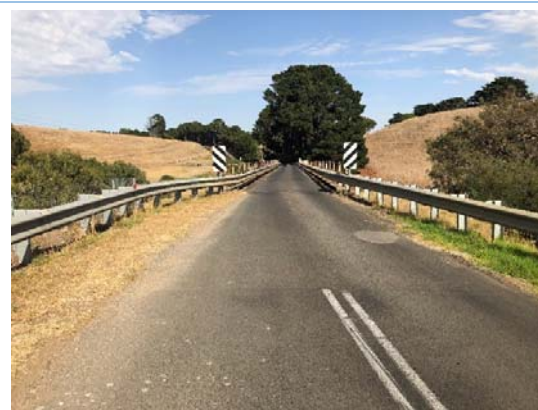


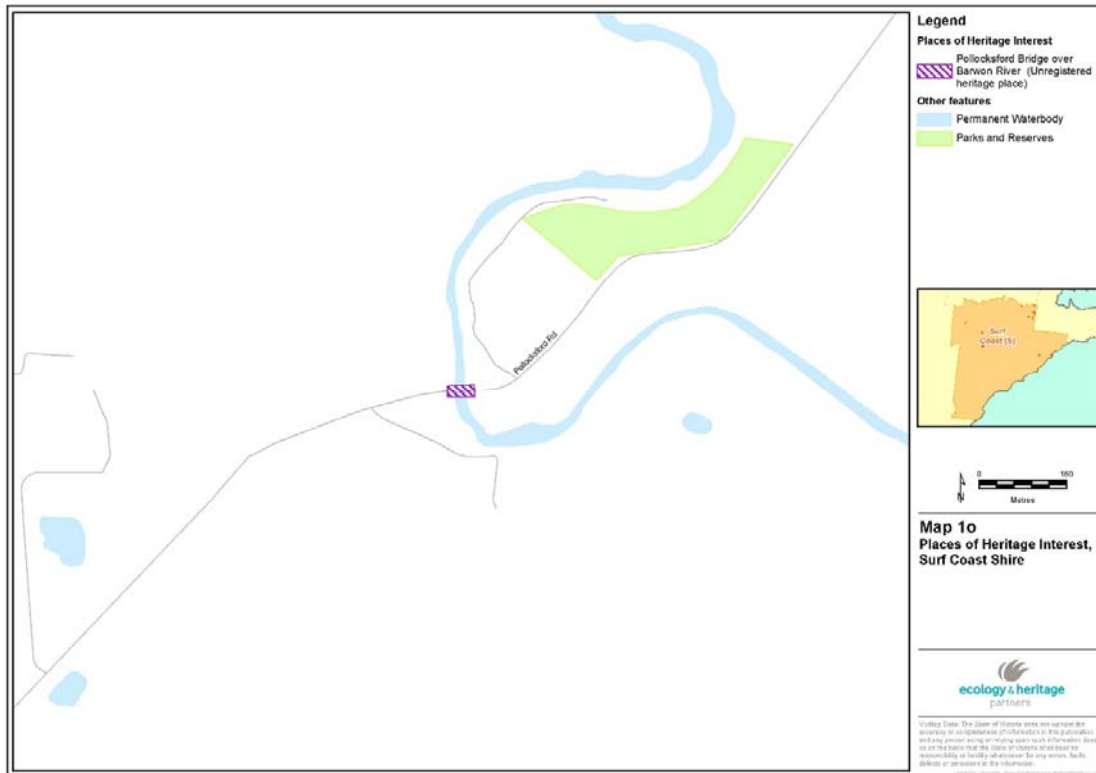
1.15 POLLOCKSFORD BRIDGE

Place Name	Pollocksford Bridge over Barwon River
Address	Pollocksford Road, Gnarwarre (Surf Coast Shire) and Stonehaven (Golden Plains Shire)
Historic Themes	Agriculture & farming; building & construction; fords & bridges; farming towns; governing (former Bannockburn & Barrabool Shires)
Current Heritage Status	None
Condition	Fair
Integrity	Fair
Recommendation	Pollocksford Bridge is recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Surf Coast Planning Scheme and the Golden Plains Planning Scheme.



