



Convict Trail Project

May 2024 Newsletter

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North from

[Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts] In our virtual tour today we are visiting Ramsays Leap. As the Conservation Management Plan states:- *the Ramsays Leap curved retaining wall is a major structure built into a steep gully which slopes away to the west. The wall is curved and battered (sloped) and is about 100 meters long and up to 4.5 meters high. The Batter is 1 horizontal to 4 vertical. - The quality of the stone work is equivalent to that on Devines hill - it is dry laid with stone dust and generally in sound condition with well-prepared stones and tight joints. The coursing is consistently level. A square culvert is set in the centre of the curve, three courses below the top of the wall.*

Modern road engineers had placed safety fencing round the curve just behind the stone wall. In 1983 the engineers McBean and Crisp inspected the road from Mt Manning to Paynes Crossing and made recommendations for conservation works. These included doing something about the safety fencing at Ramsays Leap as it had the potential to dislodge the stone walling if hit hard. Finally in 2010 the council applied for and received funding to do something about the safety fencing and just 8 hours before the council were to place water filled orange plastic jersey curb temporary fencing around the curve prior to permanent work a semi- trailer, apparently travelling to fast round the bend hit safety fencing with its left rear wheel pushing out the stone in wall behind the safety rail post and dropping the t wheel over the wall and pulling it back onto the road. This caused a lot of damage that had to be repaired before the other work could proceed. Against advice from the CTP the council employed the stonemason with the cheapest quote. This ended costing more than more expensive quotes as the Council had to get the government heritage stonemasons out to inspect the work and the stone mason being instructed to relay much of what he had already laid.

One important issue came out of this accident. When working on other sections that had to be taken down and reconstructed it was noticed here and at Mitchells Pass on the Blue Mts that there was a fine layer of dark dust between the stones. Till Ramsays Leap no one was sure if this dust was original or filtered in over time. Because of the Curve at Ramsays Leap the pressure had pushed the stones closer together and made them very tight. To relay the pushed out stones one undamaged stone had to be removed, when lifted out under it was stone dust the colour of the stones as it had been laid when the wall was built. This is very important as it explains how the walling was built without mortar or many pressure cracks that can occur when dry laid stones have small lumps making for pressure spots. A square culvert is set in the centre of the curve, three courses below the top of the wall. The inlet has a drop in entry parallel to the road with the culvert entry at right angles. The base of the culvert as it crosses under the road is stepped and leaks into the fill

below. To try to rectify this, a large pipe was inserted up the culvert but this so far has been unsuccessful as the base of the pipe is above the culvert base. Currently the whole culvert inlet is filled with leaves and soil. We are attempting to have the water directed away from flowing into the culvert. This Culvert was built with an elaborate exit to direct water away from running down the wall. At the outlet a shaped slab sill projects from the wall designed to throw the water about three meters down into a short horizontal race and hence to a final spillway approximately 3 5 meters from the toe of the wall. The spillway is about 4 meters high and battered. The photo at the head of this newsletter is of Ramsays Leap. Next Month we will continue to look at Ramsays Leap including who was Ramsay and what was his leap.

CTP NEWS:

Work at Thomas James Bridge.

The following report came from the Council on Friday 3 May:

Works are continuing at Thomas James Bridge and Settlers Road Landslips, with the following works being carried out this week:

- Excavation for the mass concrete pour on the St Albans side
- Commencement of the mass concrete pour on the St Albans side
- Completion of spray grass on the top section of the slips

The below works are planned for next week, weather permitting:

- Prepping for the pouring of the footing
- Tying steel for the footing
- Prepping for soil nailing and shotcrete at the slips

The following series of photographs attempt to show the massive extent of the works at Thomas James Bridge.



This photo taken 20 April 2024 from the top of excavation the Devines Hill end looking back towards the ferry, the side road is built up where the wall collapsed and runs below where the creek that flowed under Thomas James Bridge would have drained. The white plastic chair is sitting on the creek bed under Thomas James Bridge, with the base

stones on the Ferry side still in place. And one stone on the Devines Hill side still there under the white pipe. The temporary road runs against the cliff face behind the plywood fence behind the purple roofed shelter pavilion. The base concrete has been poured to support the road on the ferry side and the hole dug into grey shale ready for concrete on the Devines Hill side.



This photo taken 20 April 2024 at the Ferry end of the Thomas James road works looking over the excavation on that side towards Devines hill. Shotcrete in centre of picture is on the excavation on the Devines hill side of TJ bridge.

Photo taken 4 May 2024 from just above the Ferry heading towards the TJ Bridge showing work on the removal of the rock fall.





Photo taken 4 May 2024 from closer towards TJ Bridge looking back towards the Ferry over the area of the rock fall removal and stabilization.



Photo taken from same position as photo taken on 20 April showing the progression in the works despite the wet weather. Concrete base poured on Devines Hill side of bridge base.

News from Other Places

The National Heritage Festival continues till Sunday 19 May, google Heritage Festival 2024 for the National Trust program of events, some free and some with a cost.

Hornsby Shire Historical Society Meeting: Sunday May 19 @ 2pm at Kenley Park, Kenley Road, Normanhurst. Guest Speaker is Adjunct Associate Professor Dr Carol Liston who will discuss the additional Macquarie's Town on the Hawkesbury.

National Archaeology week the 19 to 15 May 2024 see <https://archaeologyweek.org/> for program of events.

And in Closing..... The June newsletter will be sent from the WA goldfields when and if there is sufficient internet coverage.

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