
John Foord Bridge over the Murray River



B7296 John Foord Bridge

Location

Foord Street,, WAHGUNYAH VIC 3687 - Property No B7296

Municipality

INDIGO SHIRE

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 4, 2005

What is significant? The John Foord Bridge is a steel truss and timber girder road bridge of 11 spans comprising riveted steel main spans across the Murray River and timber approach spans. It is located between the Towns of Corowa and Wahgunyah and forms one of a small number of important connections between Victoria and the New South Wales Riverina. It was built in 1892 by the New South Wales Roads Department to a design of J. A. McDonald.

How is it significant? The John Foord Bridge is significant for aesthetic/architectural, historic, scientific (technical) and social reasons at a State level. It is also of National significance for its association with the history of Federation.

Why is it significant? The John Foord Bridge has historical significance for over 100 years as an important link over the Murray River. It was erected at a time of high commercial activity in the town of Corowa, although river traffic was declining with the coming of the railway.

The bridge is rare as one of a small number of surviving iron lattice bridges, which was an imported British Bridge

technology that was still dominant at this time and formed the dominant group of major metal road bridges in the 1860s to 1890s (18 in New South Wales, 10 in Victoria). At the time of completion 1892, it was one of only four bridges over the Murray River (Albury, Corowa, Mulwala and Echuca) and therefore it had a significant impact on inter-colonial commerce and communication.

The bridge is also of historical significance for its association with the prominent local identity and pioneer businessman John Foord, who was involved in the company that erected the 1862 timber bridge on the site. When the new bridge was built as a replacement, it took the same name.

The bridge is also associated with John A McDonald, its designer, who was the leading bridge engineer in the New South Wales Public Works Department at the time, and whose design for timber truss road bridges in 1884, now bears his name.

The John Foord Bridge is also important for its association with Federation, having been built in the atmosphere of colonial co-operation that was developing in the late nineteenth century and it was a feature of the Federation Conference in Corowa in July 1893, becoming a symbol of the unification of the colonies. When opened in January 1893, traffic was still impeded by customs delays, resulting in strong and persistent advocacy of federation from the locals. The bridge is significant as a symbol of Federation, having been built at the time of the major debates and conferences leading up to Federation and situated in a town in which the main Federation conference was held and which was subsequently the site of cross-border celebrations when Federation was announced. The surviving customs houses provide a strong physical and symbolic representation of the site role in the Federation movement. It is of technical significance as a rare example of an iron lattice road bridge, being the only one of its type in the group of road bridges over the Murray River between Albury and the South Australian border.

The shallow depth of the truss was achieved by continuity of the structure across the piers. This helped McDonald to achieve spans of 34.2, 42.7, and 34.2 metres. The central span is the 6th longest span of a metal road bridge in Victoria, and the 14th longest bridge span bridge of any type recorded in the National Trust bridges database.

The John Foord Bridge is of aesthetic or architectural significance for its outstanding setting and landmark qualities, and its distinctive size and appearance and notably the unusual curved ends of the trusses, the length of the combination of the three lattice truss spans, and the long timber approach span section.

The bridge provides a gateway to NSW and the town of Corowa. With the open land on the Corowa Bank and the colonial buildings on the high Wahgunyah side the bridge forms a heritage environment that is remarkably intact to the period of construction. The John Foord Bridge has high social significance as a local landmark and identified heritage and tourism feature in the region. The bridge was featured in promotion material about Corowa as the venue for the 1893 Federation Conference. Glenda Campbell of the Historical Society expressed that the bridge ties in the Federation history of the twin towns of Corowa and Wahgunyah. The John Foord Bridge is the only bridge along the Murray River named after a pioneer (RTA NSW citation).

The bridge has been dedicated by The Institution of Engineers, Australia, and the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales, as part of the 2001 Institute of Engineers National Engineering Landmark and Centenary of Federation Plaques program.

Classified: 29/11/2004

Other Names Vic Roads Country Directory MapVSD 34 H2,

Hermes Number 71607

Property Number

Physical Description 1

The John Foord Bridge is a steel girder and timber truss road bridge of eleven spans, comprising seven spans at 9.1 m., three spans at 10.7m , and the main truss spans of 34.2, 42.7, and 34.2 m. respectively. The timber approach spans are situated on the New South Wales side of the river, with the Victorian side having a high bank. The bridge is only one lane wide across the Murray River and carries a 5.5m roadway and a 1.5m footway (cantilevered on the upstream side of the main trusses). O'Connor gives Overall Length as 152.3 m.

The truss spans are unusual in being half-through continuous trusses. The continuous spans allowed greater span lengths to be achieved with relatively shallow depth webs. The webs are formed from double x2 diagonals.

The trusses support riveted iron cross girders and longitudinal timber stringers. The deck on the truss spans consists of timber planking on the metal cross-girders, which rest on top of the lower chords of the trusses. The three main spans are set at a high level alleviating the need for a lift section.

Another unusual feature of the trusses are the curved ends. Cast-iron cylinders form the main piers with large oval perforated web plate between. These are similar to several other Murray River Bridges such as Echuca and other Rail Bridges, particularly in New South Wales. The deck is of timber throughout, while the approach spans on Victorian side comprise timber stringers on timber trestle piers. There is an approach of considerable length on the New South Wales side with a higher river bank on the Victorian Side allowing for an earthen approach embankment. Some of the girders on the timber spans are also propped at mid span and it is likely that the original bridge had the longer spans and these have been subdivided later.

The bridge has a concrete abutment at the southern end and a timber abutment at the northern end. There is a footway on the eastern side of the bridge.

CONTEXT

The John Foord Bridge is located in a park-like setting between the two towns of Wahgunyah and Corowa. Because of the floodplain on the northern side, a long timber trestle approach is required, but the Victorian side has a higher bank giving commanding views. The presence of the customs houses at each end, create a distinctive setting which gives visual expression to the period of contradicting colonial rivalry and co-operation in which the bridge was built.

Intactness

The Bridge appears to be intact apart from replacement of some deck members and propping of some of the timber stringer spans. The NSW RTA has determined that the northern approach section is inadequate for current traffic needs. The timber deck and approaches require constant rehabilitation. The timber deck requires regular maintenance due to damage by vibration.

A Commonwealth Federation Bridges Program aims to provide a new crossing with two kilometres of new roadway within NSW, including a new two-lane 195 metre bridge and two-lane, 90 metre long approach bridges on both sides of the Murray River.

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/>