Victorian Heritage Database Report

Puffing Billy- Railway Trestle Bridge

Location:
Belgrave-Gembrook Road, Selby VIC 3159

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number: H7922-0166
Listing Authority: HI

Heritage Overlay Number: HO32

Statement of Significance:
For long the region's most famous bridge on its most famous railway line. Probably the most photographed structure in the region.
"Built 1899 for narrow gauge railway line on standard Victorian Railways pattern but unusual in its curve; known just as the 'Horseshoe Bridge'"(National Trust Citation). (Tansley, 1978)
The bridge is a significant technical accomplishment. It is of considerable age for its type, age/size Category E and forms part of an historic railway. (RNE, 016043)
It is also an excellent vantage point for photography of the railway and has come to have some social significance as a structure of historic value. (RNE, 016043)
The Rail Bridge, over Monbulk Creek is of historical importance for its association with the construction of narrow gauge railway lines in Victoria. During the 1890s depression, broad gauge railway line construction was not considered economically viable and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways in 1896 considered alternative railway construction techniques. Following the committee's recommendations, four narrow gauge rail lines were built in Victoria between 1899 and 1916. The Rail Bridge is an important component of the former narrow gauge Ferntree Gully-Gembrook Line. (VHR, HO32)
The bridge is also of historical importance for its association with the economic stimulus the narrow gauge railway generated in the Dandenongs. Businesses that benefited included the Nobelius Nurseries, which became the largest nursery in the Southern Hemisphere in the pre World War One period. The timber, tourism and soft fruit industries also benefited from the lines' construction. (VHR, HO32)
The Rail Bridge, over Monbulk Creek is historically and socially important for its association with the recreational tourism industry in Victoria. The journey into the hills, including the ride over this famous bridge, became a popular weekend recreational activity enjoyed by local and overseas visitors from the lines' initial construction in 1899, and after its re-opening as the Puffing Billy Line in 1965. The bridge is socially important

for its associations with the community movement to protect and restore the narrow gauge line from the 1950s. This movement is an example of community concern over heritage issues which developed within parts of the Victorian community in the post war period. (VHR, HO32)
The Rail Bridge, over Monbulk Creek is architecturally important because it is an essentially intact example of a timber trestle bridge and is possibly the most extremely curved surviving bridge in Victoria. It is also significant asan example of trestle bridge. (VHR, HO32)

Description

Sweeping, curved, timber railway bridge, spanning main road and heavily timbered creek. Built in 1900 for Ferntree Gully to Gembrook steam train. Roadway lowered in 1980s.
Constructed c.1899 by Board of Land and Works Railway Construction Branch. Cost - 482 pounds.. No extensions and progressive replacement of timbers dated. (Tansley, 1978)
The bridge is a timber girder bridge with fourteen spans of 6m. It is of considerable height, with piers to 11m high, it is built to a tight radius of 60m, giving rise to its name, The Horseshoe Bridge. It is a good example of light gauge timber construction in difficult terrain. (RNE, 016043)
The bridge carries a single 0.76m gauge track, at a radius of 60m on a ballasted timber deck. There are fourteen spans of about 6m. Originally the timber decking of 178mm x 102mm and 152mm x 102mm planks, was supported on four timber girders of 483mm x 203mm cross-section, but these have later been replaced by 508mm x 229mm and 533mm x 229mm timbers. The piers are timber with 406mm x 178mm half caps. The Bridge was extensively repaired by Hardcastle and Richards in 1980 and in 1981. The oldest beam found was dated to 1914 and, most of the piles to about 1922. (RNE, 016043)

Excellent

Heritage Study / Consultant	Yarra Ranges - Shire of Yarra Ranges Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2000
Construction Date Range	
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	YARRA RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	115714
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online