

Victorian Heritage Database Report
COWIES CREEK RAIL BRIDGE NO 2



Location:

GEELONG-GHERINGHAP RAILWAY (GEELONG-BALLARAT RAILWAY), MOORABOOL, GREATER GEELONG CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H2241

Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO1971

Statement of Significance:

What is Significant?

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is a single span semicircular arch (or roman or round arch) bluestone bridge situated on the Geelong to Ballarat railway over Cowies Creek, 9.5 kilometres from Geelong. It was constructed in 1860 by Evans, Merry and Co. for the Victorian Railways to the design of George Darbyshire, engineer-in-chief of the Victorian Railways Department.

Rail links to the goldfields were considered priority routes by the colonial government and the Melbourne to Bendigo and the Geelong to Ballarat lines were the first two trunk lines built by the newly formed Victorian Railways Department. Geelong had been linked to Melbourne by rail since June 1857 but this line had been constructed by the privately financed Geelong to Melbourne Railway Company, which was a Geelong led initiative. The Geelong to Ballarat line opened in 1862 and became an important early link between the Ballarat goldfields and Geelong Port. This enabled Geelong to compete in shipping with Melbourne and facilitated the post gold rush growth and development of Ballarat as a major regional centre. Ballarat later became a railway hub for a number of other lines in the north west of Victoria. Subsequently all railway traffic from Adelaide and the Western Districts went by way of Geelong until the direct rail route between Melbourne to Ballarat was completed in 1889.

The bridge is characterised by its sophisticated design and finely finished stonework of rusticated ashlar which contrasts with the smooth surfaces of details such as the voussoirs, string courses and coping stones. Other refinements include the splayed abutments and the curved and tapering wing walls. The corners of the bridge are marked by large square pilasters supported on curve-ended corbels, and parapet walls of rusticated ashlar with a curved-top coping extends along the length of both side of the bridge.

The arch was designed to carry two lines of railway track over Cowies Creek, which was diverted to cross the railway alignment at a more convenient angle for bridge building, and hence avoid the need to skew the bridge.

How is it Significant?

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria

Why is it Significant?

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is of historical significance for its association with the Geelong to Ballarat Railway, which was one of the first two main trunk lines constructed by the Victorian Railways to connect the main gold producing towns to the ports of Melbourne and Geelong .

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is of historical significance for its association with George Christian Darbyshire, engineer-in-chief of the Victorian Railways Department at the time of the bridge's design, and an important figure in the development of Victoria's railways.

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is of architectural significance as a rare and unusual style of masonry rail bridge reflecting established British design precedents in the use of semicircular or round arch in local bluestone. The bridge is a rare type, as semicircular arch forms are only known from a handful of early rail bridges, generally the multiple arch viaducts such as Harpers Creek and Kismet Creek at Sunbury.

Cowies Creek Rail Bridge No 2 is of architectural significance for its sophisticated design and highly elaborated stonework treatment which is evident in the bridge's substantial abutments, curved and tapering wing walls and in the bridge's stonework and careful detailing.

Construction Date Range	1860 -
Architect / Designer	Darbyshire, George C
Municipality	GREATER GEELONG CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	123524
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