STOCK ROUTE BRIDGE

ADDRESS: Wodonga Creek, Wodonga

STUDY NUMBER: 2B HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: 1939-40

EXISTING LISTING: National Trust (Victoria) (State) VHD Place ID 70047

CONDITION: Poor to Fair

INTEGRITY: High



(RBA, June 2024)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The *Stock Route Bridge* over Wodonga Creek is significant. The significant elements are the nine-span form with tall timber trestles, log stringers, and a transverse timber deck with longitudinal running planks, timber spacers between corbels and stringers, the piled-log (bed-log) abutment at the Wodonga end and timber post and rail balustrade.

The non-significant elements are concrete beam and piers at the northern end.

How is it significant?

The *Stock Route Bridge* is of local historical, rarity, representative, and technical significance to the City of Wodonga**.**

Why is it significant?

The *Stock Route Bridge* is historically significant as a surviving timber bridge on a former stock route. It is historically important at a local level as it is a structurally authentic bridge purpose built for livestock and drover use over a major watercourse. The bridge provides tangible evidence of a previous stock route that extended throughout the landscape. The Wodonga Creek stock route bridge is among the best-preserved large examples of a general type of horse-era bridge used on Victorian main roads during the earlier part of the 20th century. (Criterion A)

The *Stock Route Bridge* is significant for its rarity within the municipality as there are no surviving/similar examples of timber trestle bridges over watercourses. (Criterion B)

The *Stock Route Bridge* is significant representation of a mid-20th century bridge with its long and tall timber frame and old-fashioned transverse-timber deck with running planks. This bridge makes a significant visual contribution to its floodplain environment and largely rural setting (Criterion D)

The *Stock Route Bridge* is of technical significance (Criterion F) as a nine-span bridge with tall timber trestles, log stringers, and a transverse timber deck with longitudinal running planks. Large bridges of this type are increasingly scarce. The bridge has unusual features include the timber spacers between corbels and stringers, and the relatively primitive style piled-log (bed-log) abutment at the Wodonga end.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

An extensive timber stock bridge following the former main stock route across the Murray River floodplain (Wodonga Creek) linking Albury and Wodonga. The bridge was constructed in 1939/1940 and is a timber-beam on timber-trestle road bridge comprising nine spans, with a deck length of 76 metres and a deck width of 4.5 metres, and a maximum span length of 8.5 metres.

The substantial timber deck has been constructed to an earlier 20th century horse-era pattern, with transverse decking fixed to spiking planks to protect round timber stringers, and longitudinal running planks above. Unusual features include the timber spacers between corbels and stringers, and the relatively primitive style of piled-log (bed-log) abutment at the southern end.

A timber balustrade (painted white) was installed to prevent livestock from straying over the side.



View to north (RBA, June 2024)



Central section with dislodged balustrade (RBA, June 2024)

The bridge was previously used for stock, pedestrians and cyclists, however, is currently closed due to its dilapidated state and safety concerns. Several timber beams have rotted, the deck

partly collapsed, some of the bracing to the trestles has rotted or is missing (presumably washed away with flooding), and similarly timber railings have rotted or are missing.

Some interventions have been undertaken to stablise the rate of deterioration including the concrete span at the northern end.

