



## Convict Trail Project

## June 2024 Newsletter

**A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North at Ramsays Leap.** [Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts] On our virtual trip along the Great North Road we have paused at Ramsays Leap to look at why it is called Ramsays Leap. Who was Ramsay and why did he leap? When Ramsay leapt he was under police escort being returned to face the accusation of horse theft and escaping from lawful custody. This was his second successful escape. It was in March 1854.

William Ramsay first appeared in the newspapers in April 1850 as the Licensee of the Crown and Anchor in New Freugh; by the following year he had changed the name to Freugh Arms. New Freugh was on the road between Singleton and Maitland in the Singleton Police District. By January 1854 he had over £700 in the bank in Maitland, owned a house in Singleton where his wife and five children lived, a brick hotel in Maitland leased to the publican and owned or leased the Fenugh Arms.

This was when things went wrong for Ramsay. In mid-January it appears he sold the Freugh Arms, withdrew £732 from the bank in Maitland and absconded with the daughter of the man he sold the hotel to. This appears to have resulted in a charge of horse theft being lodged against him, by whom it is not stated. The constable from Singleton, Thomas Giles, chased after him eventually catching up with him at the Colo in the Windsor Police District. Giles then took him and presumably their horses to Sydney. No mention is made of the girl/woman he was supposed to have absconded with. Giles and Ramsay and presumably



the horses were catching the steamer back to Maitland. They went on board but as it was a stormy night the paddlewheel steamer did not leave the harbour. Giles who was severely sleep deprived eventually succumbed to sleep and Ramsay presumably handcuffed to something, escaped. Constable Giles was fined 50/- (shillings) and lost his job. Ramsay then tried to sell through an agent, the hotel in West Maitland but his wife advertised she had the Deeds and was not giving them up as her husband had abandoned her and the children.

He was spotted by the police at the New Freugh pound sale and only escaped by the intervention of a friend. This time he was captured along the Macdonald River by two Wollombi constables. The newspaper reported he *"succeeded in escaping from them by jumping down a very precipitous descent, being imperfectly handcuffed at the time"*. Leaving behind *"a bay horse, black points, switch tail, small star in forehead, branded JJ on near shoulder. Also, a saddle, bridle, and coat"*. This time he was not recaptured and was believed to have gone overseas. This was the gold rush era.

Having spent a lot of time at Ramsays Leap, I often wondered where he went over and how he survived. Initially I thought he must have leapt over, taken a very dangerous slide down the sheets of rock at the Bucketty end. In writing this I rethought how he escaped and the note about being imperfectly handcuffed. It is possible they stopped at the water trough to have a drink and water the horses. Working saddles had D-rings attached to the front and back of them for anchoring bed-rolls etc to. Prisoners in handcuffs on horseback would have been padlocked to their saddles. If they stopped to drink and relieve themselves, Ramsay would have been legitimately un-padlocked from his saddle. He could have crossed the road jumped down on to the culvert sill, hung from that to drop down onto water-race, and down its rougher walls into the valley. He was still at large 12 months later when his horse was offered for sale in 1855.



In about 2019 when looking for a cave under the road reported by a group of surveyors, Warren Dixon, Wesley Warren and Elizabeth Roberts found a cave below the Wollombi side of the road that appears to have been used for the storage of gunpowder as the highest part of the cave entry has been enlarged to allow the entry of barrels of gun powder. This was a dry cave, the cave that is just below the road and under the road that was found some time later is a damp cave.

References: The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser:- 20 April 1850; 25 May 1850; 21 July 1852; 23 April 1853; 8,11 & 15 February 1854; 15, 22 & 25 March 1854; 29 April 1854 8 July 1854; 2 August 1854; 7 February 1855.

Sydney Morning Herald 10 Feb 1854; 29 July 1854

NSW Government Gazette 24 April 1855; 21 Sept 1855

Bells Life in Sydney 11 Feb 1854



## CTP NEWS:

### Bedlam Point

Using some of the Yancoal money, given to the CTP as part of the agreement to allow the mining across the Great North Road at Warkworth, some works were planned at Bedlam Point on the Parramatta River. This included the replacement of the Road sign there. When the new part-time Project Manager Fiorella Julca inspected the site, it was severely overgrown following the wet summer. This led to a meeting between the CTP and the site managers representatives, the Bushcare managers from Ryde and Hunters Hill councils and a representative from National Parks who have licenced Hunters Hill to manage the small section between what was Gladesville Hospital and the water's edge. Every one met there on Monday 3 June 2024.

