV) The alignment of this channel crosses Bridge Street in a roughly north to south direction with a bridge constructed over it to allow traffic to pass over. A bridge was in place over the river from possibly as early as 1854 and was replaced in 1858 with one built on the current site (The Star 26/07/1858) and is indicated on the 1859 Yuilles Swamp plan. The first significant engineering works to the Yarrowee occurred in 1861 when works were undertaken to form 'sludge channels' (Hansen Partnerships 2003: 173). Construction involved the excavation of a trench with timber piles driven along the sides and bases of the channel, joists and sheathing and lined with timber planks. Smaller branch channels were also constructed and are shown in the undated water channels plan below. The branch channel connecting to Bridge Street could be the 'new cut' depicted in the 1852 Feature 553 plan. Despite these works, flooding events in 1869 and 1870 demonstrated that the infrastructure was inadequate and further works were to follow (The Star 18/10/1869, Strange 1971:26). An 1871 cross-section plan shows the channel path through Ballarat and records that the channel was 'brick' from Alfred Hall on Market Street. The section from Curtis Street (originally Market Street) to Little Bridge Street and under the Bridge Street Mall is enclosed and appears to have been constructed in different phases with the base and lining in bluestone in 1895 and 1898 and the brick walls possibly earlier in 1867 (Hansen Partnerships 2003: 209-10). (WS35 Ballarat Water Channels undated PROV). In 1904 works by council in Bridge Street upgraded the usability and aesthetics of the Yarrowee channel by covering the alignment (in what is now Coliseum Walk) with timber decking (The Australasian 29 February 1908: 523, Hansen Partnerships 2003: 183). The Ballarat Heritage Study notes that the timber decking was replaced by a reinforced concrete deck, probably in the 1950s which could exist under the present surface treatments.

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/>