



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The ageing timbers of *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)* and the texture of the structure created by the horizontal, vertical and diagonal elements harmonise with a beautiful river landscape complete with large trees and winding gravel roads. There is an affinity between the bridge and the nearby timber slab outbuildings and the split post and rail fencing of the Jalbarragup Homestead. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place is important in relation to the early development of transport routes and facilities in the Nannup district. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin) is rare as the only remaining turn of the century wooden bridge over the Blackwood river surviving in its original form, and one of few such bridges left in this State. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin) is an important link with bridge-building techniques at the turn of the century, particularly in respect of the hewn timbers of the bracing and waling. (Criterion 6.2)

The place is typical of bridges built at the turn of the century. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The condition of the bridge is poor overall, with some elements missing from it.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Although no longer used as a bridge, the original intention of the structure is obvious. Integrity of the fabric of the bridge remains moderate, being diminished by its poor condition.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The place is now derelict, but its authenticity is high.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence has been compiled by John Pidgeon, Architect and Lloyd Margetts, Engineer as part of a National Trust of Australia (WA) Historic Places Assessment of this place.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The earliest European settlement in the Nannup district was at Dindinalup in the vicinity of the confluence of St Johns Brook and the Blackwood River some 11 km from the site of the *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)*. The lease of 16,000 acres at Dindinalup was taken up by Charles Bussell and J.G. Reynolds in 1851. This and subsequent settlements in the Blackwood Valley and the Warren District followed earlier exploration.

The region had been roughly mapped by a series of expeditions undertaken by settlers and surveyors over the previous two decades. With the knowledge of the countryside thus gained, scanty though it may have been, settlers established around Bunbury, on the Vasse and other settled areas. These settlers, including sons of pioneering families, began the southerly push in search of new pastures, hoping to establish their own holdings.

The Blackwood River, running from east to west across the path of this migration, afforded only a limited number of suitable crossing places. Thus the location of fords influenced the pattern of roads and the growth of centres such as Nannup alongside the Nannup Ford and Bridgetown alongside the Geegelup Ford. Other fords existed at Jalbarragup and further downstream at Milyeannup.

Traffic from Vasse (Busselton) to the Warren District tended to channel through Nannup while traffic from Bunbury and Donnybrook went through Bridgetown. Settlements around St Johns Brook and Jalbarragup date from the early 1850s onwards. Those around Balingup and Bridgetown date from the late 1850s onward.

With the growth of the timber industry, the fords began to be replaced by bridges. Pit sawn timber was cut in the colony from the earliest times and sawmills were established around Perth from 1833. In 1849 there was a mill at Vasse. Henry Yelverton established the first mill to operate for any length of time in the Southwest forests at Quindalup in 1862.

Due to the difficulties in transporting logs to mills and sawn timber to the points of sale, the timber industry did not flourish in the Southwest forests until the late 1870s when rail transport became available.

Bridges were built over St John Brook and the Blackwood River near the confluence of the two waterways in 1861. These bridges were on a branch road from a main route then being established between Busselton and Bridgetown (then known as 'Mr Blechynden's farm on the Blackwood'). *The Enquirer* of 25 June 1862 recorded the completion of these two bridges. In 1861, a bridge was commenced adjacent to the Geegelup Ford; however, it

was washed away in a flood before completion and another bridge was built about one kilometre upstream adjacent to John Blechynden's first homestead.¹

The 1890s saw a great expansion in the timber industries, facilitated by the building of Government-sponsored railways. The railways not only made it more economic for mills in the Southwest forests to access markets but also provided a local market through the demand for railway sleepers. British capital flowed in to meet the demand and many of the local timber entrepreneurs such as M.C. Davies, Millars and others threw their lot in with British investors.

