
MELTON WEIGHBRIDGE

Location

MOUNT COTTRELL ROAD MELTON SOUTH, MELTON CITY

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2435

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 22, 2024

What is significant?

The site of the Melton Station Weighbridge is significant because of its essential role in the commercial and agricultural operation of Melton Station, the township, and the region more broadly, during the twentieth century. The establishment of Melton Station and improvements to rail networks across the state of Victoria brought new economic opportunity to Melton. The need for a weighbridge grew from the expanded opportunities which the railway provided.

Whilst operational, the weighbridge site was associated with the commercial operation of Melton Station precinct and the north-western railway line. It would have functioned as an essential mechanism of day-to-day operations at the station's commercial precinct, facilitating the accurate and safe measurement of goods for distribution across Victoria's rail network.

How is it significant?

The weighbridge site represents both a direct link to commercial activity at Melton Station, and a link to the economic history of Melton and its surrounding districts. Longstanding emphasis on logistical operations at the weighbridge site, chronicled in council meeting minutes and local papers, demonstrates the essential commercial service which the facility provided. Melton's agricultural industry was reliant on weighbridge technology to ensure the successful and economically viable distribution of goods from the region.

Furthermore, Molony (2007: 120) notes that the weighbridge on Brooklyn Road in Melton South is one of the few "railway heritage places remaining" in the local region. The significance of early 20th century weighbridge sites in rural areas has been noted across Victoria, at sites such as the Maryborough Railway Weighbridge (Place ID

67680) and the Yarrowonga Road Weighbridge (Place ID 71573).

Why is it significant?

In consideration of the place's historical significance, the function of the weighbridge should be considered. The function was two-fold; firstly, as a commercial mechanism to establish the weight of goods such as grain being transported or distributed using the rail network. Secondly, the weighbridge was used as a safety mechanism to determine that goods were evenly distributed across carriages, avoiding imbalances to loads and associated risk to individuals or damage to the rail network. These functions address two categories in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes:

Theme 3: Connecting Victorians by transport and communications:

Sub-theme 3.3, Linking Victorians by rail - Associated Objects:

The weighbridge represents equipment directly associated with the operation of the railway network in the 1900's. During this period a total of 42 weighbridges under the ownership of the Victorian Rail functioned across the Victorian rail network, in addition to an unknown quantity of privately owned units. These structures served a significant function in the history of the Victorian rail network.

Theme 5: Building Victoria's industries and workforce:

Sub-theme 5.1, The processing of raw materials:

The weighbridge is significant for its role in the process of large-scale goods distribution, such as grain and other agricultural products, during the time of its operation. The ability to transport goods and raw materials on the rail network was vital to the function of Victoria's industries and associated workforce during this period.

The use of the Melton weighbridge spanned much of the twentieth century. During this time, the site functioned as an essential service supporting industry and connection across the Melton region, and across the state more broadly. The weighbridges specific function as a means of efficiently tracking the transportation of goods across rail services, was an important component of the Melton region economic expansion, as evidenced across numerous council documents and newspaper articles. Therefore, the Melton Weighbridge has historical local significance due to its direct link to commercial and economic activity at Melton Station. The weighbridge is also archaeologically scientifically significant, as the weighbridge was one of 42 weighbridges constructed under the ownership of the Victorian Rail network. If present, the extant features would have remained the same as when it was first installed.

