

# MURRINDAL RIVER TRUSS BRIDGE



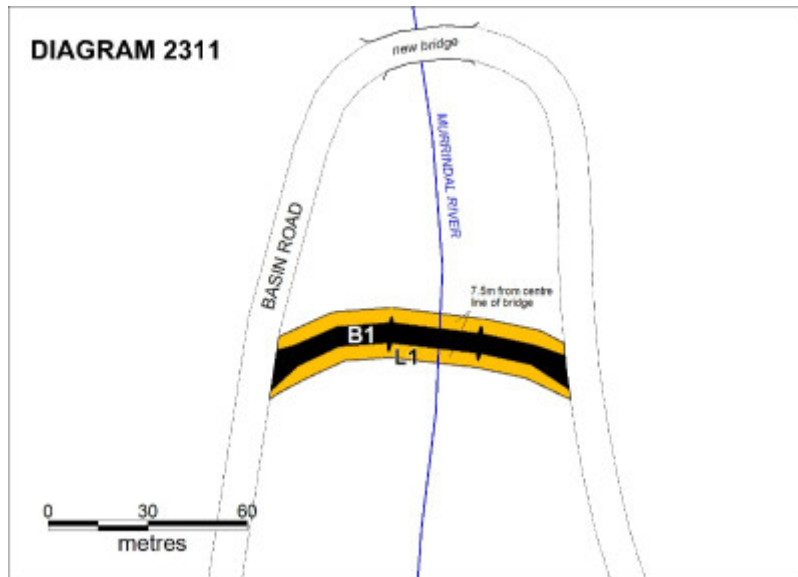
Murrindal River Bridge  
picturesque.jpg



Murrindal curved approach  
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Murrindal trestle on cutwater  
IMG\_0939.jpg



murrindal river truss bridge plan.jpg

## Location

BASIN ROAD BUCHAN, EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Municipality

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

## VHR Registration

September 13, 2012

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 12, 2020

Please note, this place was impacted by the 2019/20 bushfires.

# What is significant?

The Murrindal River Truss Bridge on Basin Road was built in 1927 and consists of a single timber Howe truss span and five stringer approach spans, supported on timber trestles fixed to concrete piers.

The Developmental Roads Act, designed to provide improved access from remote areas to main roads and railways, was pushed through by the incumbent Country Party government in Victoria in 1918 and was administered by the Country Roads Board (CRB). A large proportion of Developmental Act works, including improvements to existing roads as well as new roads, were undertaken in the hilly districts of Gippsland, the north-east of Victoria and the Otway and Heytesbury Forests.

The Basin Road, which accessed The Basin and later Jackson's Crossing, was surveyed in 1900 and was completed by c1909. The road was declared a Developmental Road in 1918 and in 1920-21 the CRB provided funds for substantial works. In 1923 the Acting Premier and the Chairman of the CRB visited Basin Road as part of the East Gippsland section of a "bad roads tour". In 1925-26 further road works were funded by a special grant under the Unemployment Act. In 1926 Developmental Road funding was approved for a new bridge over the Murrindal River, which was built under direct CRB supervision. The CRB described the bridge in its Annual Report as "virtually a viaduct". The bridge is now closed to vehicular traffic and has been made suitable for pedestrian use, with a new concrete road bridge built upstream.

This six-span Murrindal River bridge consists of five stringer approach spans of thirty feet (9.1 m) and one eighty foot (24.5 m) timber Howe truss span of a standard CRB design. This simple truss design was suited to fabrication in remote areas and was used extensively from 1919 to the late 1920s. The western approach spans are widened and gently curved. The transverse deck remains in place and is unusual in that the timbers are spaced approximately half their width apart, possibly to improve longevity. Until recently the deck was topped by two strips of running-planks for motor vehicles, but it is now completely covered in longitudinal planks. The timber trestles supporting the truss and the girder approach spans are supported on mass concrete piers. True timber trestles, as found here, are rare in Victoria. The outer ends of the approach spans are supported by buried timber piers. The Murrindal Bridge is located in a striking high-country landscape setting, on a winding road, crossing a fast-flowing river in a steep-sided wooded valley and with an impressive hilly backdrop.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Gunaikurnai people.