By the turn of the century bridge building had become more prolific and the bridges were of sturdier construction.² The Alexandra Bridge was built over the Blackwood River in 1897. The original bridge is no longer in existence save for a few spans at the northern abutment which are currently in a ruinous state. Heading upstream from Alexandra Bridge, Roberts Bridge at Darradup was built as a footbridge in 1906 and later converted to become a road bridge. It was replaced by the present bridge in 1975, leaving only a few piles visible only at times of low flow.

Next, the subject - Jalbarragup Bridge - was completed in 1900.

Further up stream was the Lower Blackwood Bridge at Nannup, long since replaced. Then comes Brockmans Bridge at Dudinyillup, which was built in 1906 and is still surviving, albeit with quite noticeable substructure modification and prominent superstructure strengthening.

Wrights Bridge at Powalup carried the Balingup-Nannup Road over the Blackwood River from 1900 until 1970. Only a few pile cut-offs remain.

The next bridge from that era was that at Maranup Ford, which served between 1905 and 1981. Again, only a few pile cut-offs and sawn pier fragments remain.

The next site is Bridgetown, continuously bridged since 1862, with the most recent structure dating from 1981. Pile cut-offs and approach embankments from the 1936 bridge can still be seen here.

Other pre-1910 bridges built upstream of Bridgetown were at Winnejup Ford (date not known), Jayes Road near Gnowangerup (1896), Boyup Brook townsite (1908), Asplin's Bridge (1903) and possibly Condinup Bridge (date not known). Only minor fragments, such as pile cut-offs, remain of any of these bridges.

It may therefore be seen that *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)* is the only bridge structure surviving in its original form from this era of Blackwood River development.

The plan PWD WA 7360.6 Drawing 2, dated 1900, shows the proposed *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)* built over and superseding a ford on the road leading north to Busselton. That ford regained importance as the bridge deteriorated, and is still used by vehicles during the summer months. Its alignment crosses

¹ This bridge was replaced in 1888 by another on the same site and again in 1936 by a bridge near the site of the present Bridgetown Bridge.

² In 1890, the Shire of Nannup distributed £5,000 for the building of roads and bridges. Charles Gilbert, 'The History of Nannup', Nannup Shire Council, 1973, p. 3.

diagonally under the bridge through the northern span. The road now known as Jalbarragup Road roughly parallels the Vasse Highway running between Busselton and Nannup.

It is probable that Jalbarragup Road was an early and important route from Busselton to the various holdings lying east of Nannup. The above plan also indicates the road leading south to MaAttee Brothers Homestead. This is now known as Jalbarragup Homestead, which was established in 1876 and survives today.

The bracing and waling of the *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)* are of hewn timbers and show broad axe marks on their faces. Pit sawing and hewing of timbers was carried out by small operators working in competition with the large mills and spot mills up until the turn of the century. Pit sawing was practised from the earliest days of the colony, while hewing commenced in the 1870s, increasing in prominence through the 1890s. Pit sawing declined as hewing became more established.³

The design of the bridge was carried out under C.S.R. Palmer, engineer in charge of the Roads and Bridges Branch of the Engineering Division of the Department of the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works. The Engineering Division was headed by C.Y. O'Connor.

The *Jalbarragup Bridge (ruin)* was closed to traffic by the Shire of Nannup in 1988 due to its poor state - in particular the substantial collapse of its abutments. Since that time further deterioration has taken place and damage or vandalism is visible to the decking and the railings. This has resulted in pressures to have the bridge demolished.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The bridge is typical of wooden bridges built around the 1900s. It is founded on driven jarrah piles which are still in fair condition considering the age of the bridge. The bracing is all original hewn jarrah and is of prime significance in the overall fabric of the bridge.

The abutment construction is also typical, consisting of driven jarrah piles supporting sawn jarrah retaining wall and wing sheeting.

Since the closure of the bridge in 1988, further deterioration has taken place and damage and vandalism is visible to the decking and the railings.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust of Australia (WA) Historic Places Assessment Form.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

³ Robertson, John R. 'A History of the Timber Industry of Western Australia' thesis (B.A., Hons), UWA, 1956.