



Convict Trail Project

October 2023 Newsletter

The CTP 2023 Annual General Meeting [Contributed by CTP Chair, Mari Metzke]

The AGM will be held at Hornsby Shire Historical Society Museum on Wednesday 1 November 2023, starting at 1pm. Hornsby Shire Historical Society Museum is in Kenley Park, Normanhurst and parking is available in Kenley Road.

Whether you are an individual member of CTP or a representative of one of the supporting groups, we welcome your attendance at the meeting. The CTP Board which is elected at the AGM oversees the work of the CTP and guides our on-going protection of the Great North Road. To refresh memories as to the composition of the CTP Board of Management Clause 14 in our Constitution follows:

14. Composition & membership of the Board

14.1 The Board of Management of the CTP will comprise

- 4 positions to represent Community Organisations
- 4 positions to represent Strategic Members
- 2 positions to represent Individual Members
- 1 position to represent Business Members
- 1 position for Executive Partnerships

each of whom is to be elected at the annual general meeting of the association

14.2 The Board of Management will, as soon as practicable after the Annual General Meeting meet to elect an Executive Team which will oversee the affairs of the CTP on a day-to-day basis.

14.3 The office-bearers of the Board of Management will be as follows:

- (a) the Chairman,
- (b) the Vice-Chairman,
- (c) the Treasurer,
- (d) the Secretary.

These office-bearers constitute the Executive Team.

To refresh your memories I have included the following explanations:

“Community Organisations” are historical societies and other not-for-profit organisations with an interest in the GNR.

“Strategic Members” are Local Government Councils, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Roads and Maritime Services and similar groups.

“Business Members” are businesses along the GNR who support the work of the CTP.

“Executive Partnerships” could be groups like Yancoal who are partnering with the CTP in projects that benefit the GNR.

I encourage all groups associated with the CTP to send a representative to our AGM. The strength of the CTP has always been in its members whether they represent the various community groups, the Councils along the length of the road or the Government Departments with assets along the road. If you are sending representatives to the AGM, please email me at mari@max.net.au so I can register them.

CTP Membership Renewals: [Contributed by CTP Treasurer, Michael Young]

It's time to renew your membership of the CTP so you can help us continue our important work to preserve the Great North Road.

Individual Membership of the CTP is \$30 or \$25 concessions per year [Includes a \$1.00 joining fee as a legal requirement of incorporation].

Business membership is \$100 per annum.

Local Government Councils will be invoiced individually by the Treasurer.

Membership Renewals can be paid in person at the AGM or you can contact our Treasurer at michaelyoung167@gmail.com to arrange payment.

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North to visit Circuit Flat Bridge

[Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts]

In our virtual trip along the Great North Road today we will visit Circuit Flat Bridge. Later this month the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society have organized a visit to Circuit Flat Bridge and have invited Convict Trail members to join them. For more details see below.

It would appear the bridge was built around 1831-32. The absence of documentary evidence is due to the transfer of the Roads and Bridges Department to the Surveyors General's Department that year, it appears none of the road construction records for that year have survived, certainly none for the Great North Road.



From the design of Circuit Flat Bridge, it was built by a gang with experience in bridge building, most likely Clare's Bridge party who built Clares Bridge, the most spectacular bridge on the road. It is likely they built it after they finished Sampsons Pass Bridge.



It is interesting that this ambitious and impressive bridge could easily have been bypassed by a suitable rock ford if the road had been deviated slightly.

Circuit Flat Bridge comprises two stone abutments originally 14.6 metres in length, 8.5 metres wide and up to 2.7 metres high with a span of 2.75 metres. Projecting buttresses flank each corner and there are seven stone corbels projecting from each abutment that would have supported struts that supported the original bridge decking. The principle of this design was for European timbers that were not as strong as Australian hardwoods. The stone work is well done with random bonding and regularly laid courses with tight joints. Circuit Flat Bridge is the most refined single span bridge design on the road (Clares Bridge is a two span-bridge) it is one of seven of the surviving bridge of which there originally about 22 bridges. The Great North Road Bridges are the oldest known stone bridges on the Australian mainland. They form a extremely significant group for its demonstration of the development from simple stone conduit structures like Thomas James Bridge to the highly sophisticated forms and designs used on the Great North Road north of the Hawkesbury River. It is fortunate that this bridge is easily seen by the public, accessible in dry weather by two-wheel drive vehicles by persons used to driving on rough dirt roads. Otherwise four-wheel drive vehicles as there are a couple of sticky crossing when wet. Otherwise it is an easy level two kilometre walk each way in and out from the Mt Manning car park on the main road from St Albans to Bucketty. Next month we will explore the nearby quarry site that supplied the stone for this bridge.

Reference: Stage 1 Conservation Plan for the Great North Road, 1999, Siobhan Lavelle and Grace Karskens.



A historic, un-dated photo of Circuit Flat Bridge from the CTP Collection.

CTP NEWS:

VISIT to Circuit Flat Bridge:

Date Sunday 29 October

Meeting time: Sunday 29 October at 10.00am.

Meeting place: We will meet at the intersection of George Downes Drive (Great North Road) and St Albans Road at the Bucketty precinct car park with the tables, 100 meters on from the big gates.