# How is it significant?

The Murrindal Bridge is of scientific (technological), historical and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

# Why is it significant?

The Murrindal River Truss Bridge is of scientific (technological) significance at a State level as a rare example of a timber truss bridge. It is one of only four timber truss bridges remaining in the State. Within that group it is also a rare and intact example of a timber Howe truss span made to a standard Country Roads Board (CRB) design, with the only other extant examples being the three-span Genoa River Bridge and the single span Glenmaggie Bridge. The Murrindal River bridge is one of only two remaining single-span CRB truss bridges. Its significance is enhanced because it is accompanied by timber stringer approach spans and timber trestle supports, which are consistent with the timber technologies that accompanied most of the single truss spans built in the State.

The Murrindal River Truss Bridge is of historical significance as a representative example of the types of works funded by the Country Roads Board under the Development Roads Act 1918. The bridge and the associated roadworks were a very substantial investment in a road which serviced a small and otherwise-isolated hinterland consisting of The Basin and Jackson's Crossing. As such it is representative of the goals of the Development Roads Act.

The Murrindal Bridge is of aesthetic significance for its placement in a striking high-country landscape setting, on a winding road, crossing a fast-flowing river in a steep-sided wooded valley and with an impressive hilly backdrop. .

## 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 exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works 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 works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted. Emergency Works: Emergency works to maintain public safety and to protect the bridge structure.

## Theme

### 3. Connecting Victorians by transport and communications

Construction dates	1927,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	MURRINDAL BRIDGE,
Hermes Number	13058
Property Number	

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## History

### Contextual history

From its inception in 1913 the Country Roads Board (CRB) concentrated its first efforts on surveying the main road network of the State. With the Country Party in State parliament the emphasis was soon changed. Premier Peacock's 1914 policy speech outlined the rationale for what would become Developmental Roads. "Now that in some districts the main roads have already been dealt with, there is a demand, especially in the rough and hilly areas of Gippsland and in the forest country of Southern Victoria, for subsidiary roads, which will act as tributaries to the main roads and make them of greater utility to the settlers." (*Argus*, 19 June 1917 p.6)

The resulting Developmental Roads Act 1918 empowered the CRB to "declare as a developmental road any road which. In its opinion would serve to develop any are of land by providing access to a railway station or to a main road leading to a railway station". The Government provided loan money with municipalities required to pay interest of approximately 2% annual for 20 years, and after 1921 for 31.5 years. In 1918 and initial 130 roads in 37 municipalities selected for Developmental funding. When the last works under this Act were completed in 1937, 6.5 million pounds had been expended. (Country Roads Board 1963 p.20) In a 1918 *Argus* article it had been acknowledged that the principal expenditure would be in the hilly districts of Gippsland, the North East and the Otway and Heytesbury Forests. (*Argus*, 31 December 1918 p.5)

## Place History

Basin Road was surveyed and under construction by 1900. (Adams (1981) p.207) In 1901 £400 was allocated to the Buchan to Basin Road. (*Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle (BATOC)*, 19 January 1901 p.3.) The rudimentary roads of this period were soon proving very inadequate for increasing traffic. (Adams 1981 p.226) In 1908 substantial works were done and in 1909 the road was considered completed. (*BATOC*, 28 April 1908 p.2; 18 June 1908 p.2. *Gippsland Times*, 11 March 1909 p.3) Parish plan records indicate that area to the east of Buchan known as The Basin was settled very gradually. Prior to construction of the bridge, blocks were taken up in 1885, 1890, 1904, 1919 and 1920. These amounted to about half of the total alienated land area, with the remainder taken up slowly in the following decades. (*BATOC*, 16 September 1913 p.3. Buchan 4 Parish Plan Imperial Measure 2244, VPRS 16171, PROV) There must have been either a bridge or a ford over the Murrindal River at this stage. In 1913 moves were made towards extending Basin Road through to Jackson's Crossing and the Snowy River. (*BATOC*, 16 December 1913 p.3) The remoteness of this settlement is indicated by a 1915 report of an "itinerant" school there with three pupils. (*BATOC*, 15 December 1915 p.2) In the following years there were scattered reports concerning the road in newspaper reports on Council meetings, with small allocations of funding and public cooperation in maintenance of the road. (*BATOC*, 11 July 1917 p.4) In 1916 the Council applied for grants from the Tourist Bureau for the Buchan-Basin road. (*BATOC*, 23 September 1916 p.4)

