
FORMER OUYEN LOCOMOTIVE DEPOT

Location

NIHILL STREET OUYEN, MILDURA RURAL CITY

Municipality

MILDURA RURAL CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7327-0018

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 3, 2023

What is significant?

The location of the Former Ouyen Locomotive Depot

How is it significant?

The site is significant in a local context under the 'linking Victorians by rail' (Theme 3.3) in *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* (Heritage Council of Victoria 2010). As such, the Former Ouyen Locomotive Depot site meets Threshold B (place history).

Why is it significant?

There is high potential for archaeological features to be present within the Ouyen Locomotive Depot, particularly where buildings and structures have been removed, such as the turntable, roundhouse and coal stage. Evidence of the presence of these former structures is apparent and further evidence is likely to be extant in a subsurface context. While archaeological remains are not part of the local significance of the HO-listed Ouyen Railway Precinct, there may be archaeological sites which meet the thresholds for protection under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Theme

3. Connecting Victorians by transport and communications

Heritage Act Categories Registered archaeological place,

Hermes Number 209357

Property Number

History

In 1921, the *Sunraysia Daily* (16 May 1921, p. 2) reported that the Ouyen Locomotive Depot (Mildura HO434) was then situated to the north end of the railway yard, near the coal stack. This area does not appear in the 1915 signalling diagram of Ouyen (Figure 22), but is confirmed in the 1927 Ouyen signalling diagram, which shows it to be located on the down side of the station platform (Figure 23). Parish mapping from 1934 shows that the allotments adjacent the Pinnaroo railway line, just south of Ouyen, were then owned by the railway (a hand-written notation suggests that both lots were 37A), and were adjacent to a railway water supply reserve (a hand-written notation names this as lot 38) in which the dam described by the *Sunraysia Daily* was situated (Figure 13).

The *Sunraysia Daily* (29 June 1926, p. 4) reported that in mid-1926, construction was progressing on the new railway yards at Ouyen. It stated that a line had been built out to the site of the railway turntable (Figure 16), near the railway dam. The turntable was then still to be erected, but when the 72-foot turntable was operational it would be able to turn the largest engines in Victoria. It further stated that additional works were being carried out at the stationmaster's residence, with a fence being moved to improve the view by drivers of approaching trains at the new railway crossing. Waugh (2002) confirms that this turntable (which is reported as a 70-foot turntable) replaced a 53-foot turntable at the new Ouyen Locomotive Depot on 3 August 1926. The large turntable was moved from Woomelang to meet the increasing demands in the engines used in transporting wheat at Ouyen (Context Pty Ltd 2013).

In November 1927, the *Argus* (26 November 1927, p. 19) reported that new £30,000 engine sheds were going to be constructed shortly at the Ouyen railyards. The sheds were described as being able to house six engines, and the material for construction had already been ordered. It would be situated in the 'greatly improved facilities for shunting and hauling traffic' which had 'recently been made'. The *Sunraysia Daily* (23 March 1928, p. 4) notes that the engine shed was fan-shaped, and would be constructed over the engine pits to the south of Ouyen (Figure 21). The location of the yards are confirmed by Waugh (2002) as being on the Pinnaroo line by 1927, just over the Mallee Highway from the station (Figure 23, Figure 24).

A railway coal stage is visible in the aerial imagery from 1946, on a trackway leading up to the engine shed, and would likely have been in operation prior to this date (Figure 14). The engine turntable disc was taken out of operation on 5 March 1946. Aerial imagery of the north portion of the site shows the coal stage and roundhouse as being extant in 1956 (Figure 15). The turntable itself was removed on 2 December 1969. The engine shed was in use in 1943, and used as stockyard sidings by 1973 (Figure 26), but the date the shed was demolished is unknown (Waugh 2002). Photographic evidence shows that the coal stage was still in use in 1968, with several then extant buildings situated nearby (Figure 17, Figure 18). On 7 December 1988, the stockyard sidings were dismantled (Waugh 2002). None of these structures are currently extant. The site currently comprises concrete footings, railway landscape features, a row of palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*) which appear to have been planted in the 1920s or 1930s, and a line of peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle*), separating Nihill Street from the locomotive depot area (Context Pty Ltd 2013).

Historical aerial imagery of the Ouyen area shows that the Ouyen Locomotive Depot was situated to the southwest of the township along the Pinnaroo line (Figure 14, Figure 15). It was on the northwest side of the line, adjacent in the northeast of the large railway dam. While the details of the depot are not clear due to the low resolution of the historical aerial imagery, the alignment of several sidings are visible, with one running in a northwest/southeast direction past a fan-shaped engine shed just prior to the dam. A second siding is visible running alongside the Pinnaroo line, splitting to the southeast of the engine shed – one set of tracks continues towards the dam, while the other curves to run in an east/west direction, ending near the northern corner of the dam. The railway turntable is not clearly visible in the imagery, however, it would have been situated to the south of the engine shed, where the northwest/southeast and west/east siding tracks intersect. The position of the

turntable at the time the aerial imagery was taken to allow engines to run along the east/west siding. The darker area just to the northeast of the engine shed comprises the coal stage, with the northwest/southeast track running adjacent to it, to allow the engines to be loaded with coal. The presence of any structures smaller than the engine shed is difficult to determine, due to the low resolution of the imagery.

This interpretation is confirmed by Semmel (2013a), in his photograph of the manual transposition of a plan of the Ouyen Locomotive Depot overlying modern aerial imagery (Figure 26). This work shows the former engine shed as being just south of several modern houses, with the former railway turntable being just south of the shed. However, the plan shows three buildings as being adjacent to the shed, along one of the sidings in the northeast, which are not visible in the aerial imagery. The coal stage is further to the northeast, past the three buildings, in what was then a large open area comprising a stock saleyard.

Modern aerial imagery, in comparison, shows that the railway depot is no longer extant. Only the Pinnaroo railway track is still extant. The area now comprises an area crisscrossed by dirt tracks, with trees growing in between the tracks. The railway dam appears to have been filled in, and is also no longer extant. There are no structures visible within the area, including that of the three buildings shown in the plan of Ouyen Locomotive Depot or the former coal stage. The location of the former coal stage now appears to be partially situated beneath a small section of an asphalted stock saleyard. The footprint of the fan-shaped engine shed is visible immediately south of a row of extant housing allotments, with a pathway running through the centre of it, and several trees growing between the footprint and the southern boundary of the residential allotments. A tree, growing in the middle of a roughly circular area, appears to be situated in the centre of the former turntable location to the southwest of the former engine shed.

This place is listed on the Mildura HO as Railway Turntables Repair Site (Mildura HO434) at Nihill Street (south), Ouyen. This place does not appear to cover what was once the entire area of the former Ouyen Locomotive Depot site, as it does not include the north-eastern portions of either the former coal stage or the sidings. This area, however, is now part of the stockyards, including a loading ramp and carparking. While the HO citation states that the railway turntable site is significant, it also notes that the palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*) form the only distinctive feature of the site following the removal of the turntable and the railway sheds.

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/>