*Image below, Left to right: Sarah Glendenning, NPWS; Sandra Payne, Ryde Council; Fiorella Julca, CTP; Jackui Vollmer, Hunters Hill Council.*



The following was the results of the meeting:-

- Agreement to remove the vegetation of the rock face to reveal historical features. Funded by Convict Trail Project (CTP), alternatively Hunters Hill if insufficient funds.
- Agreement the road sign needs to be replaced with a new one with the correct date in the same place funded by the CTP permission to be organized with Ryde LGA
- Agreement to remove vegetation surrounding CTP plaque. Works to be done by City of Ryde.
- Agreement to poison African Olives to improve established vistas, pruning as needed. Works to be done by Hunters Hill Bushcare Group.
- To be determined, removal of Coral Tree to reveal Convict Corridor, CTP to install aluminium signage.

- To be determined, extent of clearing the bench covered by vegetation, by NPWS.
- To be determined, approximately 1.5m clearing connecting the road to the wharf.

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#### **Bedlam Point - other works there.**

When we arrived at Bedlam Point on Monday 3 June it was to find the carpark opposite the Rockend or Banjo Patterson's grandmothers cottage was blocked off and occupied by a large drilling rig boring a tunnel about 150mm in diameter to carry cables for QC Communications. This seemed to be OK as they were to be 25 to 30 metres deep as they moved offshore. The Bushland management people were not happy that they had cleared a path for a survey line through the vegetation without their knowledge but when we got down to the wharf site we found the line went directly under the wharf remains they had hammered their satellite guide pegs into one of the wharf stones and the sandstone slab behind the wharf. Apologies for the crooked image but it clearly shows the damage to the stonework.



#### **Thomas James Bridge**

Apologies for no photograph this month, I went to drive out to take a photograph only to find signs saying the ferries are closed due to high water from the rain earlier this week. There was not a report on the work done this week, below is what was sent out last week:-

- *Soil nailing and shotcrete at the slips, due to be completed this week*
- *Loading out of material from the slips*
- *Awaiting ground investigation results to determine rock strength for ground anchors*
- *Mass pour for the foundation at the bridge, due to be completed this week*

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



- *Ground investigation works at the bridge*
- *Prep for dish drain at slips*
- *Loading out of material from the slips*
- *Preparation for ground anchors, pending ground investigation results"*

I had hoped to have a photo of the results of the mass concrete pour before the road starts to be rebuilt.

## News from elsewhere

### Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society Outing - June 29th

#### A Visit to the Slab Cottages at Wrights Creek

**Where:** We will meet at the parking area at Wisemans Ferry behind the kiosk.

It is a BYO everything day. Please bring sun-cream and insect repellent and wear sturdy shoes, and bring morning tea if you wish.

**When:** Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June at 10.00am. We will have morning tea and a briefing as to where we are going and what we will see. And we will carpool if required. We will end the tour at St Albans, where we can have lunch if you choose to stay. If you have brought your own, we can have lunch in the park, or if you prefer, you can buy lunch at the pub.

**Cost:** \$15.00 for members and \$20 for non-members.

**Bookings:** essential to [secretary@dlhhs.org.au](mailto:secretary@dlhhs.org.au) or 0439 265 595. We must be able to contact everyone coming along in case of wet weather. Please book by Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June. All are welcome.

### Who do you think you are!

Coming sometime soon, a story that includes a man who worked on the road and had land on the Great North Road between Laguna and Wollombi.

### Cultural Grants now open.

Applications are now open for Royal Australian Historical Society 2024 Cultural Grants! The Cultural Grants program assists historical research and publication of local, community and regional history projects, with up to \$5,000 in funding available. This program is administered by **Create NSW** with the aim to encourage involvement in and completion of historical projects of significance to the community. Applications close on 2 July 2024.

### State Library of NSW: Fellowships

Applications are now open for **The State Library of New South Wales** paid Fellowships! A number of prestigious fellowships are on offer to support the research, writing and teaching of Australian history and culture. They provide money, a room and behind-the-scenes access to Library staff. Topics have ranged from early colonisation through to investigating contemporary life. Applications close on 12 July 2024 at 5pm.

### Dural and District Historical Society

Advance notice:- June Roughly Memorial Lecture - Dr Grace Karsken's will talk about her book the people of the Hawkesbury River. 2pm on 10/08/2024 at Arcadia Community Centre, 136 Arcadia Road, Arcadia.

**And in closing:** This newsletter has been sent from Kalgoorlie by Mari while Eric seeks the elusive gold in the bush nearby.