Interpretation
of Site

Initial development (1880s-early 1900s): Construction of the north-western railway line began in 1859 (Pollitt 1962: 57). On the 2nd of April 1884, Melton railway station was officially opened (Langford 1962: 3). The stations establishment enhanced agricultural opportunities across the district, contributing to the area's economic establishment throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The railway provided agriculturalists in Melton with new access to market opportunities across the state of Victoria. As a result of increased economic opportunities, Melton's agricultural import and export increased, leading to increased demand for additional station infrastructure. The need for additional infrastructure was met during the early 1900s, with the establishment of a range of storage and industrial features across the station complex. Rail sidings, a three-tonne crane for loading materials, a goods shed and dedicated platform, ramps, and a weighbridge were installed to enhance import and export workflows (Langford 1960). The addition of a weighbridge to the Melton station complex would have increased the accuracy of measurements applied to agricultural and other goods, contributing to the economic stability and prosperity of the district. Aerial imagery from 1947, 1961 and 1970 shows the Melton weighbridge as comprising of a large in-ground scale, alongside an operator's hut. A line diagram of Melton's water supply dated to 1962 (Department of Transport 2024) references a 'Ganger's Shed' in the likely location of the weighbridge and hut. This reference highlights the potential for additional uses to have been made of the weighbridge site, such as storage or refuge by railway workers. Continued development (mid-late 1900s): Infrastructure improvements and installations continued across the Melton Station precinct throughout the late 20th century. The culmination of modernised railway infrastructure, alongside facilities such as the weighbridge, worked to enhance the commercial viability of Melton's agricultural sector. The "approach at the Melton weighbridge" was identified as containing a "bad grade" in July 1924, resulting in a Melton Shire Council resolution to undertake alterations (The Sunbury News 1924: 3). Approach grade was again an issue in 1936, at which point it was determined that "the south approach be extended out on a level grade for about 40 feet" and then "uniformly graded down to the constructed road" (Melton Express 1936: 3). Road surfaces in proximity to the Melton weighbridge were altered to improve weighbridge accessibility, highlighting its importance as a commercial facility for agriculturalists in the region. Level approaches were essential for accurate weighing, as long vehicles in the district often had to be weighed "on two wheels at a time" (Melton Express 1937: 4). In 1927 it was resolved that the Melton "weighbridge house" (hut) would be renovated, along with two other weighbridge huts under the purview of the Melton Shire Council (The Sunbury News 1927: 7). Further improvements were made to the site in 1938, when the Melton Shire Council resolved to install "new concrete runways" for the weighbridge (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1938: 2). Midway through the century, around 1949, the concrete runway on the south side of the weighbridge was extended by 6 feet (Melton Express 1949: 5). By comparing aerial images from 1947, 1961 and 1970, the location of the weighbridge and operations hut can be interpreted within the context of the station precinct and district more broadly. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, land which previously served agricultural purposes is divided for residential and commercial allotments. For example, land on the northern side of Brooklyn Road, immediately north of the weighbridge site has been subdivided into residential allotments. As Melton's population expanded, due in large part to the district's agricultural reputation and transport accessibility, land-use immediately surrounding the station precinct evolved. According to Waugh (2005), the rail sidings catering to the goods shed and other industrial areas near Brooklyn Road were removed by 1987, which generally conforms with the demolition date of 1984 that Moloney et al put forward (2006b). The weighbridge and hut are visible in aerial imagery dated to 1970. However, in 1990 the site is no longer visible. As such, the demolition of above-ground infrastructure associated with the weighbridge most likely occurred after 1970, but before 1990 – likely around 1984-1987, based on the available evidence (Waugh 200 and Moloney et al 2006b, Figure 2). Modern developments (2000 onwards): The site of the former Melton weighbridge is currently in use under a Transport Zone 1 – State Infrastructure planning zone listing, encapsulated within the Melton station precinct area. The previous location of a small shed in the northwest of the station precinct, believed to have been the Melton weighbridge and cabin, in is now a vacant block of land on the northern side of the railway line. Grading and the introduction of gravel fill appears to have occurred across portions of the allotment. Wire fencing obscures access to the exact location of the historical weighbridge. However, it is possible that in-ground components of the weighbridge site, such as concrete runways or subsurface scale mechanisms, could be extant. To understand the significance of the Melton Weighbridge (Section 9), it is important to also consider its potential values. The information summarised above currently recognises that the Melton Weighbridge above ground components have been removed sometime between 1984-1987. However, there remains a likelihood that subsurface scale mechanisms that may remain