We will have morning tea and explore the convict workings around the Bucketty precinct. We will then drive in along the road towards Circuit Flat Bridge. There is 2 wheel drive access to Circuit flat bridge in dry weather for people used to driving on rough dirt roads otherwise 4DW. We will carpool if required into the site.

Cost: \$10.00 per head

Bookings Essential: to secretary@dlhs.org.au or 0405 321 478. We **must** be able to contact everyone coming along in case of either wet weather or a fire warning. Bookings to be received by 24 October.

Important Information: It is a BYO everything day led by Rob Cunneen and Elizabeth Roberts.

Please bring plenty of water, food, hat, sunscreen and insect repellent and wear sturdy shoes. Members and guests are invited to come on for a walk to Circuit Flat Bridge and to explore the convict works in the area.

We will explore the Circuit flat Bridge site and environs including the engravings on site. Elizabeth will explain the construction of the Bridge.

We will have lunch around the site. The wildflowers are in bloom so it is a wonderful time to explore before the really hot weather.

We will be looking for the quarry site in the area.

If time permits some will walk out to Sampsons Pass which is a 3 km walk each way.

Parramatta Female Factory. All persons interested in Convict history will be glad to learn that on Thursday, 28 September 2023, the Federal and NSW State Governments announced that the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct had been placed on the Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage.

Thomas James Bridge update:

During the past month work has commenced, the latest report from the Hawkesbury Council reads:

Tree clearing will continue over the next week at the Settlers Road Major Landslip Project, along with benching to allow for safe access for the excavator to the top of the slips area. Loose shale will also be removed to solid rockface over the next week, throughout a section of the road. Residents are advised to please take care and expect continuous truck movements as the material is transported to the stockpile site.

Excavation will commence this week around Thomas James Bridge with a Heritage Excavation Director on site to monitor the works. This work is not expected to impact residents.

These works will continue to take place between the hours of 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and from 7am to 2pm on Saturdays.

The current traffic conditions will remain in place throughout these works, including the current contra flow traffic conditions. However, please allow for potential delays of up to 15 minutes during construction hours.

Please be advised that due to the unforeseen and unknown challenges with this complex project, and with safety of residents and workers paramount, we anticipate shorter, unplanned closures at less notice. Road closures will only occur in the event a section of the road becomes unsafe for passing traffic and is deemed necessary for keeping the community and site workers safe.

We anticipate a week full closure of the site in December to install the temporary bridge. We will provide 3 weeks' notice to residents prior to work commencing.

As part of this exercise the large rock the CTP plaques were on has been removed, the plaques were carefully removed off the rock and in storage at the council awaiting the completion of the work and the design of the new interpretation signage. Thank you to Hawkesbury council for removing these plaques carefully and contacting us about them.

Devines Hill: The Federal Minister for the Environment and Water The Hon Tanya Plibersek recently announced that that the Federal Government was "*investing more than \$25 million through our Australian Heritage Grants programs to protect these sites for our children and grandchildren*"

As part of this announcement the Old Great North Road up Devines Hill the World Heritage listed area has received \$88,000 dollars to protect and conserve the retaining walls where movement has occurred, with expert advice of an engineer and an archaeologist. A report and review of environmental factors will also be undertaken if reconstruction is required. This part of the Great North Road is part of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage serial listing inscribed in 2010. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife service are to be congratulated on receiving this substantial grant.

Book Review: A Woman in a Green Dress by Tea Cooper Published December 2018.

A few months ago my sister a great buyer of second hand books handed me a copy of "*A Woman in a Green Dress*" saying read this you will enjoy it. It was everything she promised and more. The author Tea Cooper is a Wollombi area resident who knows and describes her local area well and this book is set in part on Mogo Creek in 1853 in or near the Dean sister's cottage and the upper end of the Great North Road.

An America Book review found on Google reads: "*After her husband's death in World War I, Fleur's surprising inheritance takes her deep into the past--and could unravel a mystery surrounding a cursed opal, a gnarled family tree, and a sinister woman in a green dress.*"

1919: After a whirlwind romance, London teashop waitress Fleur Richards can't wait for her new husband, Hugh, to return from the Great War. But when word of his death arrives on Armistice Day, Fleur learns he has left her a sizable family fortune. Refusing to accept the inheritance, she heads to his beloved home country of Australia in search of the relatives who deserve it more. In spite of her reluctance, she soon finds herself the sole owner of a remote farm and a dilapidated curio shop full of long-forgotten artifacts, remarkable preserved creatures, and a mystery that began more than sixty-five years ago. With the help of Kip, a repatriated soldier dealing with the sobering aftereffects of war, Fleur finds herself unable to resist pulling on the threads of the past. What she finds is a shocking story surrounding an opal and a woman in a green dress. . . a story that, nevertheless, offers hope and healing for the future. This romantic mystery from award-winning Australian novelist Tea Cooper will keep readers guessing until the astonishing conclusion."

Look out for a copy, there is one in Hornsby Library.

And in closing

As we approach the end of 2023, the Management Team of the CTP wishes you all the best for the Christmas Season. Let's hope our Road is not threatened by any bushfires during the season.

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