

= Abbotsford Bridge =

Abbotsford Bridge is a steel Allan truss @-@ type bridge spanning the Murray River between Curlwaa , New South Wales , and Yelta , Victoria . It is the only remaining steel truss bridge with a lift span that crosses the Murray . It was also the second last lift span bridge to be built along the river after the Nyah Bridge opened in 1941 . It was built in 1928 by the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Public Works and was designed by Percy Allan .

The bridge was originally planned to carry the Mildura railway line over the Murray River and into New South Wales , though the line was never extended to the bridge . The bridge currently carries a single lane of road controlled by traffic lights . Abbotsford bridge was built largely to service significant cross @-@ border traffic relating to the fruit production industry . It was constructed over a three @-@ year period from 1925 onwards ; but was not originally planned to take so long to build , as there were delays due to problems with a contractor and industrial action .

In 1931 , there was a major accident at the bridge when a paddle steamer clipped the lift span , tearing apart the upper deck of the boat .

= = Description = =

Abbotsford Bridge is a steel Allan truss bridge that is about 240 m (790 ft) in length . The bridge also contains a single lift span about 20 m (66 ft) in length ; this span is still in working order . It is two lanes wide through most of its length , though the lift span is only capable of carrying a single lane . The entire bridge has been marked with a single lane and has traffic lights on both ends to control vehicular flow .

The bridge was completed in 1928 by the NSW Department of Public Works . The bridge was designed to be able to carry the loads required for a railway ; and although opened as a traffic bridge , it was intended to be converted to allow rail once the Mildura railway line was extended to the bridge . The line was never extended beyond Yelta , where the terminus remains to this day . The location of this bridge was thought of as convenient , as it provided a link to the Sturt Highway without travelling farther upstream to Mildura . It is the only remaining steel truss bridge with a lift span along the river . The bridge was built after the decline in commercial river traffic on the Murray , and was the last lift span bridge of any type to be built over the river . Due to its significance to the local area , it has been listed on the NSW State Heritage Register .

= = History = =

The nearby town of Wentworth was an important river port from which wool was shipped to the coast , and as such there was a variety of traffic in the area . In the 1890s , irrigated farming greatly expanded in Sunraysia region which is known for its fruit production , and traffic volumes increased further . It was decided to install a punt at this location (then known as Abbot 's Ford) .

New South Wales and Victoria had signed an agreement towards constructing bridges for railways over the Murray to serve the settlements on the northern side . In 1923 , a report was released that recommended going ahead with the building of four bridges , one of those being the future Abbotsford Bridge . It was said a bridge in this area would benefit Curlwaa , Wentworth , and a proposed irrigation scheme to the north . The cost was estimated at £ 78 @, @ 000 . It had been considered that it might be appropriate to combine these four bridges with locks , but this idea was rejected due to siting concerns .

In 1924 , residents of nearby settlements urged construction of the railway line to the proposed bridge site , but they were told this extension of the line was to be delayed . Within that year it was decided that a bridge was to be constructed due to increased traffic volume , and tenders were let for manufacture of the bridge spans , construction of abutments and piles , and transport of materials to the future construction site .

Early in 1925 , a foundation pile and some tents could be found at the site of the future bridge . Men in the region were also awaiting employment on the structure , and by the middle of the year

unemployment problems were becoming a serious issue . Similarly government debt was increasing , although it was still expected the railway line to Abbotsford Bridge would be completed . In November , construction started and it was expected that the bridge would be opened around 25 September the following year .

During May 1926 , the approach road between Wentworth and the bridge was being progressively metalled , but could not be completed in its entirety until construction of the bridge itself was complete . In June , construction was halted due to contract requirements not being met .

By February the next year , construction had resumed . On 8 April 25 men working on the bridge went on strike . This was of concern due to time dependent concreting being undertaken at that time . As the construction was considered unemployment relief , the constructing authority began to look for men who would do the work in their places . By 13 April , further details had emerged ; the number of the men on strike was actually 32 , and it had been caused by the alleged wrongful dismissal of three men who had left for their lunch break early . The strike continued until at least 21 April . Work had resumed by early May , and the bridge was reported as being a little over half completed at that time .

It was reported in mid @-@ May that construction work was in progress on the last two piers of the bridge , though low river levels meant that staging could not be installed to allow further work on the bridge framework . The estimated time of completion at this point was by the end of the year . It was noted in early September that the extension of the railway from Yelta was expected to occur once the bridge was completed .

The bridge was still under construction in January 1928 , and at that time the estimated date of completion was only a month away . The bridge finally opened to traffic on 14 April . The official opening of the bridge by the NSW Governor Dudley de Chair occurred on 10 July , and was celebrated by the a cutting of the ribbon and an opening of the gates at each end of the lift span . In return he was presented with a silver cigarette case .

A major accident occurred at the bridge in August 1931 . The paddle steamer E.R.O. struck the lift span of the bridge . The span had not been raised to a high enough level , causing it to clip the top of the steamer 's funnel and rip apart the upper deck . High pressure steam was released during the accident causing some onlookers to believe the boat was on fire . It was at first thought the captain would be found amongst the wreckage of the upper deck , but he had been navigating the boat from the lower deck at that time . The captain displayed considerable skill ; he immediately realised that further raising of the span despite being given the all clear meant it was not quite high enough . And through his actions as the boat progressed downstream caught in the current , he prevented the boat becoming stuck at the bridge .

Much like in its early days , the bridge still carries much traffic related to the fruit production industry , especially during picking and harvesting seasons . Bridge lifts are timed to try and avoid traffic delays . The local community considers the bridge inadequate , and feel it now impedes commercial activity .