

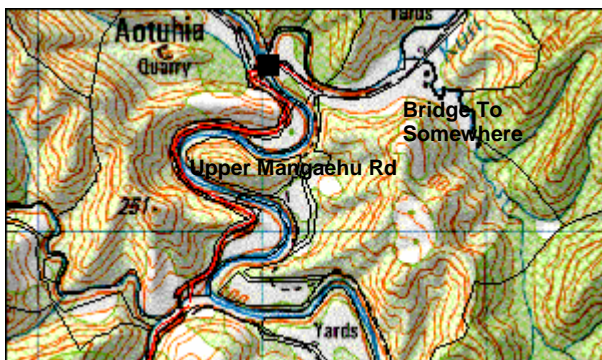


Bridge to Somewhere

Upper Mangaehu Road, Aotuhia

1937

Use:	Road Bridge	Historic Value:	3 out of 5
Materials:	Concrete	Architectural Value:	2 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	2 out of 2
Legal Description:	Secs 1 & 2 SO13241 Pt Sec 1 SC 13244 Secs 1-6 SO13245	Symbolic Value:	1 out of 3
		Rarity Value:	1 out of 2
		Townscape Value:	2 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	11 out of 20



The now isolated valley of Aotuhia was once a thriving community. It was settled in the early 1900's with the only access being by pack tracks and the Lower Whangamomona River. All supplies needed to establish the settlement were brought in by these means, and eventually there was a school, sports ground, timber mill, telephone/post office and other amenities.



The impact of isolation and harder times took its toll in the 1920s and 1930s however. Farmers began to walk off their land as the effect of the depression was felt on the nonviable sections. Notwithstanding this, a road into the settlement was built and the Government of the day had plans to build a highway west to Whangamomona to open the country up. They authorised the building of the Aotuhia Bridge in February 1936 and it was completed in May 1937 by the Peacock Construction Company of Patea for £1,800. This construction replaced the old swing bridge that had

fallen into a state of disrepair, but occurred after the community of Aotuhia had been largely abandoned.

The last settler left the area in 1942 after severe storm weather left the road link to Whangamomona so unusable that the Government declined to reopen it.

The Aotuhia Bridge is of similar design and age to the 'Bridge to Nowhere' in the Mangapurua Valley, but this one was not given the name 'Bridge to Somewhere' until much later. This name was chosen to indicate the potential for land development in the area, and that scheme was begun in 1980. The logs of wood evident near the top of the bridge, caught in the struts underneath the deck, shows the height of the river in flood (see *insert photo*).



This reinforced concrete arch bridge is 39.6m long.

Bibliography:

Morris, Derek: 'All for Nought: The Whangamomona Road, Aotuhia, Okara Valley' [2004]
Thornton, Geoffrey: 'Bridging the Gap: Early Bridges in New Zealand 1830-1939' [Reed Books, 2001]
Heritage Trail Information Board, Aotuhia