
Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges



B6948 Snowy River Floodplain Bridges



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B6948 Longer of the Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges



B6948 Long Bridge West End



B6948 Short Bridge 1994

Location

Bairnsdale/Orbost Railway (west of Orbost), ORBOST VIC 3888 - Property No B6948

Municipality

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 18, 2005

What is significant? The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges, two sequential and exceptionally long and low timber railway bridges on the Snowy River floodplain just west of Orbost, were built in 1916, and provided the original terminus point for the Bairnsdale-Orbost railway. The bridges are 770 metres and 183 metres long respectively. The shorter bridge is of uniformly 4.57 metre (fifteen feet) timber-beam construction; retains its all-timber integrity, and has a sweeping curve in its deck. The longer bridge has a combination of 4.57 metre (fifteen feet) and 6.1 metre (twenty feet) spans, and two 3.66 metre (twelve feet) spans; it has concrete replacing timber in the abutments and a few flood-damaged timber beams have been replaced by steel joists.

The bridges are unusually constructed from 'Southern Mahogany', *Eucalyptus Botryoides*, which grew along the coast east of Bairnsdale.

The Snowy floodplain bridges were initially built in the context of an early twentieth-century interest in American-style 'Developmental Railways', designed to open remote areas to closer settlement, even if that meant running at a loss.

The line was closed in August 1987.

Classified: 19/05/1998

Why is it significant?

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are historically and aesthetically significant at the State level.

How is it significant?

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are of historical significance, as part of a railway intended to open up East Gippsland for settlement, and to link with south-eastern New South Wales, and ultimately with Sydney via the New South Wales railway that terminated at Bombala.

Originally these bridges were the terminus point for the Bairnsdale-Orbost railway, the railway bridge that crossed the river into Orbost not being constructed until after World War 1.

When these bridges were built six longer timber-beam rail bridges existed in Victoria, but with modifications to the Yarra Valley Viaduct and with the replacement of other timber bridges, by the early 1940's the longer of this pair had become Victoria's longest timber railway bridge.

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are unusually constructed from 'Southern Mahogany', *Eucalyptus Botryoides*, which grew along the coast east of Bairnsdale.

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are of aesthetic significance, as they are fully visible from the Princes Highway and the Orbost-Buchan Road. The long low profiles of these bridges winding across the floodplain from Orbost towards Bairnsdale have long been a significant part of the river plain landscape.

Hermes Number 67991

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Description:

This pair of low timber railway bridges are 770 and 183 metres long respectively, the longer bridge being on the west or Bairnsdale end of the floodplain. The longer of the two has suffered slight modifications since 1971, with concrete replacing timber in abutments and a few flood-damaged timber beams being replaced by steel joists. The shorter bridge retains its original all-timber integrity, and has a sweeping curve in its deck. The low timber piers are mainly of two piles, but some have four piles. The shorter bridge is of uniformly 4.57 metre (fifteen feet) timber-beam construction, whereas the longer bridge has a combination of 4.57 metre (fifteen feet) and 6.1 metre

(twenty feet) spans, and two 3.66 metre (twelve feet) spans.

The bridges are separated by a roadway.

Context

The broad floodplains of the Snowy River have dictated the long and low shape of these two bridges, and the busy Princes Highway traffic runs parallel over modern concrete structures. The bridges sit in an open pastoral context.

Intactness:

The basic structures are still sound, although like most railway bridges that have not been maintained for some years their decking is deteriorating.

Assessment against Criteria:

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

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges were constructed as part of a railway intended to open up East Gippsland for settlement; to tap the timber resources of the region; to enable trading with south-eastern New South Wales; and ultimately to link with Sydney via the New South Wales railway that terminated at Bombala.

Originally the east end of these bridges was the terminus point for the Bairnsdale-Orbost railway, the rail bridge that crossed the river into Orbost not being constructed until after World War I.

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

When the Snowy River Floodplain bridges were built, six longer timber-beam rail bridges existed in Victoria, but with modifications to the Yarra Valley Viaduct and with the replacement of other timber bridges, by the early 1940's the longer of this pair had become Victoria's longest timber railway bridge.

The consistently long and low floodplain profile of the Snowy River Floodplain bridges is very unusual, only shared by the remnants of the Yarra Glen timber viaduct.

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

The larger of the Snowy floodplain bridges has a greater variety of span lengths than any other Victorian long river bridge. The shorter one is of uniform fifteen feet beam construction.

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are fully visible from the Princes Highway and the Orbost-Buchan Road. The long low profiles of these bridges winding across the floodplain from Orbost towards Bairnsdale are a significant and striking part of the river plain landscape.

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

The Snowy River Floodplain Railway Bridges are unusually constructed from 'Southern Mahogany', *Eucalyptus Botryoides*, which grew along the coast east of Bairnsdale.

Usage/Former Usage

rail bridges, no longer in use

Integrity

shorter bridge: retains its all timber integrity

longer bridge: some concrete and steel modifications

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/>