

Gundagai farewells historic Prince Alfred Bridge after 125 years of service

ABC Riverina / By Adriane Reardon

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Gundagai Prince Alfred timber bridge prior to demolition. (ABC Riverina: Simon Wallace)

Famed in verse, song and popular imagination, Gundagai today bids farewell to its iconic and historic Prince Alfred Bridge, condemned to demolition after more than 125 years of service.

The timber and iron bridge was built in the 1860s and completed in 1896 to its current design.

Knowing the demolition process begins today is stirring emotions across town.

"It's not just a big part of Gundagai, it's also a big part of Australia," librarian Cindy Smith said.

"Our history has disappeared ... and it's not coming back."

Key points:

- The bridge has been deemed a public safety risk that would be too expensive to repair and maintain
- It could take up to three weeks to dismantle the bridge, which holds many fond memories for locals
- Some believe it could have been saved had it been heritage-listed



achines today began bring down the 125-year-old Prince Alfred Bridge. *(ABC Riverina: Adriane Reardon)*

It was the first major bridge crossing over the Murrumbidgee River and stood alongside Gundagai's signature tourist attractions, including the iconic Dog on the Tuckerbox, the Yarri and Jacky Jacky sculpture and Rusconi's Marble Masterpiece.

The bridge was also featured on the cover of the 1989 Johnny Diesel and the Injectors album *Cry In Shame*.

Two spans of the bridge were removed in May 2021 after being deemed a public safety risk due to significant deterioration.

In August another section of the bridge collapsed following heavy rainfall.

The southern end of the bridge that crosses the Murrumbidgee River is still in service today and will not be removed, but a 711-mete stretch to the north, which has been closed to traffic since 1984, is set to go.

Fond memories



The Prince Alfred Bridge holds a special place in the heart of Gundagai residents, including Ms Smith, who drove across the bridge when she first got her licence as part of a local tradition.

The Prince Alfred Bridge featured on Johnny Diesel's Cry in Shame album cover. *(Supplied)*



The Prince Alfred Bridge in Gundagai during a flood in 1900. *(Supplied: Charles Gabriel via the State Library of NSW)*

"If you could get across the bridge once you got your licence, you were pretty safe to drive anywhere," she said.

"I remember one night, we reversed across the whole bridge ... that was a lot of fun."

Childhood sweethearts Kate and James Attwood took photos at the bridge on their wedding day, exactly three years ago today.

"We've had so many fond memories of being at the bridge, like school excursions," Ms Attwood said.

"It's such a great piece of history for the community.

"It's not going to be there forever, so it would be good to show the kids the photos."



te and James Attwood took their wedding photos at the Prince Alfred Bridge in 2018. *(Supplied: Kate Attwood)*

Saying goodbye

The process has tinged with the regret that perhaps the bridge's fate could have avoided a heritage listing had been obtained.

"Without the listing, we couldn't get the money," Gundagai Historic Bridges treasurer Robert Butcher said.

"I think it's a crying shame — it's part of Gundagai's and Australia's history."



orkmen begin tearing down Gundagai's Prince Alfred Bridge today. (ABC Riverina: Adriane Reardon)

On top of a lack of public need for the disused viaduct, Crown Lands found it to be unfeasible to restore the timber road and continue to maintain it.

But there are plans to remember it and Crown Lands is processing feedback from a [survey](#) taking suggestions on how that will be best achieved.

But it's hard to say goodbye.

"It's still going to be a part of history ... but you just won't be able to see the bridge," Mr Attwood said.

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