
GOVERNMENT TRAMWAY, BRIDGE AND JETTY

Location

2-3 GRIFFITHS STREET AND OCEAN DRIVE AND GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0098

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Archaeological Significance

The archaeological significance of Government Tramway, Bridge and Jetty focuses on its potential to inform on the manner of their construction and the materials used. This could possibly provide an insight into the importance placed by the relevant authorities on providing durable, or otherwise, maritime infrastructure in the middle years of the 19th century before the Training Walls were constructed. The cultural deposits associated with jetty could provide valuable information about its use and the trade that passed over it.

Historical Significance

The Government Jetty, Bridge and Tramway was a large investment in capital to maintain Port Fairy as a viable port of trade at a time when it was competing with Warrnambool to be the premier regional centre.

There were no pile stumps visible at low tide and up to 0.5 m underwater. It appears that the jetty was allowed to deteriorate and so the remains of piles associated with the jetty are likely to be present and buried under the beach.

They may be exposed at times of heavy seas. Remnant pile stumps may be slightly protruding from the seabed.

Other structural timbers such as headstocks and planking may be buried within the vicinity of the jetty alignment as would be artefacts discarded from the structure as well as from vessels tied up along side it.

Interpretation of Site

At the location of the concrete ramp there was a shed type structure, presumably to protect waiting passengers and cargo from the elements. It is unclear whether the structure was built on the jetty or on the land. If the latter post holes (presuming it was of timber construction) may be present under the concrete ramp and the seaward end of the

Battery Lane.

It would appear that the foundation for the tramway along Battery Lane is present in places, particularly closer to Griffiths Street. It is unlikely that the tram lines would still be present though some sleepers may still remain. The property where the bridge came ashore on the eastern bank could not be accessed at the time of the inspection, however substantial bluestone seawalls and stub jetties observed could have some association with the abutments of the bridge.

There are unlikely to be any remains of the bridge piles towards the centre of the Moyne River on account of the dredging that has taken place since the end of the 19th century. The footings of the bridge may be present on the western bank underneath the raised bitumen surfaces and within river sediments adjacent to the river wall.

Hermes Number 162055

Property
Number

History

By the early 1850s, the need for improved shipping facilities at Port Fairy was becoming apparent. Since the early 1840s transport and trade was conducted via small lighters and whaleboats running between wharf facilities constructed along the banks of the Moyne River and coastal vessels anchored in Port Fairy Bay. The size of vessels able to enter the Moyne was restricted due to siltation of the river mouth creating a shifting sand bar and many shipping difficulties and incidents occurred. As the township developed and shipping traffic increased, public agitation grew and petitions were made for Government funding to provide adequate infrastructure.

In 1856, the Government called for tenders for the construction of a timber ocean jetty, to be built on the southwestern shore of Lady Bay and thence be connected to the township via a bridge over the Moyne River. A short timber jetty was constructed, however, soon abandoned as being too short and too poorly built.

In the late 1850s - early 1860s, a second attempt was made at providing a coastal jetty, again with the idea that it would be linked to the township via a bridge over the Moyne. Produce would be transported from the jetty to stores on the western bank of the river by a horse-drawn tramway. Ironically, at the same time, dredging operations were also being conducted in order to clear the western passage and prepare the area for the construction of training walls planned for the entrance to the Moyne; both schemes aimed at allowing vessels to more easily enter the Moyne.

By the mid 1860s, the tramway bridge had been constructed and the jetty was well underway. This time the jetty was designed as a much more substantial structure, extending further out into Port Fairy Bay. It was built as a composite timber and stone structure, with rock quarried from Goat Island, as part of the dredging works, used as raw material.

By 1870, the tramway complex comprised the tramway jetty (with lifeboat & lifeboat shed attached), the tramway running over the sand hummocks of East Belfast, the tramway bridge across the Moyne and the terminus on the western bank with store facilities.

Within only a few short years, the second attempt to improve shipping via a coastal jetty and linked tramway also proved to be a dismal failure, creating many more problems than it solved. The jetty was hard to approach in difficult weather. 'The double-handling / loading and unloading of goods at the jetty and again at the tram terminus was cumbersome and.' most importantly, the low level tramway bridge prevented large vessels from passing underneath and; thus lighters were required to transport goods further to the wharves lining the banks of the Moyne further upstream.

Finally in 1875, following much public agitation - particularly from merchants situated along the river north of the bridge, the tramway bridge was removed. The jetty remained and for the following few decades was used only occasionally as a landing place, eventually being allowed to fall apart. On the 1st July 1875. The first schooner - *John Lewis* - traveled up the Moyne to the wharves of shipping merchants Challacombe & Bishop; which had previously been blocked by the tramway bridge. The schooner was hailed as the forerunner of a new fleet of vessels able to use the port and wharf premises along both banks were decorated with bunting for the occasion and "the healths of the master and charterer of the schooner were drunk."

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/>