

WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

2021 District Plan Item No. HH023
HERITAGE ITEM NAME Waimakariri Gorge Bridge [part]
ADDRESS Depot Road, Burnt Hill, Oxford
PHOTOGRAPH



([Google](#))

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. (at time of assessment) New **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 1797 / 2

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Road reserve & Waimakariri River bed

VALUATION NUMBER

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1876-77

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** HP Higginson, engineer; William Stocks, contractor

STYLE Girder bridge

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Three-span iron girder bridge supported by two iron caisson piers between concrete abutments with stone parapets.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Iron, concrete, Castle Hill stone.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Strengthened with addition of iron bracing (1882). Redecked (1945, 1963, 2012).

SETTING

The bridge crosses the Waimakariri River to the south-west of Oxford and Bexley; it spans the border between the Selwyn and Waimakariri District Councils. The scheduled setting includes the bridge approach, as well as the bridge itself. Scheduling is restricted to that portion of the bridge which lies within Waimakariri District.

HISTORY

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge was built in 1876-77 to railway standards. Once the bridge was opened the ferry at its site, a self-acting double punt which began operating in April 1872, ceased. A railway line was laid over the bridge, and the line between Oxford and Sheffield opened, in 1884. The bridge was henceforth a combined road/rail bridge until 1933 when the rail line was closed. Just before its closure the bridge was bought from the railway department by the Main Highways Board. Sections of the old railway formation can still be seen between Sheffield and Oxford. The gorge bridge remains in use by road traffic.

HISTORIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has high historic and social significance for its association with the development of the road and rail network in Canterbury. It is the oldest bridge over the Waimakariri River and has a long history as a scenic attraction.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has cultural value as a place of community identity and historic continuity.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has architectural and aesthetic value as a mid-Victorian high-level bridge designed by HP Higginson, a civil engineer who had trained in England and worked in Russia, India and Mauritius before his arrival in New Zealand in 1872.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has high technological significance as a girder bridge, with iron imported from England. It was built by William Stocks, a Christchurch builder, contractor and monumental mason, who undertook a number of large railway projects in Canterbury as well working on Christchurch Cathedral.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has high contextual significance as a local landmark that spans one of Canterbury's iconic rivers.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the bridge pre-dates 1900, its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the bridge's construction and subsequent use.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has high overall heritage significance to the Burnt Hill/Oxford area and to Waimakariri as a whole. The bridge has high historical and social significance for its association with the development of the province's road and rail infrastructure and cultural value as a place of historic continuity. The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has architectural and aesthetic value for its mid-Victorian design and high technological significance for its iron and concrete construction. The Waimakariri Gorge bridge has high contextual significance as a local landmark that has often been photographed.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REPORT COMPLETED

3 February 2019

AUTHOR

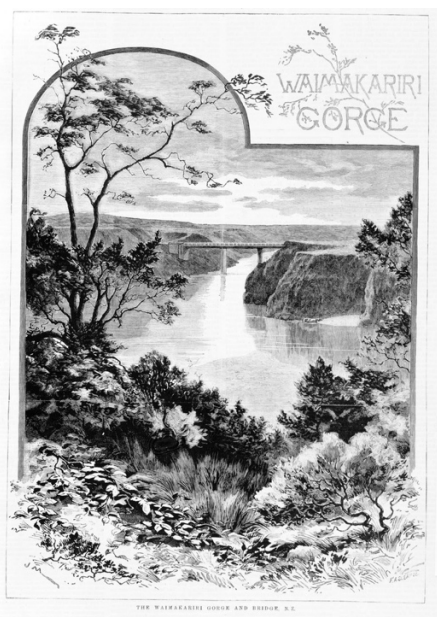
Dr Ann McEwan / Heritage Consultancy Services



Extent of scheduling, limited to WDC portion of bridge, Waimakariri Gorge Bridge, Depot Road, Burnt Hill, Oxford.



A train stopping on the bridge to allow a sightseeing party to disembark. 1890s. PAColl-7581-74, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.



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