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# Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges (Nos 1-6)

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## Location

Koo Wee Rup Swamp,, KOO WEE RUP VIC 3981 - Property No B6913

## Municipality

CARDINIA SHIRE

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 12, 2004

What is significant? Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges Numbers 1 to 6 were built as part of the Great Southern Railway. When the Great Southern Railway was constructed through the swamp in the late 1880s, very long timber railway bridges were required to allow adequate movement of surface water. As the swamp was drained, the long and low timber bridges were gradually replaced by earth embankments, and small bridges such as nos. 3 and 4 were left strategically placed at sufficient intervals to handle the much-diminished water flow. The swamplands suffered further serious inundations during major floods of the early to mid 1930s, and the four rail-deck bridges constructed in 1936-7 were designed to ameliorate such extreme flood conditions.

Three of the bridges are of 4 spans, two of 9 spans, and one (Toomuc Creek) of 13 spans. They were built to very similar designs but at different times: numbers 3 and 4 in 1890, nos. 1 and 2 in 1937, and nos. 5 and 6 in 1936. All these bridges now have timber piers and rail-deck decking, but bridges 3 and 4 originally possessed longitudinal-timber decks.

How is it significant? The Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges numbers 1 to 6 are of technical and historical significance at the State level.

Why is it significant? Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges Numbers 1 to 6 are of technical significance as although this style of short span longitudinal deck bridge was by far the most common form of bridge built by the Victorian Railways, it is now rare due to widespread replacement by embankments and culverts. All these bridges now have timber piers and rail-decking, however bridges 3 and 4 (the 19th century pair) originally had longitudinal-timber decks.

Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges Numbers 1 to 6 are of historical significance as they represent the last vestiges of major timber-bridge-engineering projects dating from the 1880s, and as a series of contiguous small timber and rail-deck railway bridges in good condition, they are now unique in Victoria.

The Great Southern Railway was instrumental in the opening up of South Gippsland for settlement and agriculture, and the Koo Wee Rup swamp bridges were a crucial part of that railway, enabling very difficult terrain

to be crossed.

The Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges numbers 1 to 6 reflect a long term development in the Koo Wee Rup swamplands, whereby the original very long and low timber-beam bridges were replaced during the twentieth century by earth embankments broken at appropriate intervals by small rail-deck drainage-channel bridges. Victoria's other extant examples of small-to-medium timber and rail-deck bridges are widely scattered across the State, and few are in such good condition as the Koo Wee Rup swamp bridges. The Koo Wee Rup Swamp bridges are also situated relatively close to Melbourne, and are fairly accessible to the general public.

Classified: 06/07/1998

Hermes Number 65287

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

### Description:

Group of six small single-track swamp railway bridges, three being of 4 spans, two being of 9 spans, and one (Toomuc Creek) being of thirteen spans. Bridges numbers 3 and 4 were built in 1890, and their span length is the old Victorian Railways standard eleven-foot span (3.3 metres). Bridges numbers 1 and 2 and 5 and 6 have spans of 3.8 metres. All these bridges now have timber piers and rail-deck decking, but bridges 3 and 4 originally possessed longitudinal-timber decks.

### Context

The environmental context is drained swampland of the former Koo Wee Rup Swamp, now converted into open flat pastoral land.

### Intactness:

Good.

### Assessment against Criteria

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

The Great Southern Railway was instrumental in the opening up of South Gippsland for settlement and agriculture, and the Koo Wee Rup swamp bridges were a crucial part of that railway, enabling very difficult terrain to be crossed.

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

This style of short span longitudinal deck bridge was by far the most common form of bridge built by the Victorian Railways, but is now rare due to widespread replacement by embankments and culverts. As a series of contiguous small timber and rail-deck railway bridges in good condition, they are unique in Victoria. Other extant examples of small-to-medium timber and rail-deck bridges are widely scattered across the State, and few are in such good condition as the Koo Wee Rup swamp bridges.

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects

Koo Wee Rup Swamp Bridges Numbers 1 to 6 are representative of the short span longitudinal deck bridge that was by far the most common form of bridge built by the Victorian Railways. Other extant examples of small-to-

medium timber and rail-deck bridges tend to be widely scattered across the State, and few are in such good condition as the Koo Wee Rup swamp bridges.

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

When the Great Southern Railway was constructed through the Koo Wee Rup swamp in the late 1880s, very long timber railway bridges were built, to allow adequate movement of surface water. As the swamp was drained, the long and low timber bridges were gradually replaced by earth embankments, and small bridges such as nos. 3 and 4 were left strategically placed at sufficient intervals to handle the much-diminished water flow. The four rail-deck bridges 1, 2, 5 and 6 were designed and constructed in response to major floods of the early to mid 1930s.

## **Usage/Formal Usage**

rail bridges, no longer in use

*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/>*