



Convict Trail Project July & August 2024 Newsletter

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: North from Ramsays Leap to Fernances Culvert. [Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts]

In our virtual trip along the Great North Road to day we will travel from Ramsays Leap to Fernances Culvert. From Ramsays leap the road winds down the hill past Lemmings corner so called for the number of motor bikes that went off the road at the corner before the recently major reconstruction on that corner. Before reaching the bottom of the hill there is some recently exposed walling supporting the road. Right at the bottom of the hill there is a very small valley on the right-hand side of the road. This was a crown reserve and a travelling stock route campsite that may have been used as a convict camp site. It is recorded that one of the convict gangs camped at Mt Simpson was moved to the bottom of the hill. Across the entrance to the next slightly wider valley is a section of older road about 150 meters in length situated to the east or right of the road travelling North. About 75 meters of this earlier alignment is paved with hand knapped, closely packed stones forming a pavement surface. At the southern end where there is also a side cutting, the hand-placed pavement is substantially intact. The road is built up above the surrounding flat to a height of approximately 60 cms and the formation is approximately 3 meters wide. This is an interesting surviving formation which displays an early method of traversing low, wet ground. The road continues along the valley floor with some of the head waters of Wollombi Brook on the western side of the road Finches Creek and Fernances Creek that pass under the road to what was probably a swampy area or lagoon. Here the road climbs up the hill on the western side to Fernances Culvert.



In about the winter of 2011 there was a function held one afternoon at Laguna Hall where a number of speakers talked about Wollombi Valley. The key note speaker was Professor Wayne D. Erskine then at Newcastle University. He specialized in fluvial geomorphology, soil erosion and river management. He explained in the early days of the headwaters of Wollombi Brook there were no cut creek beds as such that now exist but there were flow-ways where the water when it rained flowed over

grassed land and in areas collected in a series of lagoons. The erosion of the land into cut away creek beds only occurred after the introduction of hard hoofed animals. In a paper he wrote included in *The way of the River Environmental Perspectives on the Wollombi* published in 1994 by the Wollombi Land Care Group.

CTP NEWS:

VALE: LORRAINE BANKS BA (history) MA (Applied Science Social Ecology) 2 February 1945 – 27 December 2023

It is with sadness and a sense of loss that we belatedly announce the death of Patricia Lorraine Banks, known to us all as Lorraine, who was the first employee of the Convict Trail Project. In March 2023, while at the Dharug & Lower Hawkesbury HS 40th Birthday, Lorraine was photographed talking with Grace Karskens. Lorraine knew she had less than 12 months to live as the illness that made her resign from the Convict Trail Project in 2000 had finally been diagnosed.



Before commencing work for the Convict Trail Project Lorraine had had a very successful public service career in project development and management, reaching the lower levels of upper management, an achievement for females in the 1990s especially one with children. At 51 she gave up her well-paid job to take on of the challenge of the CTP at half the pay and supposedly 30 hours a week.

Before this in her spare time she had established the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society and has written or partly written, published and edited three books on the history of the lower Hawkesbury. She may have contributed to publications while a public servant but their publications are issued without author acknowledgement. Lorraine first heard about the Great North Road shortly after she purchased her house at the Lower Macdonald in 1978 when she was studying history at Macquarie University with a special interest in the convict period. In 1983 the Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society was established and Lorraine was elected president and was heavily involved in leading walks and exploring and finding bits of the various connecting tracks. In 2011 Lorraine wrote *"in March 1995 Paul (Budde) invited all the Great North Road stakeholders to a meeting at Hornsby Council chambers. From that meeting, with sub-committees formed, and actions delegated, the Convict Trail became a firmly established entity. I found myself leading the history sub-group for the Convict Trail, and we had several meetings exploring aspects of the road, and looking at ways to research and promote the historical significance. Later in the year the year the Convict Trail was successful in obtaining a grant from the NSW Heritage Office to appoint someone to co-ordinate the Project. I was perfectly happy in my public Service job, I thought about it, and decided I could live on half the pay I was getting, and it would be great to work at*

something which I loved and about which I felt so passionate. So I formally and successfully applied to run the Convict Trail Project, and began work in January 1996. Fortunately my previous work experience and involved setting up and running several different organizations and projects from scratch. Here all I had was lots of knowledge about the Great North Road, but a blank sheet in terms of what to do and how best to promote and manage the Road and the Project. That began the most enjoyable, satisfying and frustrating time of my life. Unfortunately, illness forced me to retire after 4 and 1/2 years, but the Convict Trail Project was up and running by then." *The Pick of the Great North Road - Women of the Great North Road " Volume 8 . 2011.*

