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# Stewart's Bridge



B6837 Stewart's Bridge

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## Location

Stewarts Bridge Road,, KANYAPELLA VIC 3564 - Property No B6837

## Municipality

CAMPASPE SHIRE

## Level of significance

State

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 11, 2005

Stewart's Bridge is of State significance for historical, scientific, social and aesthetic reasons. Designed in mid-1878 and constructed during 1878-9, this bridge is the oldest surviving timber road-over-river bridge that is still in service in Victoria. It is the only surviving Victorian all-timber road bridge known to have been built in the 1870s. The name "Stewart's Bridge", and the crossing place at which it stands, are even more historic. In March 1864 the red-gum sawmillers, James Mackintosh and John Taylor, chose a section of river floodplain near the current Stewart's Bridge as their new saw-milling centre, and immediately set about building the original Goulburn River bridge: the first bridge in the Echuca district. Only one other Goulburn River bridge pre-existed it, that being Patrick Hanna's toll bridge constructed at Seymour in 1863.

Stewart's Bridge, a nine-span timber-beam bridge which for most of its long life was entirely of timber construction, has span lengths measuring up to fourteen metres to cater for the passage of once-numerous river-boats and timber barges. This is the only known surviving Victorian example of a simple timber-beam river bridge

designed with such lengthy spans, to allow for the free passage of river-boat traffic. Apart from an occasional pier replaced after flood damage in 1924 or 1939, the timber substructure with its tall raker piles and buffer piles and the occasional stay pile, dates back to 1878-9. Such very unusual age, in timber-beam piers still in service, makes them of potential scientific interest.

Stewart's Bridge in its current form, with steel joists hidden below deck between its timber stringers, also provides an educational example of sympathetic adaptation of a colonial structure to handle modern traffic. In a riverland district that prides itself on its past connection with shipping on the Murray-Darling waterways, this significant vestige of the paddle-steamer era has high social value as an integral part of that heritage. The bridge was built at a peak period in river-boat traffic, when paddle-steamer captains allegedly had instructions to "sweep away" bridges that obstructed their passage along the Goulburn River.

The antique timber frame of Stewart's Bridge, together with its situation in a magnificent forested river-valley floodplain setting, provides a unique aesthetic experience. Close to the historic riverboat port of Echuca, now a favoured tourist resort, the old bridge with its longitudinal running planks over transverse decking and its unusually long timber spans on tall timber piers, provides memorable viewing. The bridge's immediate environs provide a great setting for picnics, fishing or walking.

Classified: 06/10/1997

Filenote: The bridge is now bypassed (2012)

Hermes Number 70499

Property Number

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*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/>*