Pollocksford Bridge (from top left, rotating clockwise): 1. West side of bridge looking north east showing bluestone abutment in the foreground. 2. West side of bridge looking north east showing bluestone piers. 3. Underside of bridge showing recent decking. 4 West side of bridge looking north east showing asphalted decking. (Source: Ecology and Heritage Partners Pty Ltd 2019)

Map



History

The original Pollocksford Bridge was commissioned by the Haines Government during the 1850s. William Haines was the first Premier of Victoria, serving from November 1855 to March 1857 after Victoria gained responsible government, and again from April 1857 to March 1858. Haines was a Geelong farmer and surgeon as well as a politician and ‘represented the small farmers against the squatters who owned most of Victoria’s land’.ⁱ He understood the need for reliable bridges and roads in developing agricultural areas such as the Shires of Barrabool and Bannockburn where ‘access to areas north of the Barwon was only possible by fords.’ⁱⁱ

Between the 1850s and 1880s the railways developed across Victoria at a rapid pace with the Geelong line opening in 1857 and a line to Winchelsea in 1876. The railway made transport of people and goods to the bigger cities and their markets so much quicker, easier and cheaper and by the 1880s there was a massive State government investment in the railway system, to the detriment of roads across the state. Decades later the Pollocksford Bridge would be remembered as being in regular use by Geelong traffic, although in times of flood ‘its timbers had to be tethered to large red gum trees, which (in 1921) are still standing on each side of the river.’ⁱⁱⁱ The original bridge had undergone repairs several times.

In 1912, spurred on by the introduction of the motor car on Melbourne’s roads in 1897 and the newly established Royal Automobile Club of Victoria in 1904, the *Country Roads Board Act* was passed in State parliament to develop a safe and reliable Main Roads system across Victoria. Almost immediately it established

a Developmental Roads scheme, for roads 'of sufficient importance and will serve to develop any area of land ... by providing access to a railway station or to a main road leading to a railway station.'^{iv} The reconstruction of the Pollocksford Bridge appears to have initially been included under the Developmental Roads Scheme but the Country Roads Board 'refused' to take it over.^v This meant the two neighbouring shires of Barrabool and Bannockburn had to pay for it, to the tune of £3000. The cost of the bridge required a loan from the Union Trustee Company, Melbourne at 6.5% interest that was repayable over ten years at £600 a year.^{vi}

Despite the poor timbers of the original bridge it retained 'a very sound underwork of masonry' so its existing bluestone piers were retained. The Bannockburn engineer Mr ETM Garlick supervised the construction of the superstructure, almost entirely made from second hand materials and with steel girders constructed by the Railway Department's Newport depot. The Geelong Advertiser correspondent reporting on the opening of the Bridge explained that, 'built on the cantilever principle, the bridge had required considerable skill, its middle girder not resting on any piece whatever. The total length is 260 feet, the middle span about 90 feet, and, the whole cost about £3000.'^{vii}

The Bridge was officially opened on Monday, 14 February 1921 by Premier Lawson at an event that was more than merely a 'cut-the-ribbon' affair. 'A large number of residents, Parliamentarians, councilors and Geelong citizens' attended and there were several speeches from representatives of both Shires. While the Country Roads Board was acknowledged as 'the finest body in the State' and the Lawson government 'a friend to the man on the land', the opening of the bridge was an opportunity for Shire councilors and others to impress upon Premier Lawson the importance of the farming community to wider Victoria and the need for greater support to develop regional and rural Victoria. Other speechmakers used the opportunity to explain the difficulties of providing good roads and bridges out of local government revenue; 'work of such a nature should be paid for out of the public exchequer' they declared and motor cars, which benefited more from good roads than anyone, ought to pay an extra tax.

Pollocksford Bridge is the second of three important bridges in the area at the time (the others being Russell's Bridge and Slate Quarry Bridge) built when 'bridge-making is forming an important policy of the councilors, who realise that in a country where heavy rainfall often causes "washouts" permanent and substantial bridges pay better than rickety old structures...'^{viii}