In June 1918 the Tambo Shire Council engineer proposed two other roads as suitable for Developmental funding - Bruce's Track and the Coastal Road between Lakes Entrance and Orbost. (*BATOC*, 29 June 1918 p.3) It is likely that Basin Road one of the original round of declarations of Developmental Roads by the CRB. In 1918 local newspaper reported indications that the CRB would "help but the [Basin] road through for a developmental purpose, as it was the only way a good grade could be got to contact Jackson' Creek." (*BATOC*, 25 September 1918) The slow progress of land sales in the basin up to this time indicates that the aim may have been to encourage further uptake of land in the area. Developmental funding was soon forthcoming, as in 1919 the Shire invited tenders for over 25,000 lineal feet of roadwork on Basin Road. (*Argus*, 18 November 1919 p.2.) In March 1920 tenders were invited again for 25,600 feet of road making including a timber bridge in an unspecified location. (*Argus*, 29 March 1920 p.2) The same invitation was advertised again in April, June and July. In the July advertisement a further 4587 feet of roadwork and a stock bridge were added to those Basin Road works. There was also a tender invited at this time for a "Bridge over the Murrindal River" of 3x30 foot spans, though this was probably upstream on the Buchan Gelantipy Road. (*Argus*, 19 April 1920 p.2; 18 June 1920 p.2; 19 July 1920 p.2) There must have been few contractors interested or available, for the advertisement appeared again in December 1920 and in January and February 1921. (*Argus*, 8 December 1920 p.17; 19 January 1921 p.3) The 1920 floods may have had an impact here. These floods had carried away the existing bridge over the Murrindal River on Basin Road. (Buchan Sesquicentenary Committee 1989 p.66) The parish plan indicates that this previous bridge was approximately 400 metres downstream on an earlier and straighter alignment of Basin Road. (Buchan Sheet 4 Parish Plan Imperial Measure 2244, VPRS 16171, PRO.) In April 1921 the Shire invited a tender for making 10,000 feet of Basin Road as "Developmental Works", indicating that some of the earlier works had been executed. (*Argus*, 23 April 1921 p.5)

In 1923 the Acting Premier Mr McPherson toured East Gippsland as part of his policy of "ascertaining by inspection" which of the states "bad" roads should benefit by a special allocation for Developmental Roads in the previous budget. As part of the tour he inspected Basin Road near Buchan. (*Argus* 10 April 1923 p.9) In 1924 the Minister for Public Works announced that priority in new Developmental Road projects would given to Soldier Settlements and in hilly country. The CRB had prepared a long list of recommendations, most of which were located in to Gippsland. (*Argus*, 9 August 1924 p.25) Funding was now becoming available for unemployment relief, and such works were in progress on Basin Road from 1924. (Adams 1981 p.262) In the 1925 Commonwealth election, there was a polling place at the Roads Board Office at the "Basin Road Camp", which was probably occupied by unemployment relief workers. (*Gippsland Times*, 19 October 1925 p.4) In the 1925-26 year the CRB expended £6703 on works on Basin Road under a "Special Grant for Relief of Unemployed". (Country Roads Board 1926 p.43)

In January 1926 the CRB allotted £5000 funding for a new bridge over the Murrindal River on Basin Road. (*Argus* , 12 January 1926 p.6.) In June 1926 the CRB invited tenders for Contract 162 SP/69, a 230 foot long bridge on Basin Road over the Murrindal River along with 200 feet of approaches. (*Argus*, 14 June 1926 p.5) A tender had been accepted by the end of the 1925-26 financial year. (Country Roads Board 1926 p.96) The bridge was completed in 1927. (Buchan Sesquicentenary Committee 1989 p.66) It was used as an exemplar of the year's projects in the 1927-28 annual report of the CRB, alongside a description of its close relative, the Genoa River bridge.

