

GORE DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME

Mataura River bridge

ADDRESS

Bridge Street / SH 93, Mataura

PHOTOGRAPH



(April 2022)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO.
(at time of assessment)

n / a

HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY

n / a

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

GDC FILE NUMBER

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

1938-39

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER**

WL Newnham, Public Works Department design engineer

STYLE

Bowstring arch bridge

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Single-span arched bridge with three chords uniting two bowstring arches; balustraded approaches and footbridges on both sides of vehicle deck.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Concrete, steel, cement.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Unknown, if any.

SETTING

The bridge across the Mataura River at Mataura links the east and west sections of the town and gives it name to Bridge Street. The scheduled setting encompasses the bridge and its approaches.

HISTORY

Tenders were called for a new bridge across the river at Mataura in the winter of 1937. The existing, one-way suspension bridge had been built in 1868 and was immediately downstream of the new structure, which was officially opened on 22 July 1939. The Mataura Borough Council hosted a banquet and dance at the Horticultural Hall in River Street to mark the occasion and Robert 'Bob' Semple, the Minister of Public Works, officially opened the new bridge. The bridge was the scene of Mataura Republic Day celebrations in 1989 when nationwide council amalgamations led to the creation of Gore District Council. It remains use today.

HISTORIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has historic and social significance for its association with the development of local transport infrastructure and the movement of people and goods around and through the district.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has cultural significance as a place of community identity and historic continuity.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has architectural and aesthetic significance as a bowstring arch bridge designed by the Public Works Department. The PWD introduced concrete bowstring arch bridges to New Zealand in the 1930s and erected a number around country: Tuakau (1930-33), Pahiatua (1934), Balclutha (1933-35), Palmerston North (1935, demolished) and Hamilton (1934-37). Of this cohort of bridges, only the Tuakau bridge in northern Waikato is not a Category 1 listed historic place by Heritage NZPT. William Langston Newnham (1888-1974) was appointed the PWD's design engineer in 1929 and in 1941 he attained the position of engineer-in-chief. Newnham, who had studied engineering in Christchurch, was the head of the Public Works Department from 1943 until his retirement three years later.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality of its construction and detailing.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has contextual significance as a local landmark in close proximity to the town centre and a number of heritage buildings on both sides of the Mataura River.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the bridge post-dates 1900, any potential archaeological significance of the site would likely relate to its earlier use and development. The site of the mid-19th century bridge immediately downstream of the current bridge and the banks and bed of the Mataura River may give rise to both pre-European and colonial archaeological evidence.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Mataura River bridge has overall heritage significance to Mataura and to the district of Gore as a whole. The structure has historical and social significance for its association with the development of local transport infrastructure and cultural significance as a site of community identity and historic continuity. The Mataura River bridge has architectural and aesthetic significance as a bowstring arch bridge designed by the Public Works Department and technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality of its reinforced concrete

construction. The Mataura River bridge has contextual significance as a local landmark and for its relationship to the historic town centre; its site may have potential archaeological value.

REFERENCES

- *Evening Star* 29 October 1931, p. 10; 7 July 1937, p. 10; 27 August 1937, p. 1.
- *Otago Witness* 7 August 1858, p. 4.
- *Otago Daily Times* 13 February 1937, p. 8; 15 October 1938, p. 19; 2 June 1939, p. 24; 24 July 1939, p. 9.
- <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/5180>
- <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/4161>
- https://cdn.ymaws.com/concretenz.org.nz/resource/resmgr/docs/conf/2014/s2_p2.pdf

REPORT COMPLETED

13 May 2022

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Extent of scheduling, including bridge and its approaches, Mataura River bridge, Bridge Street / SH 93, Mataura.