Wildwood Road Bridge over Deep Creek

B7275 Wildwood Bridge

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Location

Wildwood Road,, BULLA VIC 3428 - Property No B7275

Municipality

HUME CITY

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 17, 2008

What is significant? Wildwood Road Bridge is situated on the Wildwood Road over Deep Creek, a tributary of the Maribyrnong River. It is a riveted metal girder bridge on bluestone abutments and central pier erected in 1871 by Sumner & Co under contract to the Shire of Bulla.
How is it significant? Wildwood Road Bridge is significant for aesthetic/architectural, historic and scientific (technical) reasons at a State level.
Why is it significant? The Wildwood Road Bridge is of historical significance as one of the earliest surviving metal and stone road bridges in Victoria reflecting the period of District Roads Board improvements to roads and subsequently the role of incipient Shire Councils, which came with the maturation of rural settlement in the decades following the gold rush period. It is also important in marking the development of the district despite the restrictive effect of the large squatters such as Clarke and Brodie.
It is of technical significance as an early and competently executed riveted wrought iron girder bridge which reflects the maturation of wrought iron bridge engineering in the mid nineteenth century. As such the bridge

reflects the development of engineering competence in Victoria that had been established for only a decade or so. Precursors to this bridge can be found only in the road over rail bridges on the Melbourne-Bendigo and Geelong-Ballarat lines and a small group of bridges concentrated around the Ballarat region. Wildwood Bridge is one of about ten riveted wrought iron bridges with masonry abutments and piers dating from the 1870s and 1880s. It is perhaps the best preserved example of its type, and distinguished from the others by an attractive setting, and particularly high clearance.
It is of aesthetic or architectural significance as an attractive and well proportioned bridge, which sits harmoniously in its landscape in a picturesque rural setting among remnant natural vegetation along the steep Deep Creek gorge. The survival of mature Red Gums presents a landscape around the bridge that would be little changed from when it was built. Views to and from the bridge can be both dramatic and intimate, while the associated Martin Dillon Reserve reflects the historical character of the bridge in its exotic plantings.
The bluestone abutments and pier, while coarse in their finish, have aesthetic value for their hand-hewn texture and the way they show an affinity with the surrounding volcanic landscape and exposed geology of the Deep Creek Gorge and Basalt Plains. The axe cut masonry reflects the manual skill of the builders while the subtle forms of sloping piers and curved wingwalls punctuated by subtle string courses and coping, reflect a finely balanced design.
Classified: 08/09/2009

Other Names	Craig Bank Bridge; Deep Creek Bridge,
Hermes Number	71574
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Wildwood bridge is a two span single lane riveted girder bridge with bluestone abutments and central pier. It is 19.8 metres long overall with two 9.65m long spans and a deck width of 5.6 m (5.2 m between kerbs). The central pier stands 5.7 m above the creek bed, although the abutments are slightly shorter due to the bedrock rising at the banks.
There are four riveted wrought iron girders, continuous over the central pier. These are about 400mm deep and 150mm wide with web stiffeners at approximately 1.2m intervals. Top and bottom and main web plates are about 2m long. It is possible, considering the short length of plates used, that the girders were fabricated on site, or at least assembled on site from smaller lengths. The girders appear to be resting on flat cast iron slide bearings on the bluestone pier and abutments.
The timber cross planks are bolted directly to the top flange of the girders, with longitudinal running planks spiked down to the cross planks and with a light coat of bitumen. There are also timber kerbs. Galvanised water pipe handrails are obviously a modern addition, as they use standard Cyclone fencing clamp connectors. Timber end posts are modern, but more in keeping with the style of the bridge.
The abutments have gracefully curving wing walls with parapets only a stone course high providing a kerb. The stonework is regular coursed axe cut basalt, probably quarried from close by. Pilasters are expressed at the corners. A projecting string course runs across the abutment face at the base of the girders and turns the corner for about a metre. Another string course forms the coping to the wingwalls. The central pier is tapered and finished on the ends with a semi circular cap to the side of the girder.

None of the stonework has drafted margins or other more sophisticated tooling. Mortar joints have been repointed with a Portland cement mortar, but original mortar appears to have been a lime/sand/clay mixture.
VicRoads Inventory gives the superstructure type as Universal Beams/RSJs, in error, as they are actually riveted plate girders.
The approach roads are steep and with sharp bends immediately adjacent to the abutments.

The bridge is located in a picturesque rural setting among remnant natural vegetation along the steep Deep Creek gorge. Mature Red Gums present a landscape around the bridge that would be little changed from when it was built. A sharp bend in the river at this point has resulted in the road having steep and acutely angled approaches, particularly spectacular on the southern approach which is down the line of a side gully into the main

valley, which opens up to a view of the valley as the roads winds down. Small flats on the river bank provide some agricultural setting, while the early homestead which is contemporaneous with the bridge, and closely associated historically, is just visible from the road. Evidence of the original ford, which provides further historical context for the bridge, can be identified in the shallow rocky floor of the gorge at this point. The exposed basalt outcrops in the bottom and sides of the gorge provide a geological affinity with the stone abutments of the bridge. Wildwood Road is still a relatively undeveloped route, providing access to rural properties between Deep Creek and Emu Creek. However, suburban development in the vicinity will cause increased traffic in the immediate future. The Martin Dillon Reserve is located adjacent to the bridge on the north bank. This site has historical associations with the bridge, features some exotic plantings, but is otherwise undeveloped, and offers considerable opportunity for enhancing public visitation and interpretation of the bridge.

Intactness

The Wildwood Bridge has a high level of integrity to its original construction period. The most apparent change is the replacement of the original handrail (probably diamond section timber rails and timber posts. With galvanised pipe. The timber kerbs are probably of greater section, but would approximate the original design.

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/