



Convict Trail Project

March 2023 Newsletter

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North to Frog Hollow

[Contributed by] Elizabeth Roberts

In our virtual trip along the Great North Road today we will visit Frog Hollow. The only time I visited there was in August 2005 when I and five hardy volunteers camped there for wet and cold two nights and three days whilst the women measured and photographed the conservation work needed and the men cleared vegetation especially trees growing in stone walling. Mount Baxter just beyond Frog Hollow was listed in our 1998 Conservation Management Plan as needing conservation; it is still in 2023 needing conservation. The road work described last month was an attempt to be able to get in to Mt Baxter to do conservation work.



The Great North Road near Frog Hollow. The mudhole facing this vehicle has now been repaired.

The name Frog Hollow appears on G B White's 1831 Map of the Great North Road along with a reference to "Mr Wiseman's Huts". These were also mentioned in the 1832/33 NSW Calendar and Directory. Two stone structures were recorded by Grace Karskens, in 1985. By 1998 one of these had been destroyed by works to install a pipe culvert, on the track that runs through Frog Hollow. Wiseman apparently erected the huts at Frog Hollow as storage structures associated with his contract to supply the road gangs with rations. The remaining hut site at Frog Hollow is situated about 100m west of the Great North Road and is accessed via a dirt track which leads from the Road.

The remains of the hut consist of stone rubble walls of two courses, about 0.5 metres high. The walls are most intact where they form a corner at right angles to each other.



Additional squared stone pieces are scattered around nearby. The footings probably extended over an area of about 2m x 3m. The entire structure may have been of stone. The second hut site reported by Grace Karskens was situated about 13metres northeast of the above structure. A pipe drain has been installed in this location. Stone edging around the pipe probably derives from the structure described by Grace Karskens.

Closer to the main Great North Road, a rock outcrop has graffiti including "Frog Hollow" carved into it. The building site at Frog Hollow has archaeological potential and has not been subject to fully comprehensive archaeological investigation or excavation.

The sole surviving footings represent one of a very small number of building sites associated with the Great North Road and dating to the convict period.



Above: Eric Metzke showing the depth of the washouts in a section of the road which is trafficable.

Left: The measure held by Felicity Barry shows the depth of the washouts in the road.

The hut site may provide data on issues relating to the feeding and clothing of the convicts working on the Great North Road in this extremely remote and isolated section. [Taken from 1998 CMP by Siobhan Lavelle].



Above: Near Frog Hollow we observed Aboriginal water holes and associated rock grinding grooves.

Trove Needs Your Help.

Much is known and written about the effects of the 1867 Hawkesbury Flood around Windsor, Richmond, Pitt Town and Wilberforce etc. However little is recorded about its effects in the lower Hawkesbury.

Thanks to **Trove**, the on-line portal to the old newspapers of Australia among other things, hosted by the National Library of Australia, we know a little more. A little known report was sourced recently when searching for something else. It reported that a number of people in the Lower Hawkesbury lost their homes and all their belongings as far downstream as Brooklyn or Peats Ferry as it was then called.

This has prompted us to speak via this newsletter of the importance of **Trove** to all research in Australia.

Trove is a great resource that researchers in other countries are envious of. Its 5-year funding grant is about to expire and currently there is no guarantee it will be renewed. Whilst the petition is closed, it not too late to tell your Federal Politicians how important it is that its funding is renewed and put on a permanent basis as a regular line item in the federal budget. Why is Trove important? According to dfat.gov.au 'Australia is a world-leading tourist destination. Our tourism sector contributes \$152 billion to our economy, supports more than 300,000 businesses and employs more than 660,000 Australians'. Tourists expect to be told authentic stories. Trove contributes to tourism by providing the material for these stories. This is only a small part in how Trove is used and contributes to the economy. All councils must have a heritage study that is greatly informed by Trove. Because newspapers in the 19th Century repeated stories printed in other papers it is sometimes possible to find stories from papers that no longer exist but without Trove these

stories would never be found. Who would look in Goulburn paper for a story about the Lower Hawkesbury or an Illawarra paper for a story about the Hunter Valley. Trove has cut the time taken for a basic newspaper research from weeks to hours, thus cutting the cost of and greatly improving basic heritage research.

CTP NEWS:

Thomas James Bridge

Last week some movement was detected in the western abutment of Thomas James Bridge but after inspection traffic has been allowed to continue over it. The community advisory group has met and put forward some suggestions to council. The work is still in the planning stage.

Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society (DLHHS)

The Convict Trail Project would like to congratulate the DLHHS, a long term member of the CTP family, on reaching their 40th birthday. They are celebrating later this month when Grace Karskens will speak to them about her latest research along the river. I understand that Lorraine Banks, who was both a founding member of DLHHS and the first executive officer of the CTP, will be attending the event.

The Pick Volume 11

Work is progressing on researching roads connected to and/or built after the construction of the Great North Road opened the surrounding land. Nothing occurs in isolation. More writers are still needed. Contact Elizabeth Roberts at earoberts@bigpond.com if you would like to contribute to this issue of The Pick.

And in closing

If you are near Hornsby Shire Historical Society Museum in Kenley Park, Normanhurst, between 10am and 2pm on a Tuesday, pop in to see where the research files of the CTP are now housed. Rather than have these files sit inaccessibly in one of the houses of a CTP Executive member, they are now housed in the Research Room of the HSHS as part of their Convict and Colonial Collection. All material is listed on the HSHS Archives database and accessible.