



Convict Trail Project

April 2023 Newsletter

Dharug & Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society's 40th Birthday

When the DLHHS was formed in 1983, Grace Karskens was writing up her Masters research on the Great North Road. Lorraine Banks was living on the MacDonald River and completing a degree in history, so was elected the first president of the new society. Both were present at DLHHS's 40th birthday party at the Chapel at Gunderman.

As guest speaker, Grace presented a great talk on the Hawkesbury River based on her new book *People of the River*. The research project she is currently working on based on the Aboriginal Place Names on the Hawkesbury compiled by the Rev John McGarvie.

Unfortunately Mc Garvie did not venture as far downstream as Wisemans Ferry.

Unfortunately, Lorraine is not well and is now living with family in Canberra. Her young niece who had just got her licence, drove her up for this function.

It was a day with intermittent showers so the neighbours behind the Chapel kindly invited us to use their function room for afternoon tea. It is an interesting rustic room, built to be used as a reception place for weddings in the Chapel with lovely views of the river.



Three people who have worked tirelessly over many years to research, document and preserve the Great North Road for future generations. Lorraine Banks - first project officer, Elisabeth Roberts - project officer for many years & Emeritus Professor Grace Karskens who has written extensively on the area and continues the research enjoy a catch up at Dharug & Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society's 40th Anniversary.

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North from Mt Baxter [Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts] Today in our virtual trip along the Great North Road we visit Mt Baxter or rather the ascent of Mt Baxter 21.5 kilometres north of Wisemans Ferry and about 4.5 kilometers north of Clares Bridge. Here the road winds up the western side of the mountain side with excellent views to the west.



The ascent of Mt Baxter features a substantial intact section of road work about 100 meters long. The hillside includes evidence of quarrying, such as jumper bar marks, benches and pick making. The road is supported by a substantially battered or slopes wall of formed masonry. Coursing is attempted but in places interrupted by snecking (small shaped stones used between stones of unmatched height) and unevenly matched blocks. There is also some stacked bonding. The most substantial section is between 9 and 11 courses high. This precinct provides a good and intact example of road building methods for a very steep slope. The line was cut and quarried out of the mountain side and the cut stone used to build the battered wall.

The 1989 Conservation Report gives the level of significance for this section as High and states remedial measures are urgently needed to manage the tree growth to clear and restore the culverts and adjust the road levels. [Ref. Siobhan Lavelle *State 1 Conservation Management plan for the Great North Road.*]

It is well over 10 years since this section was last looked at so it is not known how this section has stood up to the recent flooding rains. The road conservation work undertaken from Donneys track heading north was undertaken with the aim of being able to conserve this section but unfortunately did not get this far.

The worst of the trees growing out of the walls were cut over 10 years ago but trees can grow quite large and do lots of damage in 10 years.



This section was probably built by Iron Gang 9. In November 1829 they were placed beyond 10 Mile Hollow and constructing the section to Giber Gunha in the vicinity of Mt Baxter. In January 1830 Assistant Surveyor Simpson reported the...progress has been arrested by extensive rocky substances requiring a good deal of blasting and quarrying which to render the Road safe and in some cases passable must be cleared as the operation proceed.

The leg irons in the possession of the CTP were probable worn by a run away from Iron Gang 9 as they were found by some Outward Bound students many years ago in a cave nearby. One of the irons had been ovaled to allow the heel to slip out and the other the soft metal plug had been shorn through allowing the iron to open.

CTP NEWS:

Thomas James Bridge

Hawkesbury City Council has announced that tenders for construction commenced on Monday 27 March and will be open for 3 weeks.

I attended the DLHHS 40th Birthday on 25th March and drove up to look at the bridge, in the time since the wall first collapsed a lot more of the road has slumped. The council have the whole area covered in plastic to keep out as much water as possible

TROVE

In case you missed this announcement in the news Trove has been saved.

"Funding for the country's largest digitised archive has been announced, after months of the National Library of Australia (NLA) calling for more financial support.

Key points:

- *The federal government says the future of the National Library of Australia's (NLA) database, Trove, has been secured*
- *National institutions have been calling out for funding over the past few months after little funding increases under the Coalition*
- *In the May federal budget, \$33 million dollars will be included for the NLA, plus a \$9.2 million cash injection specifically for Trove*

In its upcoming May budget, the federal government has promised \$33 million over four years to the NLA. The NLA, which runs digital archive database Trove, will also be separately allocated funding of more than \$9 million — a move the government said would secure the future of the service for years to come.

Trove currently boasts a collection of more than 14 billion digitised records, Australia's one-stop shop for the history of the nation that is utilised regularly by academic institutions,

researchers and people who the government describes as "ordinary Australians keen to understand the history of their families or their communities". - ABC news.

And in closing

CTP Research at HSHS Museum - 10am, 12.4.2023 - We have changed the meeting date from the first Wednesday of the month to the second Wednesday of the month so that this newsletter which goes out on the 7th of each month can always include a reminder.

Who knows the history of this sign? Sighted recently on the corner of Old Castle Hill Road & Old Northern Road opposite the entrance to Oak Hill College. Not recognisable as CTP signage. Does anyone know of its history?? Intriguing to say the least.

