



Ahaura River Bridge replacement project

MAKING SOLID PROGRESS

Favourable weather conditions through winter have meant work on the Ahaura River Bridge replacement project is progressing well.

- › Archaeological explorations on both sides of the river are complete.
- › Site clearance is well underway - including excavating the road and bulk filling the southern and northern approaches for the new bridge.
- › The temporary staging bridge on the south side of the river is now complete. This platform structure can support heavy machinery to allow construction of the new bridge to continue over the river. The staging bridge is strong enough to support the 280-tonne crawler crane named Cranky, to lift loads of up to 55 tonnes.

Installation of the new bridge piles has begun on both sides of the river. The steel encased 1.8m diameter reinforced concrete piles are drilled 13m through river gravel and another 3m into sandstone before concreting, to form the bridge foundations.

Delivery of the pre-cast 'super tee beams' are well underway. The super tee bridge beams will span between the bridge



A major milestone - the first of the 52 tonne 'super tee' bridge beams being put in place.

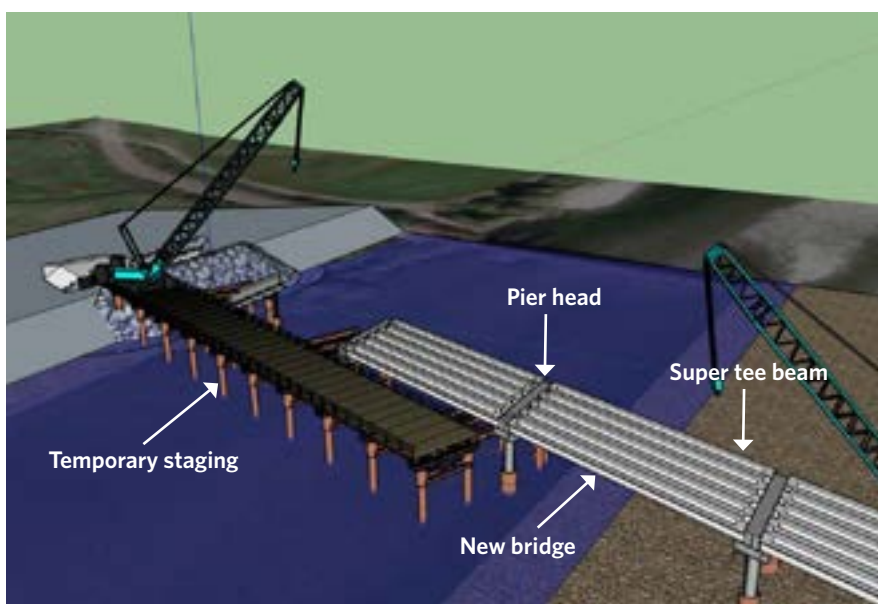
piers (vertical load bearers) to enable bridge construction. Each super tee beam is around 30m long and weighs up to 52 tonnes. They are being transported one at a time by truck to Ahaura from the production facility in Christchurch via State Highway 73 through Arthur's Pass.

Casting the new bridge columns and pierheads is also underway. These are used to support the super tee beams.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Work continues:

- › The super tee bridge beams are being delivered most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until all 35 beams have been delivered on site.
- › Installation of the new bridge piles is progressing from the north to the south end of the river.
- › Casting of the bridge columns and pierheads is ongoing, as well as bulk filling on the north and southern approaches to the bridge.



What has been uncovered?

Archaeological work at the Ahaura Bridge site has unearthed historic evidence on the north side of the river, where the new highway alignment turns.

A small team of archaeologists have been carefully excavating remains associated with the 19th century St Mary's Convent and Church.

The work has been carried out under an archaeological authority issued by Pouhere Taonga Heritage New Zealand.

St Mary's Convent was a Catholic boarding school situated on the right bank of the Ahaura River, to the left of the road after the bridge, coming into Ahaura.

The school was set up by Father Pertuis and opened in 1872.

In May 1887, Father O'Donnell (who was appointed to run the school in 1884), had the original school demolished, and erected a two-story presbytery.

The foundational remains of this two-story building were recently uncovered and investigated by the archaeologists.

The ground floor plan of the building was traced from its concrete foundations and included an old veranda at the front, remains of the old fireplace and a lean-to addition at the back of the building.



A frosty morning – the remains of the concrete path and steps which once led into St Mary's Catholic Church, 1898.

Close to the presbytery building, the remains of an old washhouse were also investigated, which included an old well which would have supplied the convent residents with water.

The remains of St Mary's Catholic Church, which was built in 1898, were also uncovered by the archaeologists.

The timber-built church was constructed at the northern edge of the former school grounds and featured a concrete footpath with steps leading into the building.



Surface water would have been an ongoing issue affecting the church, given the archaeologists required a number of drains to be installed to keep the work site dry.

Artefacts found by the archaeology team relating to the 19th century occupation of St Mary's Convent included historic Brunner bricks, as well as domestic refuse, such as ceramics and glassware.

The artefacts will be assessed and analysed by specialists as they contain a wealth of information which will help tell the story of the historic convent and church site.



Above and below on the previous page: archaeologists investigating the remains of the old presbytery building.



WSP Archaeological Technician Johanna Huston investigating an old building pile at the church site.



Aerial view of the old presbytery building site.



An old burnt pit that may be associated with construction of the railway line which was opened in 1890.

Objects discovered



An historic ceramic egg from the 19th century, once used to encourage hens to lay, was found by the archaeologists during their investigations.



The lid of a 19th century cherry toothpaste pot found by archaeologists. The inscription on the lid reads *Cherry Toothpaste, patronized by the Queen, for beautifying and preserving the teeth & gums, prepared by John Gosnell & Co London.*



Two 19th century stemware drinking glasses, one etched with a fern decoration, found by archaeologists.

MORE INFORMATION



For more information on the SH7 Ahaura River Bridge replacement project, visit our website www.nzta.govt.nz/sh7-ahaura-river-bridge-replacement