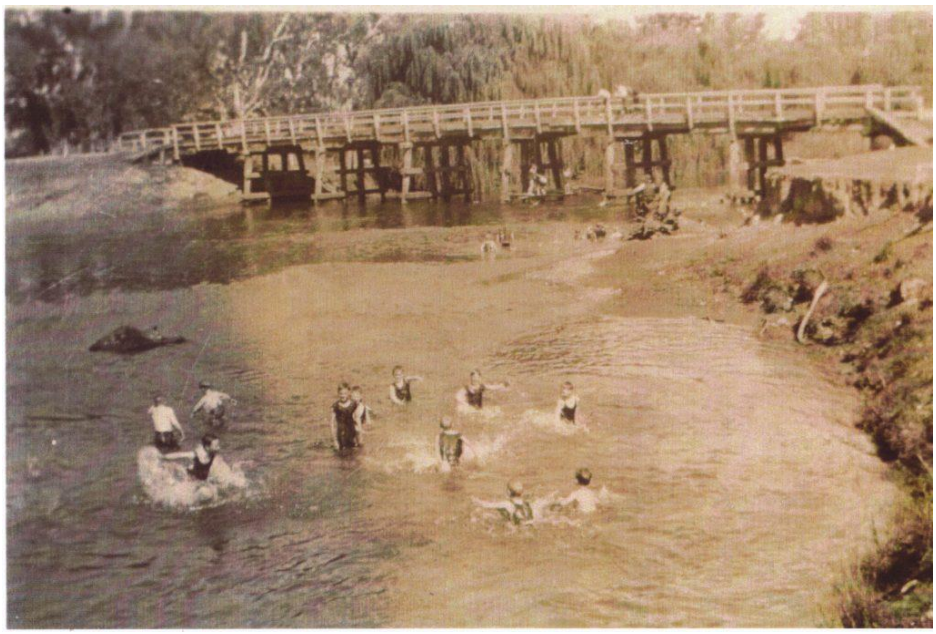
HISTORIC THEMES

3.1 Establishing pathways

4.3 Grazing and raising livestock

HISTORY

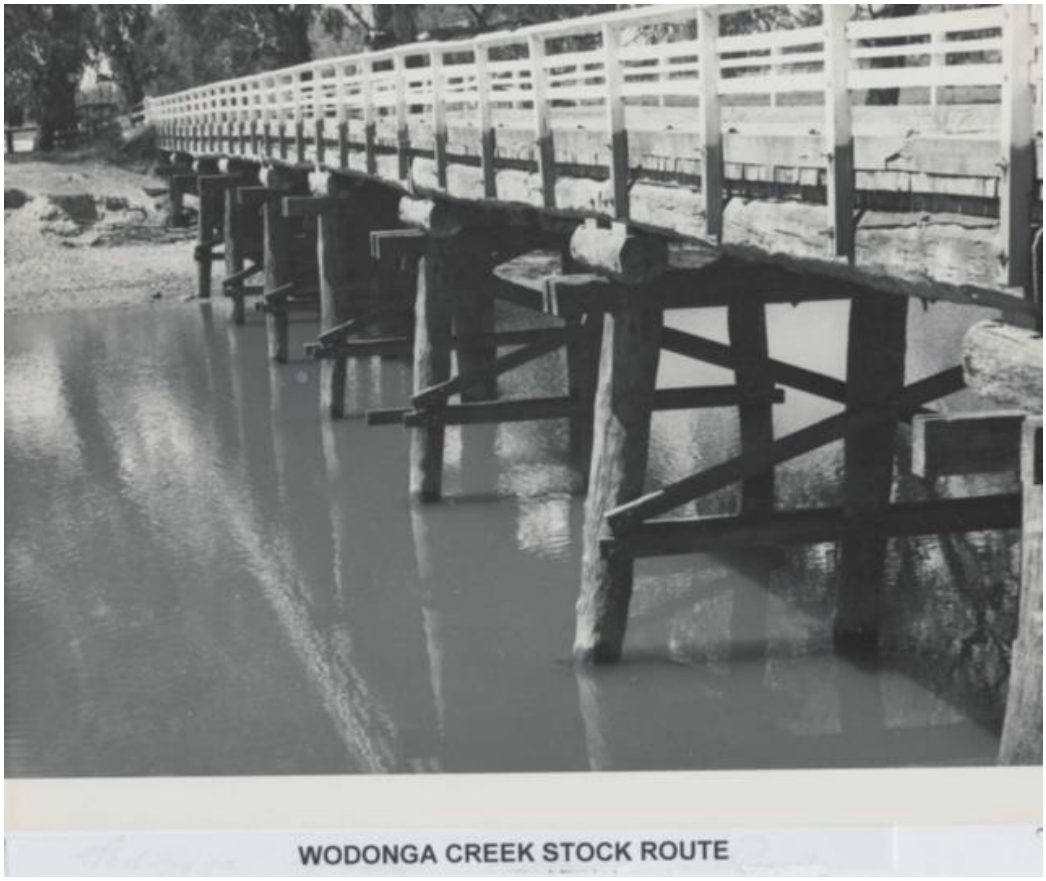
The stock route bridge was constructed over Wodonga Creek, an anabranch of the Murray River, in 1939/1940. The bridge created the opportunity for new important links for rural producers and townspeople of both Albury and Wodonga, providing a new stock route across the causeway to relieve traffic on the highway. Piles of stout planking were driven against the steep riverbank to prevent erosion and to help enhance the swimming area nearby. The Country Roads Board allocated £1,000 to improve the stock route in 1945. A new cable suspension bridge was erected upstream for pedestrians in 2013.



Wodonga Creek swimming area with stock route bridge in background
(Date unknown, Wodonga Historical Society)



Stock Route Bridge, ca. 1965. (Collection of Geoff Roy)



Stock Route Bridge (Unknown date, Wodonga Historical Society)



1963 aerial (CAD8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia)

COMPARISON

There are no similar timber bridges within the municipality. Few large timber road bridges of any type survive in Victoria, of which the stock route bridge is a subtype.

The Country Roads Board constructed a number of dedicated stock bridges during the 1930s in response to increasing conflicts between motorised road traffic and livestock. The Wodonga Creek stock route bridge was probably one of the largest of these. The nearest rival was the substantial timber stock bridge built beside the Princes Highway at Dartmoor in 1936 which had a deck some 49 metres long and 3.0 metres wide, compared with the 76 metre by 4.5 metre deck of the Wodonga Creek stock route bridge. Another substantial example remained in use as a footbridge across the Ovens River in the City of Wangaratta up to the 1980s.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that the *Stock Route Bridge* over Wodonga Creek is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the timber bridge and a nominal five metres of curtilage surrounding it as indicated below.



(Nearmap, 22 June 2024)

PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

Planning Controls	Y/N
External Paint Controls Apply?	N
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	N
Tree Controls Apply?	N
Solar Energy System Controls?	Y
Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?	N
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the *Heritage Act 2017*?	N
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	N
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

REFERENCES

F.Randell & B.Pennay (2004) 'Wodonga City Council Victoria Heritage Study Volume 1: Thematic Environmental History.'

Wodonga Historical Society Archives

Victorian Heritage Database 'Wodonga Creek Stock Bridge' National Trust of Australia, (Victoria) Classification Report, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/70047