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# FORMER RUSHWORTH RAILWAY STATION

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## Location

STATION STREET, RUSHWORTH

## Municipality

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7924-0100

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 10, 2024

### What is significant?

The former Rushworth Railway Station comprises archaeological features from several phases of the site's development. These features include the remains of a locomotion turntable, ash pit and water supply, 5 switch point levers, 4 lines of broad gauge track through the main station area, a dead-end siding, a brick-lined drain, timber goods shed, goods shed platform, passenger platform and a weighbridge and shed. The site also includes various smaller features that need further interpretation to reveal their importance and connection to the site such as remnant wooden railway blocks, ceramic piping, a rectangular concrete feature and two access pits within the track area. In addition, aerial photographs and the documentary record, including maps, indicate that the former Rushworth Railway Station was a multifaceted site with several areas of archaeological potential.

### How is it significant?

The former Rushworth Railway Station site is of local significance and evidences an association with an historical phase, period and process that encompasses the development of rural townships in Victoria, the relationship of the township to local industries (farming and forestry) and the establishment of transport infrastructure (rail).

### Why is it significant?

The former Rushworth Railway Station site has existing archaeological features and a documentary record that demonstrates its link to three sections of Victoria's Framework of Historic Themes:

04: Transforming and Managing the Land – 4.4 Farming and 4.6 Exploiting other mineral, forest and water resources

03 Connecting Victorians by Transport and Communications – 3.3 Linking Victorians by rail

06 Building towns, cities and the garden state – 6.5 Living in country towns

The Former Rushworth Railway Station site meets the definition of an archaeological site under the Heritage Act 2017, as a site that contains artefacts, deposits or features 75 or more years old. The site provides information about past activities evident in both the documentary record and through the application of archaeological methods. The site is of local significance and evidences an association with an historical event, phase, period and process that encompasses the development of rural townships in Victoria, the relationship of the township to local industries (farming and forestry) and the establishment of transport infrastructure (rail).

Newspaper and photographic evidence combined with Parliamentary Reports from Victorian Railways reveal that the history of the site has three main phases. The first phase (1890-1914) includes the initial construction of the Rushworth Railway line and station infrastructure after the passing of the Railway Construction Act in 1884. Rail traffic during this phase comprised both passengers, goods freight and livestock, evidenced by the construction of sheep and cattle yards, a goods shed and the firewood siding. Other infrastructure, such as the locomotion turntable and ash pit evidence this phase of transport development which was based on steam power. Firewood and wheat comprised the majority outgoing goods traffic from the station, which was at this time the last station on the branch line from Murchison East. The second phase (1914-1950) of development occurred after the extension of the railway from Rushworth to Colbinabbin in 1914. Traffic at the station continued to grow with passenger numbers remaining steady and grain transportation increasing, although there was a decrease in firewood loading with the closure of the dead-end siding at the station. The deviation of the Colbinabbin Railway line along a more southern route as a result of the expansion of the Waranga Basin occurred during this period, providing a more consistent service. Outgoing goods and passenger traffic peaked during the interwar period, however, livestock transportation declined, possibly leading to the removal of the cattle and sheep yards. Another branch line also opened in 1917 linking Rushworth to Stanhope North (Gigarre) and providing greater transport access for passengers and farmers in the north. The third phase (1950-1987) of development occurred after WWII when passenger traffic began to drop significantly and, according to the annual reports of Victorian Railways, had stopped completely by 1960. Livestock traffic similarly declined. During this period diesel trains were gradually replacing the old steam locomotives until by the early 1970s they had largely disappeared on the line. Traffic at the Rushworth Railways Station comprised mainly outgoing goods, predominately grain. This is evidenced by the removal of the old station building and part of the passenger platform in 1969 and its replacement with two large grain silos, and the installation of the weighbridge and shed. In 1987 the station closed as grain transportation by rail was replaced with road vehicles and the station was considered by the government to be no longer required or economically viable.