Hermes
Number 212377

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Number

History

SiteCard data copied on 22/08/2024: The Melton Railway station was established to service a growing agricultural community along the north-western railway line, and was opened on the 2nd April 1884 (Langford 1960: 3). The establishment of a station in Melton symbolised the “economic consolidation of the district” (Melton City Council 2024). Access to a railway provided Melton’s agricultural sector with new market opportunities, encouraging economic connections across the state of Victoria. Expanded economic opportunity and the growth of Melton’s township soon led to an increased demand for infrastructure, in and around the Melton Station precinct. The early 20th-century saw the installation of additional station infrastructure, to accommodate the growing need for storage and industrial support. Agricultural import and export were streamlined with the addition of rail sidings, a three-tonne crane for loading materials, a goods shed and dedicated platform, ramps, and a weighbridge (Langford 1960). The purpose of the weighbridge was to determine the mass and weight distribution of goods such as fresh agricultural produce. Weighbridges generally consist “of a large metal plate set into the road (or rail) surface with a small hut beside it containing the scale” (Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group 2024). Historical reports for the City of Melton, conducted by Moloney et al (2006a; 2006b) and Lovell Chen Pty Ltd (2022), indicate that a weighbridge was established at the Melton station precinct. Moloney et al (2006b) also note the presence of a weighbridge, located near Brooklyn Road. The weighbridge was constructed in or before 1910, with the Melton Shire Secretary announcing its opening “for public use after the 1st July 1910” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1910: 2). In July 1910, Alexander Cameron was “appointed by the council to be in charge of the weighbridge” with scale charges set at sixpence for “up to 2 tons” and one shilling for “over 2 tons” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1910: 2). Newspapers articles appeared alongside the weighbridge’s announcement, promoting offerings at the Melton Market and a land clearance sale (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1910: 2). The operational logistics of Melton’s weighbridge routinely appear in council meeting minute records throughout the early 20th century. The weighbridges routine place in council meetings, and subsequent inclusion in local papers across various districts, highlights the important role which the weighbridge played in the regions commercial operations. Melton Shire Council meeting notes from July 31, 1911, indicate that the weighbridge scale had “been tested on the 12th July, and found to be correct” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1911: 4). Across December 1913 and January 1914, receipts from the Melton weighbridge accounted for £17 and 12s, almost £7 more than the nearby Diggers Rest weighbridge (Gisborne Gazette 1914: 2). The Melton’s weighbridges comparative profitability is indicative of the districts prominent role in regional agriculture. In June 1918, it was reported that the past years receipts for the Melton weighbridge were over £141, with charges for working the weighbridge reaching £52 a year and a £10 commission (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1918: 3). However, the shire council was required to undertake “a somewhat lengthy discussion on the working of the Melton weighbridge”, due to “trouble” being caused by persons using the scales without providing immediate cash payment (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1918: 3). As such, it was determined that “notices should be posted up enforcing payments” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1918: 3). By January 1919, further trouble was associated with the weighbridges operation. Potential inaccuracy had been reported, prompting the Melton Shire Council to test the scales accuracy against a nearby weighbridge (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1919: 3). In 1921, it was reported that “broken metal was causing a nuisance at Melton weighbridge by falling in at the edge and preventing correct weighing” (The Sunbury News 1921: 2). Council meeting minutes reveal that the weighbridge “required adjustment and testing” again in 1924, with the same article noting that the Melbourne Corn Exchange had recently “stated that country weighbridges were sometimes at fault” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1924: 3). The profitability of and operation of weighbridges attracted routine scrutiny as the twentieth century wore on, both in Melton and across the region more broadly. In 1925, Melton Shire Council discussed “the duty of ratepayers to support their own weighbridges, which had been put in at considerable cost, with their money”, admonishing the “bunkum” (foolishness) of other councillors “going past their own bridge and using private bridges” in the hope of attaining a more favourable weigh-in (The Sunbury News 1925a: 6). Profitability of the weighbridge was a reoccurring point on contention at Melton Shire Council meetings. A 1925 audit noted “numerous errors” in dockets written by the Melton weighbridge operator (The Sunbury News 1925b: 1) and the weighbridge attracted further criticism in 1927 for its inaccuracy “by comparison to another bridge” (Melton Express 1927: 3). “Errors

and omissions in the dockets issued at Melton weighbridge” also caused issue in 1933, resulting in a monetary shortage of “14/6” (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1933:4). Furthermore, in 1937, the Melton Shire Council Secretary reported “numerous alternations of figures on the dockets from Melton weighbridge”, citing unsatisfactory bridge supervision allowing farmers to “calculate for their own dockets” (Melton Express 1937: 4). The continual attention which Melton Shire councillors paid to the weighbridge evidences its vital role in the region’s commercial activity. Aerial photography from 1947, 1961 and 1970 indicates that the Melton Station precinct and weighbridge location as situated off Brooklyn Road on the northern side of the railway line, south of the Hazel Street intersection (See Figure 2). A small hut structure is visible in these images, to the west of a weighbridge scale. Concrete runways were added to the weighbridge around 1938 (The Bacchus Marsh Express 1938: 2) and extended on the southern side of the weighbridge around 1949 (Melton Express 1949: 5). Concrete additions are not visible in the 1947 aerial, as the weighbridge site is too distant, but concrete runways are discernible in both 1961 and 1970. A 1962-line diagram (Figure 3) of Melton’s water supply (Department of Transport 2024) features a ‘Ganger’s Shed’ in the likely location of the weighbridge and hut. In the context of historical railway precincts, a ‘Ganger’s Shed’ often refers to sheds associated with storage for railway workers such as track maintenance labourers (Victorian Collections 2024; Old Treasury Building 2024). It is possible that the weighbridge was no longer in use in 1962, but further research is required to confirm this. As such, the diagram reference suggests a potential for the weighbridge site to have also been used in track maintenance operations. The Melton Station weighbridge would have been used in conjunction with other infrastructure in the station precinct to monitor measures of commercial activity. Infrastructure investments such as the Melton weighbridge supported the regions industry, improving the efficiency with which goods could be loaded and transported for distribution across the state. The Melton weighbridge is no longer in operation. Based on aerial imagery of the station precinct, the weighbridge hut and some above-ground weighbridge components are believed to have been demolished between 1970 and 1990 (Figure 2).

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.

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