

## ROTHWELL BRIDGE



ROTHWELL BRIDGE SOHE  
2008



1 rothwell bridge over little  
river werribee side view  
jul1984

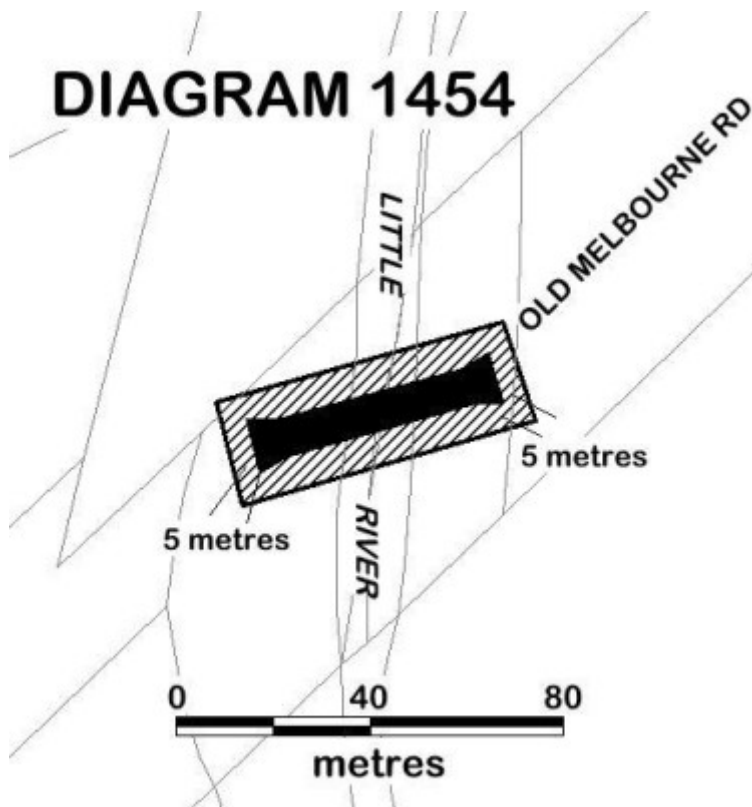


Diagram 1454.JPG

### Location

OVER LITTLE RIVER, OLD MELBOURNE ROAD LITTLE RIVER, GREATER GEELONG CITY, WYNDHAM CITY

### Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

WYNDHAM CITY

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H1454

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO298

HO72

## **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

## **Amendment to Registration**

August 10, 2017

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - August 6, 1999

What is significant?

The Rothwell Bridge over the Little River at Rothwell was erected as a double span segmental arched stone structure in 1866-67 from designs prepared by the Shire of Wyndham Engineer, John Baxter. Clement Nash was the contractor. The bridge and approaches were partially destroyed by flood in September 1880, and PE Nolan, Shire of Wyndham Engineer, designed the present segmental arch bridge from spans, apparently reconstructing the original section and widening the approaches. Rothwell bridge has been by-passed by the modern Melbourne-Geelong Rd, however it is still in use as a road bridge.

The Rothwell Bridge is four span structure with piers separating the central two arches from the end ones. The structure is faced with rusticated bluestone masonry and has substantial abutments. Features are the voussoirs, imposts, string courses and piers.

How is it significant?

The Rothwell Bridge over the Little River is of architectural and historical importance to the State of Victoria

Why is it significant?

The Rothwell Bridge is of historical importance for its associations with the expansion of Victoria's infrastructure in the 1860s and for its role in the development of transport systems. It has important associations with the road link between Geelong and Melbourne. Rothwell Bridge is an important indication of the early investment in roads and railways by the government, which helped establish the national transport system and bridges such as this once formed important links in this expanding network.

The Rothwell Bridge is of architectural importance as an early road bridge, representing traditional stone construction techniques. It is a rare example of a bridge with piers dividing the spans, and also demonstrates skilled stonemasonry with its prominent voussoirs, rusticated string-course and carved breakwaters.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner, which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

\* No permit required for routine maintenance of Rothwell Bridge

\* No permit required to replace like with like on Rothwell Bridge

Construction dates        1866,

Heritage Act Categories   Registered place,

Hermes Number 1000

Property Number

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## History

### Contextual History:

Up to the 1850s the Traveller's Rest virtually constituted the settlement at the Little River. In February 1852, the situation changed when the township of Rothwell in the parish of Murtcaim, was proclaimed. Town lots and large blocks in the vicinity were sold; prospects of steady development were enhanced by the announcement that the Geelong-Melbourne railway would follow the line of the road and a station would be established at Rothwell. However, for engineering reasons, it was decided that the railway would be relocated about half a mile further north and that the station be established on the Werribee side of the river. The focus of settlement gradually shifted to the north, Rothwell township was stillborn, while Little River sprang into being, mainly outside Corio Shire boundaries. The name Rothwell lingered on for a number of years being used interchangeably with Little River (Wynd, 1981, p.125).

