

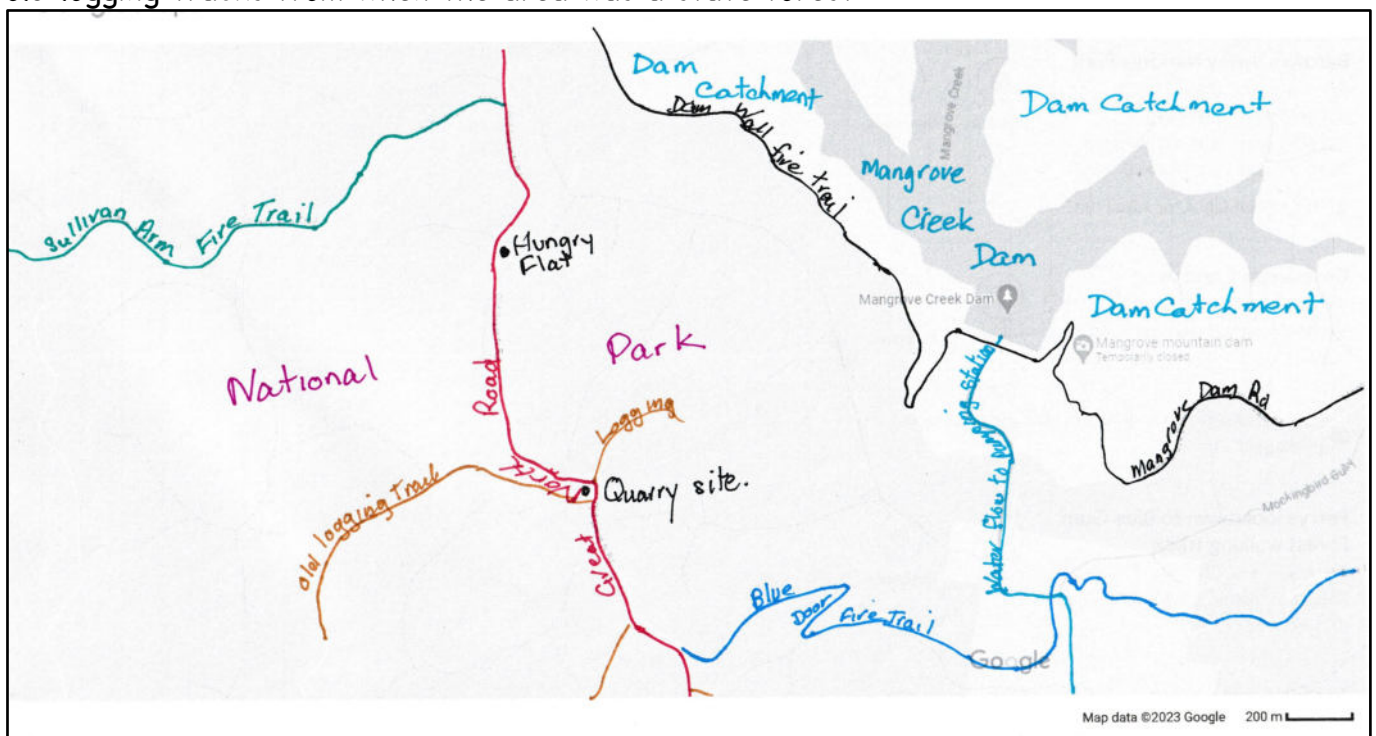


Convict Trail Project

June 2023 Newsletter

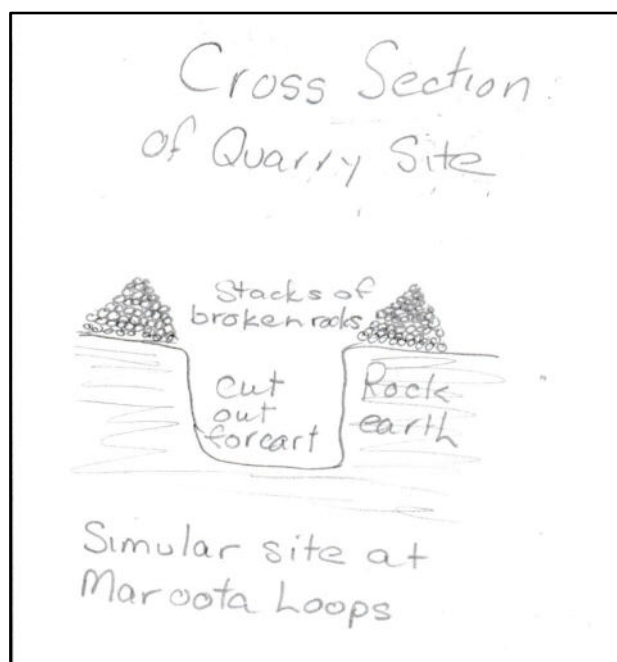
A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North from the Blue Door fire trail to the dam wall fire trail. [Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts]