Hermes  
Number 211061

Property  
Number

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## History

The former Rushworth Railway Station is on the Rushworth to Murchison branch line designated for construction under the Railway Construction Act 1884 (Schedule 33, Act to Authorize the Construction of Certain Lines of Railway by the State and for Other Purposes, 1884:253-4). In 1888 the state government officially reserved land for railway purposes in the Rushworth township, at Waranga and in the Murchison township for the line. The designation of this land meant it was reserved from occupation or mining and the construction of station infrastructure could begin (Victorian Government Gazette, 15 June 1888:1979). Victorian Railways had already accepted a tender from Cairns Bros in December 1887 for the construction of a broad gauge (5ft 3in or 1600mm) railway line between Murchison and Rushworth for a cost of £40,514 11s 5p (Victorian Railways 1890a:39; Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1910:3). As well as the stations at Rushworth and Murchison, this section of railway line included a station at Waranga (Department of Lands and Survey 1882). Victorian Railways selected tenders for the construction of six gate cottages on the Rushworth to Murchison line, water

supply works and, sheep and cattle yards in 1890 (Victorian Railways 1890: 60, 63). A crane, goods shed and platform were also built (Nagambie Times, 15 August 1890:2; Elmore Standard, 4 July 1890:2). Photographic evidence indicates a main station building with a passenger platform was also constructed. The main station building was timber with an intersecting gable roof and finial, picket fencing and a verandah extending onto the platform area. The line between Rushworth and Murchison officially opened on 1 September 1890 (Victorian Railways 1893:35). In the Victorian Railways parliamentary report of 1893, the department declared that the Rushworth Station had received revenue of £1,326 3s 11p from passengers and parcel traffic, and £3,406 15s 7½p from goods and livestock (Victorian Railways 1893:35). In 1899 a siding construction was approved at Rushworth for the improved loading of firewood (Elmore Standard, 10 February 1899:3; The Age, 14 November 1913:15). A significant amount of firewood comprised outgoing freight from Rushworth. In 1902 the Numurkah Leader reported that there were six wood mills within the station precinct cutting wood for transportation to Melbourne. At this time the Victorian Railways' inadequate provision of railway transport trucks was criticized as each of the sawmills was 'capable of cutting six trucks of firewood per day, but they receive only one or two trucks per day, and occasionally, as the case last week, none at all' (Numurkah Leader, 18 July 1902:7). Infrastructure at the station included the station building with an office, passenger platform, goods shed and platform with siding, sheep and cattle race and siding, silos, locomotion turntable, rail motor shed, gang shed with siding, and likely a gate cottage. In 1910 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways reviewed the possibility of extending the line from Rushworth to Colbinabbin and perhaps further west to join the Bendigo line (Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1910). The Committee took evidence and visited the district before making a recommendation of the viability of the line. The Committee reported that a large amount of timber was already being transported from the Rushworth Station and that a station in Colbinabbin would assist in the distribution of firewood to the Melbourne market: 'Seven traction engines, besides farmers' teams, were hauling firewood into Rushworth from the parishes of Wanalta and Gobarup at the time of the Committee's visit to the district. In those parishes are large quantities of box and ironbark timber which were rung several years ago, and are suitable for the Melbourne market' (Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1910:3). The committee recommended the extension of the line to Colbinabbin, rather than the more expensive option of a branch line that joined the Bendigo line. On 26 August 1914 the railway from Rushworth to Colbinabbin officially opened (Victorian Railways 1915, no.37:85). Victorian Railways shut down the firewood siding at Rushworth at this time as firewood traffic was now shared with the Colbinabbin Station (The Age, 14 November 1913:15). The Colbinabbin to Murchison branch line ran along the southern edge of the Waranga Basin. In 1916 the size of the Basin expanded significantly, and a diversion of the railway line and nearby road was needed to avoid flooding. Victorian Railways opened a branch line between Rushworth and North Stanhope (Gigarre) in 1917, increasing the status of Rushworth station. The government acknowledged the importance of keeping the line open, particularly for agricultural and firewood traffic, and the avoidance of delay and increased costs of reconstruction caused by flooding. In 1918 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways considered the construction of a deviation of the line between the Rushworth and Waranga Railway Stations (Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1918). The Committee acknowledged that the construction of a deviation should occur without 'unnecessary delay', however, several options for the track were identified that needed to be surveyed and costed before a decision could be made about the alignment of the deviation. The following year the committee reported the costing of three different alternative alignments and gave a recommendation for 'scheme 1', the cheapest option at an estimated cost of £19,280 (Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways 1919:5). In January 1922 the Alexandra and Yea Standard and Yarck, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express reported that stage one and two of the deviation works had been completed (Alexandra and Yea Standard and Yarck, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express, 20 January 1922:3). These works included a deviation of the Rushworth-Murchison East railway track, the Rushworth-Murchison Road as well as the construction of a railway embankment along the line and a bridge over the Waranga Creek (Alexandra and Yea Standard and Yarck, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express, 20 January 1922:3). Significant floods across Victoria in December 1930 caused major disruptions to the rail service and the railway line at Rushworth was reported to have 'washed away' despite the deviation (Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, 17 December 1930:7). Within the Rushworth Railway Station precinct water inundation was also an issue. The station is located south of a creek that extends along the northern boundary of the site and into the township of Rushworth. A drainage line off this creek extends directly beneath the railway track, as can be seen in a Victorian Railways map of 1890 (Victorian Railways 1890b). Attempts to drain the water away from the station site led to the construction of several culverts and drains within the station precinct, including a substantial linear stone lined drain south of the station as well as a brick-lined drain directly under the tracks running north/south. During a visit by the Railway Commissioner to inspect the Rushworth Railway Station in 1914, a local deputation expressed their concern that the drain was not working: 'The unfinished appearance of the town drain where it runs through the station yard was the first matter dealt with. This drain had only been completed during the last few months, but owing to its uneven surface refuse was continually lodging in the drain, to the detriment of public health' (Murchison Advertiser and Murchison, Toolamba, Mooroopna and Dargalong Express, 13 November 1914:4). The drain was

