GREY DISTRICT COUNCIL

HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME	Taramakau Railway Bridge
ADDRESS	SH 6, Taramakau River, Greymouth
PHOTOGRAPH	

(www)

TTPP PLAN ITEM NO.	HHxx	**HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY**	xx
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Rail corridor		
GDC FILE NUMBER	xx		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION	1888-89		
ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/ BUILDER	John Blackett, engineer; Scott Brothers, contractors		
STYLE	Rectangular truss bridge		

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Six-span bridge with girder superstructure carried on five sets of twin metal cylindrical piers. Railway track laid over bottom chord. Trussed portal over top of original trusses.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Steel, iron, timber.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Planked for vehicle traffic (McTaggart & Co, contractors; late 1891/early 1892). New girders installed (1929). Upper portal frame erected (post-1964).

SETTING

The bridge runs on a north-south axis over the Taramakau River; Camerons in the north and Kumara Junction in the south are the two closest settlements. A road bridge is positioned immediately to the west of the historic bridge; both span the border between the Grey and Westland Districts. The extent of setting is limited to the rail corridor in the immediate vicinity of the bridge.

History

A rail bridge over the Taramakau River to serve the Hokitika-Grey Railway was erected in 1888-89. The bridge was planked to accommodate horse and drays (later cars and trucks) in 1891 and new girders were installed in 1929. After 1964 an additional portal frame truss was installed over top of the original trusses. In spite of many years' concern over the hazardous nature of a combined road and rail bridge, a new motor vehicle bridge, downstream of the historic bridge, was not opened until July 2018. With the new bridge's completion the last combined road-rail bridge in New Zealand became solely used for railways traffic. In 2022 the rail bridge was repainted.

Historic And Social Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has historic and social significance for its association with the development of the road and rail network in Grey and Westland Districts and, more generally, the West Coast.

Cultural And Spiritual Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has cultural value as a place of community identity and historic continuity.

Architectural And Aesthetic Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has aesthetic significance as a late-Victorian truss bridge designed by John Blackett (1818-93), who was born and trained as an engineer in England. Blackett emigrated to New Zealand with his wife in 1851 and after a period farming in Taranaki he was appointed provincial engineer of Nelson in 1859. In 1870 Blackett was appointed acting chief engineer for New Zealand. During his tenure (1871-89) as the government's marine engineer Blackett was responsible for erecting 14 lighthouses around New Zealand. At the same time, he was also assistant engineer in chief, engineer in charge of the North Island, and, finally, engineer in chief for New Zealand (1884-89).

Technological And Craftsmanship Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has technological and craftsmanship significance for its metal truss construction by leading Christchurch foundrymen and locomotive manufacturers, Scott Brothers. The company (est. early 1870s) also produced the steelwork for Kind Edward Barracks in Christchurch (1904-5) and a number of other large-scale bridges around New Zealand. The girders added to the bridge in 1929 were manufactured by the Addington Railway Workshops.

Contextual Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has contextual significance as a local landmark that spans one of the West Coast's major rivers.

Archaeological and Scientific Significance

As the bridge pre-dates 1900, its approaches have potential archaeological significance relating to site's use and development.

Summary Of Heritage Significance

The Taramakau Railway Bridge has overall heritage significance to the Grey and Westland Districts. The bridge has historic and social significance for its association with the development of the West Coast's transport infrastructure and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of bridge users since 1889. The Taramakau Railway Bridge has aesthetic significance as a rectangular truss bridge designed by John Blackett, one of the

leading engineers of the period, and technological and craftsmanship significance for its construction by Scott Brothers of Christchurch. The Taramakau Railway Bridge has contextual significance as a West Coast landmark and its approaches have potential archaeological significance in view of the bridge's age.

REFERENCES

- *Kumara Times* 27 April 1883, p. 2; 27 June 1888, p. 2.
- *West Coast Times* 10 July 1889, p. 4; 20 August 1891, p. 2.
- *Greymouth Evening Star* 10 June 1927, p. 11; 25 February 1928, p. 30 (supplement); 2 November 1928, p. 2.
- *Grey River Argus* 7 December 1886, p. 2; 27 May 1887, p. 2; 8 September 1887, p. 2; 31 July 1889, p. 2; 21 August 1891, p. 2; 6 March 1930, p. 4.
- *Lyttelton Times* 5 July 1888, p. 4.
- *Press* 3 November 1928, p. 7; 20 July 1961, p. 14.
- *Inangahua Times* 5 November 1891, p. 2.
- *Hokitika Guardian* 12 June 1929, p. 4.
- West Coast Recollect.
- https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b23/blackett-john
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scott_Brothers_(locomotive_manufacturers)

REPORT COMPLETED 18 September 2023

AUTHOR Dr Ann McEwan / Heritage Consultancy Services

Extent of setting, limited to that part of the rail corridor through which the bridge passes. [Aerial taken before new bridge built.]

The bridge in 1964. West Coast Recollect.