Identification and location

Name of Place: **Stony Creek Rail Bridge**

Other Name

Address off Francis Street
Yarraville

Place Identifier **20241**

Heritage Significance *metropolitan*

Creation date(s): 1856-8 **Map (Melway)** 42 A10

Boundary description The bridge and its approach abutments and embankments,

Local Government Area: Cities of Maribyrnong and Hobson's Bay

Ownership Type state (PTC)

Description

Site Type: Bridge, Rail, GIRDER OR BEAM

Physical Description

The present bridge appears to comprise a modern structural steel span on the original 1859 rusticated bluestone abutments with the addition of a new concrete pier in the centre. The abutments show distinctive treatment with pilasters, an ashlar string course and low parapet capped in sawn stone slabs. Stonework is axe-faced regular coursed blocks with remnants of lime pointing.

The original box-section plate girder was a riveted wrought iron structure consisting of two wrought iron box girders, each 92 feet long, 7 feet high and 2 feet 3 inches wide, and weighing 26 tons with cross girders erected underneath later. The girders were mounted on two stone piers 20 feet above high water, and provided a clear span of 90 feet. The original girders were cut up and scrapped when the new span was built in 1959.

Condition

In good condition apart from some intrusive painting.

Integrity

The loss of the original girders is unfortunate but does not detract from appreciation of the beauty of the stone abutments.

Context

Adjacent to the former Yarraville Woollen mill but generally in open space as part of the Westgate Golf course and Stone Creek parkland.

Threats

none at present

History

The Melbourne - Geelong Railway was constructed in 1854-9 as a private venture, reaching only Newport initially, where passengers and goods were transferred to river boats at North Road for the final trip upstream to Melbourne. The survey of both the Geelong and Williamstown lines go back even earlier to 1852 by the architect and engineer William Snell. Tenders for the construction of the Geelong Line were called in May 1856 (Harrigan 1962:13-16). The Williamstown - Melbourne line was completed in 1859 as the first Government constructed railway. The Government had previously bought out the floundering Melbourne, Mount Alexander and Murray River Railway Company, in March 1856 and took over the building of the Williamstown line. The contract for the Stony Creek bridge was awarded in the first batch in June 1856 by the newly formed Victorian Railways Department, along with the much larger Saltwater River Bridge, now known as the Maribyrnong River Railway Bridge (qv.).

The ironwork for the bridge was manufactured in England by Pete, Brassey and Betts for £2,034. The total span was 90 feet and construction of the foundations and the bridge abutments and erection of the bridge itself were done by George Holmes and Company, of Melbourne, for £14,580. Presumably the designer was G.C. Darbyshire, Chief Engineer of the Victorian Railways Department. It was completed in 1858 and the line opened to traffic on 13 January 1859, the same day as trains ran over the Bendigo Line (Harrigan 1962).

In 1902, two plate girders were erected underneath the cross girders to strengthen the bridge to take increasing weights of engines and train loads. With the coming of Diesel engines in the 1950s, the bridge was again strengthened, this time by removing the iron girders completely and replacing them with a new steel girder and deck in 1953 (*Victorian Railways News Letter*, April 1953, p.10).

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme	Moving goods and people		
PAHT Subtheme:	Moving goods and people by rail	**Local Theme**	Railways

Cultural Significance

The Stony Creek bridge is of historical and architectural significance at the metropolitan level as part of one of the earliest railways in Victoria and the first major government railway undertaking. (Criterion A3) The bridge abutments reflect on the design philosophy imported from Britain in the 1850s which none the less exhibits the skill of the stone-mason and railway engineer using the indigenous building material ie. the ubiquitous local bluestone. (Criterion A4) The bridge demonstrates important expansion of settlement in Melbourne and Victoria, as based on rail infrastructure.(Criterion C2) When built this bridge was part of one of the greatest engineering achievements in the colony. (Criterion F1)

Comparative Examples

The stone abutments compare with other bridges on the Bendigo and Williamstown line, such as the Saltwater River Bridge in Footscray. The sawn stone of the pylons and string courses are distinctive.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register	No
Register of the National Estate	No
National Trust Register	Recommended
Other Heritage Listings	WRIHS
Planning Scheme Protection	Recommended
External Paint Controls Apply?	Yes - retain unpainted finish
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	No
Tree Controls Apply?	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	No
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	No
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	No

Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.
To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.
To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.
To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.
To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.
To encourage continuation of the original use of the place.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

As one of the earliest structures erected in connection with the Williamstown railway, it reflects the characteristic phase in Melbourne's development.

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

The development of the Geelong and Williamstown railway lines and the railway construction era in general was an important cultural phase in the history of the region and Melbourne.

C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.

The bridge demonstrates important expansion of settlement in Melbourne and Victoria, as based on rail infrastructure.

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

When built this bridge was part of one of the greatest engineering achievements in the colony

Documentation

References

Harrigan, L., *Victorian Railways to 1962,* Victorian Railways Commissioners, 1962, p.13-16.
The Victorian Railways News Letter, April 1953, p.10.
Snell, Edward, *The Diary of Edward Snell, edited by Tom Griffiths and Alan Platt., Angus & Robertson 1988.*

Data recording

Assessed By	Gary Vines
Assessed Date:	29/2/2000