On the Basin Developmental-road in Tambo Shire, a bridge has been erected over the Murrindal River, consisting of a timber truss span of 80 feet, and five stringer spans of 30 feet. The river valley is very narrow at this point so that the bridge is virtually a viaduct, and the end spans are on curves of 100 feet radius. These spans are widened and super-elevated. Buried piers are used instead of abutments, the ends of the banks being pitched to protect them against floods. The piers in the main stream are of mass concrete up to flood level with timber trestles above this level. The cost of the bridge was £5,600. (Country Roads Board 1929 p.14)

In November 1926 the Shire invited tenders for 136½ chains of fencing along Basin Road "near Murrindal Bridge" and the accepted tender was approved in December. (*Argus*, 27 November 1926 p.17; 17 December 1926 p.24) However, in June 1927 the CRB re-advertised the invitation to tender for erection of 136½ chains fencing on a "deviation" of Basin Road, indicating the new alignment of the road. It also advertised an invitation to tender for further road making and a 26 foot span bridge on Basin Road. (*Argus*, 4 June 1927 p.21; 18 June 1927 p.5) Further extensive works on Basin Road to provide unemployment relief were undertaken in the 1930s. (Adams 1981 p.262)

## **Bibliography**

Adams, J. (1981). The Tambo Shire Centenary History. Bairnsdale, Tambo Shire Council.  
Buchan Sesquicentenary Committee (1989). Bukan-Mungie: 150 Years of Settlement in the Buchan District - 1939-1989. Bairnsdale, Buchan Sesquicentenary Committee.  
Country Roads Board (1926). Country Roads Board Thirteenth Annual Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1926, Country Roads Board.  
Country Roads Board (1929). Country Roads Board Fifteenth Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1928. Melbourne, Country Roads Board.  
Country Roads Board (1963). Country Roads Board Victoria 1913-1962: Fifty Years of Progress. Melbourne, Country Roads Board.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

Assessment Against Criteria:

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history. The Murrindal River Truss Bridge is of technological significance at a State level as a rare timber truss bridge. It is one of only four timber-truss bridges remaining in the State. Within that group it is also a rare and intact surviving timber Howe-truss span made to a standard CRB design, with the only other extant examples the three-span Genoa River Bridge and the single span Glenmaggie Bridge. This Murrindal bridge is one of two remaining single-span CRB truss bridges. Its value as a survivor is enhanced because it is accompanied by timber stringer approach spans and timber-trestle supports, which are consistent with the timber technologies that accompanied most of the single truss-spans built in the State.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments. The Murrindal River Truss Bridge is of historical significance to the State of Victoria as a representative example of the types of works funded by the Country Roads Board under the Development Roads Act 1918. The bridge and the roadwork which originally accompanied it was a very substantial investment on a road which serviced a small and otherwise-isolated hinterland consisting of The Basin and Jackson's Crossing. As such it is representative of the goals of the Development Roads Act.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. The Murrindal Bridge is of aesthetic significance for its placement in a striking high-country landscape setting, on a winding road, crossing a fast-flowing river in a steep-sided wooded valley and with an impressive hilly backdrop.

## **Plaque Citation**

Completed in 1927 with Developmental Roads Act funding, the timber technology of the stringer approach spans and trestles complements the main span of now-rare timber trusses of standard Country Roads Board design.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2311 held by the Executive Director being part of Crown Allotment 3C Section F Parish of Buchan.
2. All of the structure marked B1 on Diagram 2311 held by the Executive Director.

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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/>*