HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

name:	Quantong Timber Trestle Railway Bridge
Address:	spanning Wimmera River adjacent to 1844 Wimmera Highway QUANTONG
Place Type:	Railway Bridge/ Viaduct
Citation Date:	2022

Timber Trestle Bridge over Wimmera River at Quantong

Recommended Heritage Protection

VHR -

HI -

PS
Yes

Integrity

Intact sections of trestle bridge remain – longest section in best condition (135m length). Other sections substantially dilapidated. Remnant bridge clearly marks the former carriageway of the Horsham-Carpolac line.

History and Historical Context

Rail reached Horsham in 1879 following the extension of the line from Ballarat via Ararat and Stawell. Its arrival marked an important milestone in the development of the Wimmera, effectively opening up the district to closer settlement.

The West Wimmera Railway League formed in the early 1880s to lobby the Department of Railways for a spur line from the Horsham railhead to southern and western Wimmera districts. The league primarily comprised of district selectors and Natimuk business interests, and proposed that the line would serve a catchment of 300 farmers, who collectively produced 260,000 bushels of grain per year.

The league campaigned that the development of the line would promote more settlement and increase cultivation of grazing land for cropping. The league argued that 'the produce of a 320-acre farm (of cropping) would bring more revenue to the railways than the produce of 20,000 acres devoted to wool-growing'.[1]

Without access to a local railhead, farmers incurred a fee of sixpence per bushel for the transportation of grain to the Horsham terminal. This cost had a significant negative impact on profit margins, considering that between 1879 and 1888 the price of wheat halved from four shillings down to two shillings per bushel.[2]

The poor condition of the road network provided further incentive to lobby for a railway line. One correspondent to the *Horsham Times* described the state of the Horsham to Noradjuha road as 'almost impassable' explaining that 'the best way to travel this road now would be in a boat'.[3]

Finally in 1884, the *Railway Act* (also known as Duncan Gillies' 'Octopus Act') authorized the construction of the 20 mile 'Horsham to Natimuk' spur line. However, controversially the line stopped short of Natimuk and diverged southward at Natimuk East (one and a half miles from the township proper) before terminating at Noradjuha.

Contractors, Downie and Barnfield, won the tender to construct the line for £46,264, which included a large timber-trestle rail-over-river bridge spanning the Wimmera River and its flood plain near Quantong. W. Blackwood was awarded tenders to construct a goods shed and platform at both the Natimuk East and Noradjuha sidings. The station building at Noradjuha was constructed by Parker and Vickers.[4] The line opened to traffic on the 25 August 1887.

Further lobbying resulted in the Department of Railways commissioning a survey for a 28 mile extension from East Natimuk to Goroke in 1888. In 1890 the line to Natimuk was opened and the extension west to Goroke was completed in 1894. Additional railway sidings were established at Remlaw, Vectis, Quantong, Arapiles, Mitre (St Mary's), Nurcoung, Gymbowen, and Mortat. By 1896 the *Horsham Times* recorded that the line had carried 10,000 bags of wheat, 7,000 bags of salt and 2,000 bales of wool to the Horsham railhead that year.[5]

In 1927 the line was further extended 9 miles west to the Carpolac terminus, a small agricultural settlement situated 25 miles from the South Australian border. A passenger service ran between Horsham and Carpolac, in addition to a grain and mixed goods train.

For a time, grain trucks carted produce to the Port of Portland via the Hamilton – East Natimuk spur line. The line consisted of six branch lines and was opened to traffic as a through-line in 1920. This operation was short-

lived however, as the creation of the Victorian Grain Elevators Board (GEB) resulted in a network of reinforced concrete silos established along Victoria's wheat-belt rail network. These bulk storage facilities provided a single point of receipt, storage and distribution, and replaced the stockpiling of individual jute wheat bags (which were susceptible to rot and rodent infestation) at local rail sidings throughout the Wimmera, Mallee and Western Districts.