still an issue of complaint from the locals in 1922, when the Railway Commissioners made another visit to the station (Kyabram Guardian, 12 December 1922:3). In 1927 the Rushworth Railway Station had 5,978 passenger journeys, 12,984 tons of outwards goods traffic and 3,440 tons of inwards goods traffic (Victorian Railways 1927:118). In the 1940s the Rushworth line served a vital role carrying passengers around the district, in conjunction with a bus service: 'The railways at present carry the bulk of the traffic from Rushworth and Murchison, whilst the bus services pick up people beyond the railway terminus and act as feeders to the railways both at the Bendigo and Kilmore East ends' (Shepparton Advertiser, 9 January 1942:5). Passenger use of the station decreased in the post-war period. In 1950 the number of passenger journeys was 3,966, however, the outgoing goods tonnage was 14,002 and 2,599 incoming. The main livestock traffic this year was sheep (Victorian Railways 1950:88). By 1960 passenger traffic was no longer reported but goods traffic had decreased considerably. Only 4,475 tons of outgoing goods were recorded and 1,998 tons of incoming goods. Livestock traffic had also dwindled to almost nothing with only 3 trucks of sheep leaving the station in 1960 (Victorian Railways 1960:20). There were still some passenger journeys to and from Rushworth in 1956/57 but by 1958 this had virtually ceased with only one passenger journey recorded (Victorian Railways 1958). In ~1969 the main station building was removed and two silos constructed on the site for storing wheat. A weighbridge and shed were built south-west of the silos within the station precinct to weigh the wheat before it was put in storage and transported. The Rushworth Railway Station closed in October 1987 (Vicsig 2021). Aerial photographs indicate that the silos were removed from the site ~2011 and by 2014 a CFA station house had been constructed at the same location. Features recorded in the documentary record include: • Passenger Platform • Main Station Building • Goods shed • Goods Platform • Water supply and ash pit • Water reservoir • Crane • Sheep and cattle yards • Firewood siding • Gate cottage • Stone lined drain • Silos • Weighbridge • Weighbridge iron shed • Various galvanised iron sheds • Toilet • Rail motor shed • Gang shed

*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/>*