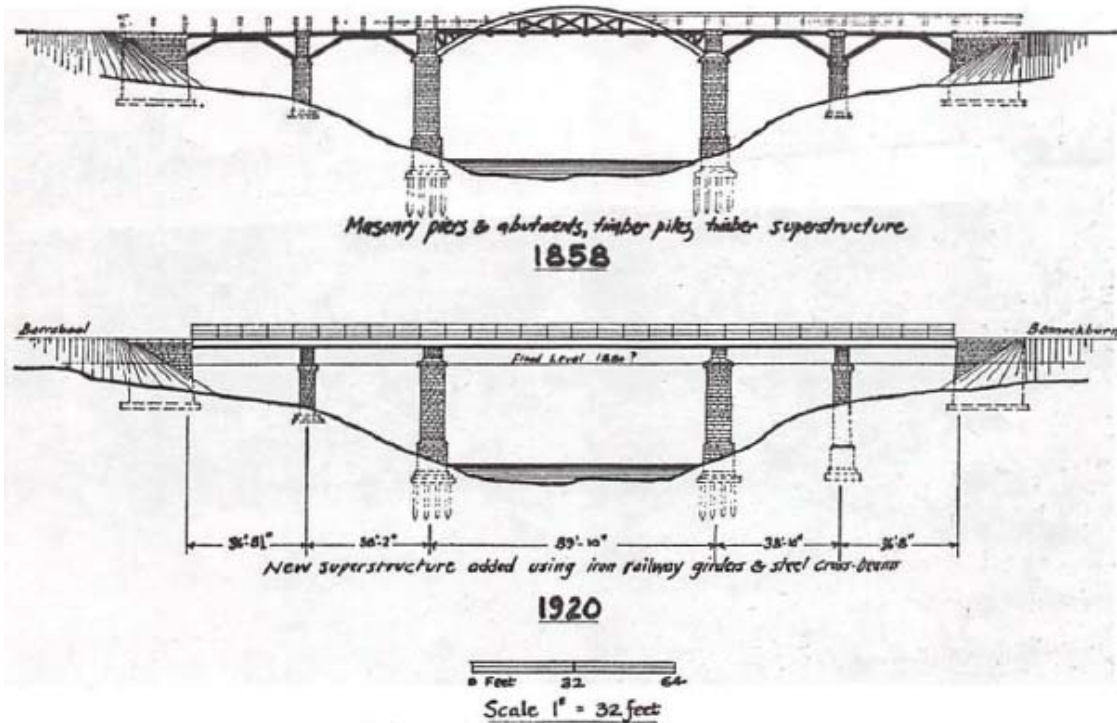


Diagram of the Pollocksford Bridge in 1858 and 1920 (Source: Investigator: Magazine of the Geelong Historical Society, March 1980)

Description

The Pollocksford Bridge is a single-lane road bridge over the Barwon River, Gnarwarre. The Barwon River forms part of the boundary between the Surf Coast and Golden Plains shires, and the bridge is located in part in both municipalities.

The Pollocksford Bridge is a five span bridge supported on four uniform bluestone piers which each taper at the top. The four evenly spaced spans at either end of the bridge are narrower than the wide centre span over the river course. The bridge also comprises substantial capped bluestone abutments at either end and riveted solid steel girders. The deck of the road bridge is asphalt, with bracketed posts supporting a pair of cylindrical horizontal railings along the length of the bridge on both sides. More recent guard rails have been installed along Pollocksford Road on either side of the bridge, and these rails extend along the deck of the bridge, inside of and attached to the support structure of the bridge.

The bluestone elements appear to be generally intact, although the bridge deck surface and guard rail are not original, and the original timber arch was removed by 1920.

Comparative Analysis

There are three other heritage listed bridges over the Barwon river – one in Winchelsea and one in Belmont. The Winchelsea Bridge is an impressive three span arch structure built of bluestone by James Sinclair and opened by Prince Alfred in 1867. The Barwon Heads – Ocean Grove Bridge is exceptionally long (308metres) and set on an historic tourist route. Both of these bridges are included in the Victorian Heritage Register. The bridge over the Barwon River at Belmont is of local significance. It is constructed of steel plate girders and reinforced concrete and dates to 1926. It is historically significant for linking Geelong to Belmont and South Barwon regions and scientifically significant for illustrating the technological processes involved in 1920s bridge construction.

The Pollocksford Bridge is modest in scale by comparison. While the bridge deck surface and guard rail are not original, this is not unusual for early timber bridge decks.



Winchelsea Bridge (Source: hermes.heritage.vic.gov.au)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Pollocksford Bridge, Pollocksford Road, Gnarwarre is significant at a local level. The four uniform bluestone piers and substantial capped bluestone abutments at either end are the most intact and significant elements. The bridge deck surface and guard rail are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Pollocksford Bridge is historically and aesthetically significant to the Surf Coast Shire municipality

Why is it significant?

The Pollocksford Bridge has historical significance as one of the earliest bridges built over the Barwon River. (Cri A)

The Pollocksford Bridge has historical significance for its association with the first Premier of Victoria, William Haines. (Cri H)

The four original bluestone piers and capped bluestone abutments underpinning this bridge are aesthetically significant. (Cri H)

ⁱ 'William Haines', Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Haines_\(Australian_politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Haines_(Australian_politician)), accessed 28 February 2019

ⁱⁱ Quoted in C Kellaway et al, p.36

ⁱⁱⁱ 'New Pollocksford Bridge.', Geelong Advertiser, 15 February 1921, p.3

^{iv} Developmental Roads Act 1918, Section 3 (1)

^v 'Bannockburn', The Ballarat Star, 19 March 1921, p.2

^{vi} 'Loan floated. L2000 for Pollocksford Bridge', The Ballarat Star, 11 August 1920, p.6

^{vii} 'New Pollocksford Bridge'

^{viii} 'Bannockburn's Third Bridge', Geelong Advertiser, 31 May 1922, p.5