Two concrete silos were established on the Horsham – Carpolac branch line in 1939: a 65,000 bushel capacity silo complex at Vectis and an 110,000 capacity complex at Natimuk. Wheat collected and dispatched from the GEB silos was transported by grain trains on the main western line (via Horsham and Maroona) to a purpose-built export terminal at Geelong.

Further bulk handling storage facilities were established at almost all of the rail sidings along the line to address the record wheat and oat harvests in the post-World War Two period.

The Natimuk – Goroke – Carpolac line closed in December 1986 and the Horsham – East Natimuk Railway ceased operation in October 1988.

Quantong Railway Bridge

The large timber-trestle rail-over-river bridge spanning the Wimmera River and its flood plain near Quantong was constructed in 1887 to a design by the Victorian Railway Department.

The following information is based on the National Trust's citation, Victorian Heritage Database report 68627:

The Wimmera River (Quantong) Railway Bridge is the remnant of a much longer original bridge of 87 spans built in 1887, crossing the Wimmera River and floodplain. Some bridge sections were converted to earth embankment in the years after World War 1, leaving three independent timber bridges, surviving as late as 1996.

Only one remains, a single-track timber-beam and timber-pier rail bridge of 29 spans and 133.4 metres length, crossing the river itself. The piers remain of a similar bridge of 12 spans and 55.2 metres length, and one of 5 spans with a deck length of 23 metres has disappeared entirely since 1996.

The Wimmera Railway Bridge is the remnant of a much larger rail-over-river bridge at this site, and represents the standard type of Victorian Railway's fifteen feet timber-beam structure, which was commonly used at major rail-over-river crossings in the late 19th century.

The Wimmera River Railway Bridge is the last timber railway bridge to survive intact over the Wimmera River, and is one of the largest intact timber railway bridges surviving in Victoria's west. Large railway bridges were never very common in the relatively dry northwest of the State, and good examples of timber railway bridges of any kind are now exceedingly uncommon in the Wimmera and Mallee, where most have been stripped of deck and sometimes beams, or totally destroyed.[6]

[1] Argus, Saturday 17 January 1885, pg 29.

[2] Argus, Saturday 29 March 1884, pg. 10

[3] Horsham Times, Friday 20 August 1886, pg. 2

[4] Gazette 106, Friday, November 4th 1887, pg 3191

[5] *Horsham Times*, Friday 6 May 1898, page 3

[6] National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Victorian Heritage Database, *citation report 68627*.

Description

Physical Description

Located: 36.44”00’S 142.00” 13’E

Approx 135 metres long section of timber trestle bridge, the bridge stands at a maximum approximately 8 metres out of the water of the Wimmera River. Earth embankments are still evident to either side of the bridge. The bridge spans the river and also a land depression adjacent. Trestles – 28 extant in intact section, pprox. 5m spacing between each, all numbered. Trestles constructed from redgum trunk section pairs of posts (one straight, one angled per leg), with timber cross braces and ties between. Tops are finished with a pair of bearers, notched to posts. Carriageway is timber in construction, with main longitudinal timber bearers and timber decking planks laid perpendicular to bearers. Deck is finished with ballast metal gravel, contained by timber edge beams, which are tied together across deck with metal tie rods.

Remnant trestle bridge was one of two such bridges across the Wimmera River. The second bridge has since collapsed and only remnants of posts are seen today.

Physical Condition

Good condition – timberwork and ballast. All weathered, minor corrosion evident to steel rods. No evident subsidence. Recommend that vehicular traffic be kept off bridge to minimise imposed loads.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history. *(triggered substantial expansion and increased agricultural production in the west of the Shire after laying in 1887. The railway allowed the economic, easy and reliable transport of grain and wool from farms to market and port).*

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history. *(rare, as earliest surviving complete section of trestle rail bridge dating from the 1887 in the Shire – only other trestle bridge is at Kanagulk – 1917)*

–*Criterion D:* Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or naturalplaces or environments. *(as a class consisting of rail trestle bridges, the remaining bridge section is intact and demonstrates construction type, use of local materials and innovative engineering skill required to successfully bridge flood areas. It informs of 19thC railway timber trestle bridge technology – no longer erected in this manner. It illustrates railway engineering technology of the late 19th Century – trestles are numbered for maintenance, spans suit loads imposed, engineered to avoid flooding and span river)*–

Comparative Analysis

Trestle rail bridge, Kanagulk (near Fulham Estate), Hermes no. 191240: Hamilton/ East Natimuk railway line – passes over the Glenelg River – similar condition, length and construction type – equally comparable, but later in construction.