Bounded as it was by two rivers and divided more or less centrally by another watercourse, the provision of bridges was an important function of the council. The Moorabool at Batesford had been crossed by wooden bridges in the 1840s; that of 1848 was replaced in 1853 after flood damage. Both had been erected by the central government before local governments were established, but bridges across the little Rover at Rothwell had to await the establishment of the Shire (Willingham, Sheet 141).

### History of Place:

A drowning at the Rothwell ford in 1863 triggered the movement to build a bridge over the Little, but the indecision about where it should be located, and the need for cooperation with the Wyndham Shire meant that the bridge was completed in close proximity to the original ford (Wynd, 1981, p.125).

In approximately 1863, after a person drowned crossing the Little River, the Coroner suggested that a bridge be built across the river. Corio Road Board declared that this matter was outside their jurisdiction but would co-operate with the Wyndham Road Board. When funds became available for a bridge M.J. Cummins M.P raised the matter in Parliament and requested £1200. Six months later he was reported to have gained £600 with much opposition. The government wished the bridge to be built near the railway. In the October meeting Wyndham Road Board decided to pull out of the cost of erection of the bridge. During November there were arguments between the government and local residents as to where to build the bridge. The local publican wanted it placed between his place and Mc Shanes and he would donate the land, he claimed the banks were sound. Cummins finally asked the PWD to determine the best site (Geelong Historical Society, Investigator, March 1978).

In December there was a special meeting of the board was held at Ashley's Hotel, Rothwell to discuss the location of the bridge. New engineer, D.K. Goall had been appointed by this time. The result of the meeting would see the Commissioner of Railways and Roads to recommend a particular site. The board met and decided to adopt a petition signed by 8 residents that the best site was where government Rd crossed the Little River at the northern boundary of the parish of Muntcarn. The road led through and adjoined Obrien's farm (Geelong Historical Society, Investigator, March 1978).

Mr Cowderoy of the Railways Department was present at the meeting of local residents and was told the bridge site had not been decided. There were two different petitions for the site of the bridge with some of the names on both. The board washed its hands of the matter but made the recommendation that the bridge be built on the Government Rd site (Geelong Historical Society, Investigator, March 1978).

In July 1964 McShane protested about the recommendation for the site of the bridge. The new position would render it valueless and the first site should be chosen. Corio Shire Council (Board became this) put that the matter was out of their hands. Mr Spalding explained that most of the public wanted it in its original site. On December 7 1864 a motion was carried that the original decision should stand.

Plans and specifications for a wooden bridge were drawn up. McShane appeared to build a stone bridge for the £600 near his property. Ratepayers protested against wishes of local people.

In May 1865 a letter from assistant Commissioner of Roads and Railways was received stating that the council would have to pay one third of the bridge. Two plans were produced, one for £1400 the other for £800. The one for £800 was the design accepted. Eight months later the government rejected the design as faulty and objectionable (Geelong Historical Society, Investigator, March 1978).

In January 1866 Mr Baxter's Design was chosen at a special meeting. Mr Nash's tender was accepted and was allowed 15 weeks in which to complete the bridge. A strike among masons meant that the bridge was unfinished by the contract date and £600 had already been paid out (Geelong Historical Society, Investigator, March 1978). The contractor Clement Nash later sued the Bridge Committee for £500 plus costs (Willingham, Sheet 141).

The Rothwell Bridge over the Little River at Rothwell (now the Little River township) was erected as a double span segmental arched stone structure in 1866-67 from designs prepared by the Shire of Wyndham Engineer, John Baxter. Clement Nash (who later sued the bridge committee for damages) was the contractor. The bridge and approaches were partially destroyed by flood in September 1880, and P. E. Nolan, Shire of Wyndham Engineer, designed the present segmental arch bridge from spans, apparently reconstructing the original section and widening the approaches (Willingham, Sheet 141).

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Criterion A

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

### Criterion B

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

### Criterion C

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

### Criterion D

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

### Criterion E

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

### Criterion F

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

### Criterion G

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

### Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying the following places in the Heritage Register:

Number: H1454

Category: Heritage Place

Name: Rothwell Bridge

Location: Over Little River, Old Melbourne Road,

Little River

Greater Geelong City and Wyndham City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 1454 encompassing parts of Crown Allotments 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, Township of Little River, being a curtilage of 5 metres from the bridge.

Dated 10 August 2017  
STEVEN AVERY  
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 32 10 August 2017 1711]

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*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/>*