

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** MONIER ROAD BRIDGE

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Brung Brungle Road Old Glenelg Highway WANNON

**STUDY NUMBER:** 099

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE:** MONASH BRIDGE

**PRECINCT:** Wannon

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** none **SECTION:** none **PARISH:** PARISH OF REDRUTH

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 431J; VicRoads 72 F4; located on the Brung Brungle Road, formerly the Glenelg Highway, where it crosses the Wannon River, about 18kms north-west of Hamilton and 15kms south-east of Coleraine.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Monier Bridge, Brung Brungle Road, Wannon

**Image Date:** 15/11/01

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the bridge structure, the abutments and its approaches and any remnants of the original ford.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The Monier bridge over the Wannon River at Wannon, formerly known as Redruth, is located on a Crown Land road reserve, where the old Glenelg Highway crossed the river. It is a four span Monier concrete arch bridge built in 1917, and is the fourth bridge to be constructed on this site. It features bluestone abutments and piers which date from an earlier bridge built in 1870. The superstructure features decorated pillars with a cement render finished in a vermiculated pattern, and steel railings.

The 1917 bridge was a late and rare use of several Monier arches. By the time that this bridge was commissioned, John Monash had realised that girder bridges were more suitable in most situations. However the reinforced concrete girders of the time were not long enough to span the distances between the old bluestone piers of the earlier bridge (HS 18/9/1999).

## **HISTORY:**

The township of Wannon was formerly called Redruth, which is still the name of the surrounding Parish. It developed around the river crossing, at first a ford, and subsequently a timber bridge. Remains of the ford may still survive immediately to the north of the existing bridge. The first bridge was replaced in 1870 by a bridge with bluestone piers and abutments and with a timber superstructure of the strutted beam type. This was replaced in 1907 with a similar superstructure but the successor, which cost 1,000 pounds, soon required replacing itself (CRB, 4th annual Report, 1917; Shire of Dundas Centenary, 55).

In 1913 the Country Roads Board was established and assumed responsibility for the construction of major road bridges. It adopted a policy of building in permanent materials. The new bridge at Wannon was designed by a CRB engineer whose name is not recorded. The three wide spans between the existing bluestone piers necessitated the use of the Monier system. "Tenders were called in February 1917 and awarded to the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company which acted merely as a construction contractor. The work was commenced in March and following delays from wet weather and a wartime delay of steel supplies, was completed in August 1917." (O'Connor, 53) The Monier superstructure cost 2,305 pounds (CRB, 1917).

John Monash (1865-1931) was a brilliant student whose erratic academic progress hindered his graduation as an engineer from the University of Melbourne until 1891. In 1897, Monash formed a partnership with J. T. Noble Anderson, and negotiated a licence in Victoria for the patented Monier system of reinforcing concrete with steel. They concentrated on designing and building bridges and were highly successful from the late 1890s until the collapse of a bridge using the system at Bendigo ruined their finances and ended the partnership. In 1905, Monash formed the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Co. Ltd, with John Gibson as managing director. Gibson had been associated with the distinguished Melbourne builder David Mitchell. This venture was highly successful, and Monash acquired considerable wealth, professional standing and social status. During the First World War Monash distinguished himself as a military leader, gaining the reputation as Australia's greatest general. Despite wartime shortages, the Reinforced Concrete Co. continued to operate and supervised the construction of the Wannon bridge in 1917. After the war, Monash became head of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria and assumed a leadership role in the Jewish community.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3 Developing local, regional and national economies

3.8 Moving goods and people

3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads

## **CONDITION:**

The bridge is in very good condition but some of the cement rendered finishes of the pillars show signs of patching and over-painting.

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## **INTEGRITY:**

high degree of integrity

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The Monier Bridge over the Wannon River at the township of Wannon, formerly Redruth, is the fourth bridge to span the river. The township developed around the crossing and in association with the nearby Wannon Falls. The bridge was located in the commercial centre of the township, at a time when the former route of the Glenelg Highway was the main street of Wannon. The bridge was critical for access to the Western District beyond Hamilton. The first bridge, built of timber, was replaced by two subsequent bridges. The present structure was built in 1917, to the design of a Country Roads Board engineer. The contractor was the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company. The bridge represented the CRB's new policy of building in permanent materials. Although a late use of the Monier system, it incorporates technical advances and is also of significance for its use and adaptation of the bluestone piers which necessitated larger than usual spans. The Monier Bridge is substantially intact and in good condition. It has since been superseded by a modern bridge on the realignment of the Glenelg Highway.

How is it significant?

The Monier Bridge on Brung Brungle Road over the Wannon River at Wannon is of historical and architectural significance to the township of Wannon and the Shire of Southern Grampians.

Why is it significant?

The Monier Bridge on Brung Brungle Road over the Wannon River at Wannon is of historical significance as a landmark at the centre of the former main street of the township of Wannon, established at the river crossing in the 1860s. It has additional historical significance for its sequence of development, representing the improvement of road transport and the growing importance of the communications corridor west of Hamilton towards the South Australian border. It is one of the first bridges designed by the then new Country Roads Board.

The bridge is of architectural significance as a late example of the use of the Monier system of reinforced concrete construction, which demonstrates technical improvements to the system. It also meets the challenge posed by the long spans between the existing bluestone piers. The bridge is architecturally significant as the work of the important engineering firm, Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company Ltd, which was led by the eminent engineer and general, Sir John Monash, who pioneered the use of the Monier system in Australia.

## **COMPARISON:**

188 Scott's Creek Bridge, Hamilton-Port Fairy Road, Byaduk  
194 Bluestone Mill Bridge, Peshurst-Byaduk Rd, Byaduk  
434 Road Bridge (Former), Victoria Valley Road, Dunkeld  
435 Lyne Creek Bridge, Byaduk-Branxholme Road, North Byaduk  
436 Honeysuckle Creek Road Bridge, Glendinning Road, Glendinning

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

01-Oct-02

## **EXISTING LISTINGS:**

## **HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

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## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
	The Wannon Bridge, Hamilton Spectator	1999	18 Sept 1999
Colin O'Connor	Spanning Two Centuries; Historic Bridges of Australia	1985	114- 119
Geoffrey Serle, in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle, eds	Australian Dictionary of Biography	1986	543- 549
Lesley Alves, Alan Holgate, Geoff Taplin	Monash Bridges, a typology, 2nd edition	1998	
Miles Lewis, ed	Two hundred years of concrete in Australia	1988	