Other comparators are outside the Rural City of Horsham:

Stony Creek rail bridge, Nowa Nowa, Hermes no. 67978: 1916 construction, 27 span, 276m long, 18.6 m high bridge. – comparable, but later in construction. Higher than Quantong bridge.

Trestle / steel bridge, Panther Place, Eltham, Hermes no. 66300: 1902 trestle bridge – mix of timber and steel – low rise, but still in service today.

Trestle bridge, Puffing Billy, Belgrave, Hermes no. 66906: 1889 in construction – comparable (curved).

Trestle bridge, Springdallah Creek, Hermes no. 31671: 1880s – early bridge – inc steel beans under carriageway.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The elements of heritage value of the remnant 1887 Quantong timber trestle railway bridge over the Wimmera River include:

. 135m long section of timber trestle bridge, including ballast to deck, and the form of the earth embankments each side – to at least a length of 100m each. This comprises about one-third the original length of the bridge.

. All timber sections of trestles, bracing and carriageway deck.

How is it significant?

The remnant 1887 Quantong timber trestle railway bridge is of historic and representative significance and rarity value to Horsham Rural City.

Why is it significant?

The remnant 1887 Quantong timber trestle railway bridge, is:

. of local historic significance, as evidence of the 1887 Horsham-Natimuk (later to Carpolac) railway line. Once laid, the railway facilitated the economic and rapid transport of grain from farms to ports – resulting in increased agricultural activity, prosperity and substantial expansion of agricultural development in the western part of the Shire in the late 19th century. Towns such as Natimuk, Mitre and (outside the Shire) Goroke and Carpolac developed along the railway line, providing stations, silos (mid 20thC) and fuel/ water for trains. (Criterion A)

. of local significance as rare, surviving evidence of past railway routes through the Shire and as a rare, intact example of timber trestle bridge construction within the Shire, and the earliest surviving example. The bridge

was the longest of three bridges on the line. (Criterion B)

. of local representative significance, as an illustration of a particular class of Victorian Railways timber railway trestle bridges of the 1880s period – exhibiting 19th century railway engineering skill and innovation in the use of local materials in construction, engineering skill in spanning and modifying the local terrain and waterways, and the particular design of the structure – timber trestles at 5 metre centres, supporting a timber and ballast carriageway for trains.

Recommendations 2022

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

References

Literature title: Argus Newspaper
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author:
Literature publisher:
Literature year:

Literature title: A story of Horsham : a municipal century
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author: Brooke, Brian. & Finch, Alan
Literature publisher: City of Horsham
Literature year: 1982

Literature title: Wooden Wonders Victoria's Timber Bridges
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author: Don Chambers
Literature publisher: Hyland House Publishing for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
Literature year: 2006

Literature title: Horsham Times Newspaper
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author:
Literature publisher:

Literature year:

Literature title: The Portland Railway
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author: Turton, Keith, W
Literature publisher: Australian Railway Historical Society Melbourne
Literature year: 1968

Literature title: Victorian Railways Report: of the board of land and works for the year ending 30th June 1888
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author: Victorian Railways
Literature publisher:
Literature year: 1888

Literature title: Victorian Heritage Database, citation report 68627
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author:
Literature publisher:
Literature year:

Literature title: Victoria Government Gazette, number 106, Friday, November 4th 1887
Literature type: General Reference
Literature author:
Literature publisher:
Literature year: 1887