Today we walk up the Great North Road from the Blue Door fire trail to the dam wall fire trail. The trip is about 3½ kms along the GNR, just below the ridge line on the dam side of the ridge line. It forms part of the fire trails that protects one of the Central Coast Councils major assets, the Mangrove Creek Dam, their main water supply. Why does a dam need to be protected from bushfire? It needs to be protected from ash and sediment inflow from land denuded by fire. No one wants dirty drinking water or the dam clogging up with sediment. Besides these two fire trails coming in from the east, a long fire trail, Sullivan Arm fire trail, comes in from the west about midway between the two from the east. Between the Blue Door fire trail and Sullivan Arm fire trail there are two Great North Road sites of note, a quarry site and Hungry Flat, as well as the evidence of at least three old logging tracks from when the area was a state forest.



This quarry site is a 30 metre narrow cutting on the southern side of the present road where it loops round a sharp corner. Above on either side of the cutting are stockpiles of small broken stone pieces, the size close to that used as sub-pavement on the road which suggests it was used for that purpose. These types of quarries and stockpiles demonstrate

something of the nature of a convict work site and show how they were in use when abandoned to move onto the next site.



The breaking of stone suggests this was a site where invalids worked. As shown by the painting by Augustus Earle, (1793-1838) of men sitting breaking stone for the Great Western Road, one had been flogged, and it was work he could do while his back healed.

The second site in this section is Hungry Flat. This name is mentioned by several travellers and surveyors in colonial times. Although not listed in the CTP CMP as there is no road evidence there, it was frequently used for camping and was one of the few open areas along the GNR. When Sir Thomas Mitchell was travelling north to determine the best line for the road from 12 Mile Hollow (now 10 Mile Hollow) to Wollombi, he camped one night at 12 Mile Hollow and the next night at Hungry Flat, one of his pack horses named "Sharper" having twice fallen down steep banks.

In September 1830, Iron Gang 8 were stationed at Hungry Flat where they remained till December. While there records show that they constructed two small bridges between Hungry Flat and Sampsons Pass, one was 16 feet long and the other 12 feet long and both were 21 feet wide. They also constructed about 3 miles of road. Although nothing remains now, it appears both these bridges were constructed at Hungry Flat. John Dunmore Lang was one of the travellers who stopped at Hungry Flat. *"At the termination of our second stage, we arrived at a place, of which the mere name is sufficient description 'the Hungry Flat', it affords neither bread for man nor grass for horses, it only recommendation is a stream of delicious water"*.

Ain about 2014 or 2015, Hawkesbury City Council declared a Bushfire emergency that fire was possibly burning towards Mangrove Dam. Fortunately Gosford District Rural Fire Brigades under the leadership of Inspector Rolf Poole undertook to prepare the fire trails and a firebreak to protect Mangrove Dam. He contacted the CTP who worked with him to show the bits of the road that needed to be protected. The next day several Gosford area brigades conducted as clearing exercise along the Great North Road between Blue Door and the Dam Wall fire trails and out via Sampsons Pass and Circuit Flat Bridge, a route possible till constant vehicle use started to damage Sampsons Pass. Fortunately this fire was contained before it could advance to near the Dam. Later a very large hazard reduction fire was conducted in the triangle formed by the Great North Road, Mogo Creek Road and Sullivan Arm Fire trail. Unfortunately for the GNR, Rolf Poole and has moved on and upwards in the Rural fire Service. It is to be hoped the current Gosford Area Manager will take as much care of the GNR if it needs to be used to access fire trails. In case anyone is

asking why we have not conserved the road via the fire trails, the two fire trails up from the valley to the top of the ridge are very steep and it is considered an ordinary tip truck would not be able to climb the hill and or negotiate the very tight U-bends on both fire trails. Fire trucks are 4-wheel drive and tip trucks are not.

(References: Extracted from CTP CMP by Siobhan Lavelle and "*Blood Sweat and Irons*" by Ian Webb, Augustus Earle painting from National Library of Australia, Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NK 12/23 nla pic-an2818287, and personal experience)

CTP NEWS:

Thomas James Bridge Update [from Hawkesbury City Council website]

Update: 9 June 2023. Tender for construction closed 3 May 2023. Submissions are in the final stage of assessment. Council plans to host a community information meeting once we have a greater level of certainty over matters such as commencement dates, temporary access and construction timeline. This meeting will be subject to the successful negotiation and execution of contracts.

Information on the meeting will be shared once details are confirmed.

And in closing

A Date For your Diary

The 2023 CTP AGM will be held on Wednesday 1 November at 1 pm at Hornsby Shire Historical Society premises in Kenley Park, Normanhurst. More details will be in a newsletter closer to this date.

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