
Wannon River Bridge



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Location

392.13 Km mark, Branxholme/Casterton Railway line,, CASTERTON VIC 3311 - Property No B6940

Municipality

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 17, 2005

What is significant? The Wannon River Bridge south east of Casterton was built in 1884 as an important component of the Branxholme-Casterton Railway. It was built as a 77 span, 15 feet (4.57 metre) timber-beam bridge, but thirteen of these spans have since been converted to earth embankment, leaving a deck length of almost 293 metres. It is single track, with a maximum height of 9.22 metres. The timber piers vary from simple and low vertical-two-pile structures on the floodplain sections, to very unusual tall vertical-four-pile structures and some 4 pile piers including 2 raker piles, in the vicinity of the main river channel. The bridge deck sweeps in a gentle curve.

The Branxholme-Casterton railway was a direct result of agitation by Portland commercial interests intent on developing Portland as a major deep-sea port serving both international shipping and Australian coastal shipping. This line was the opening gambit in a game that was directed from Portland over many decades, and was still going strong during World War 1, when the Hamilton-East Natimuk line was being completed as a north-south freight route designed to re-direct Wimmera and Mallee wheat from Geelong or Melbourne to Portland harbour. The line closed in 1977.

How is it significant? The Wannon River Bridge is historically, technically and aesthetically significant to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant? The Wannon River Bridge is historically significant as by far the most impressive surviving artifact from the former Branxholme-Casterton Railway. It is also among the oldest surviving Victorian Railways timber bridges and is the longest nineteenth-century Victorian Railways Bridge still in existence. The Wannon River Bridge is of special interest because of its relatively early date of construction (1884), before the 'Octopus Act' bridges built in the years leading up to the 1893 Depression.

The Wannon River Bridge is technically significant as the longest surviving example of a Victorian Railways 15 feet (4.57 metre) timber-beam bridge still retaining its all-timber integrity. It has some very unusual tall vertical-four-pile pier structures and is gently curved at one end.

The Wannon River Bridge is aesthetically significant as it is situated amidst picturesque grazing land in the Western District, where the broad flood plains of the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers merge to form one gigantic flood plain. The lengthy old bridge curving slightly across the flood plain is readily accessible to the public, and contributes much to the local scenery.

Classified: 06/07/1998

Hermes Number 68059

Property Number

Physical Description 1

single-track timber-trestle and all-timber railway bridge, consisting of 64 timber-beam spans each of 4.57 metres (15 feet). Its total length is 292.61 metres, and its maximum height is an impressive 9.22 metres. The timber piers vary from simple and low vertical-two-pile structures on the floodplain sections, to very unusual tall vertical-four-pile structures and some 4 pile piers including 2 raker piles, in the vicinity of the main river channel. The bridge deck is curved.

Context:

The Wannon River Bridge is situated amidst some of the most picturesque grazing land in the Western District, where the broad flood plains of the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers merge to form one gigantic flood plain. The large old bridge curving across the flood plain just outside Casterton is fairly accessible to the public, and contributes to the local scenery.

Condition:

The basic structure of this all-timber bridge appears to be reasonably sound, but the decaying timber deck beneath the ballast is hazardous.

Assessment against Criteria:

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

The Wannon River Bridge is of special interest because of its relatively early date of construction (1884), before the 'Octopus Act' bridges built in the years leading up to the 1893 Depression.

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

The Wannon River Bridge is the most impressive surviving artifact from the historic Branxholme-Casterton Railway that once provided the regular overland transport link between Melbourne and Adelaide.

It is the longest railway bridge in the State to retain an all-timber construction in its full integrity.

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 Wannon River Bridge is the longest nineteenth-century Victorian Railways bridge still in existence. As such it is the longest surviving bridge of its class (15 feet spans), and is also among the oldest surviving Victorian Railways timber bridges.

The Wannon River Bridge is unusually uniform in construction for a large all-timber railway bridge, with standard fifteen feet timber-beam spans throughout its great length. It has some unusual features arising from its relatively early date of construction, particularly the very rare tall vertical-four-pile piers on the main river-channel section.

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The Wannon River Bridge is situated amidst some of the most picturesque grazing land in the Western District, where the broad flood plains of the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers merge to form one gigantic flood plain. The lengthy bridge curving across the flood plain is readily accessible to the public, and contributes much to the local scenery.

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

Usage/Former Usage

rail bridge - no longer in use

Physical Conditions

deteriorating; not maintained

Intactness

intact

Integrity

excellent

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/>