After she retired Lorraine moved from Settlers Road at Lower Macdonald to another river front house on Dora Creek at Cooranbong, where she was joined by Bill Bottomley till shortly before his death. In her later years Lorraine has lived with her daughter in Canberra. She is survived by her daughter Susan and her son Michael and their families. Lorraine's publications include:

Hawkesbury River history : Governor Phillip, exploration, and early settlement, edited by Jocelyn Powell and Lorraine Banks revised reprint 2011.

The Ferry, the Branch, the Creek Aspects of Hawkesbury History, Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society. Revised edition 2002

Exploring the Great North Road: 1998 forum papers, edited by Lorraine Banks 1998

William Curtin: two convicts, Lorraine Banks & Bill Bottomley 1997

Around & about Wisemans Ferry: a guide to the district, Lorraine Banks & Jocelyn Powell 1993

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The Ferry, the Branch, the Creek: Aspects of Hawkesbury History, Dharug and Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society 1987

Bedlam Point. The CTP has just discovered in late June that the wharf remains at Bedlam Point belong Transport NSW when we received an email saying:-

"Transport for NSW (TfNSW) owns the land of Sydney Harbour and the old Punt Road Wharf at Gladesville is part of our land as it is located below the mean high-water mark. We have been informed by QC Communications that, following their (unauthorised) boring of holes in the rock formations of the old wharf, these were filled by yourself. If this is correct, please advise what material you used to fill the holes so that we can consult with our Heritage Specialists to determine if it is considered suitable." This is yet another group we have to work with.

In telling QC Communications they should fill the holes and later filling them myself to ensure they were filled with the correct material I had first consulted with the Heritage Office to find the Technical Advisory group appears to no longer exist, I next asked questions on the Heritage Advisors email list to get no replies. I then went back to what I had been advised to do when working at Clares Bridge where I used a mix of slacked lime and pozzuolan to repair non weight-bearing breaks in stones. In phoning Westox Building Products to enquire about purchasing some, their technical department advised I should use something they call 'Course Stuff' part A and Pozzuolan part B and sent me a sample as I only needed a small quantity. Coarse Stuff is a mixture of slacked lime and sand.

The drilling work here is now complete and Hunters Hill Council and the NPWS are working on removing some of the vegetation covering the NPWS seats and signs and poisoning some recently self-seeded African Olives in the area where the NPWS seats are. The end of the

road down to the wharf is still covered in weed growth that is currently a small bird habitat.

Thanks to Westox. Many thanks to Westox Building Products, also known as Westegate P/L, for the advice and for supplying me with this sample. This is the second time they have been very helpful to the Great North Road. They specialize in heritage conservation materials especially lime and related to the conservation of sandstone and the removal of salt from salt impregnated masonry.



The left photos show a hole and the right photo shows it filled.

NADOC Week was held from 7-14 July and many of the CTP family would have attended at least one NAIDOC event. Following NADOC week I would like to outline some of the relationship between the Great North Road and the original inhabitants of the area through which it passes, especially from Wisemans Ferry to Wollombi. It had long been thought that the GNR follows song-lines or Aboriginal pathways. But to my knowledge no one who has worked on examining song-lines has looked at the potential song-lines the GNR was built along. The theory that it was built along song-lines is reinforced by what Coral Edwards an Aboriginal woman who worked as a Cultural Educator told Bill Bottomley in 1996 when he was compiling an oral history about the GNR *"By Force of Maul and Wedge"*. Page 96 *"You can always tell where tracks were because you always find Aboriginal sites on the side of the roads. Some sites weren't right on the edge the road, obviously, but most old tracks have sites along them where people camped. There are little tracks like this that go through the State Forests and everything, that we know are the old tracks because of the sites that can be found along them."*

In several places along or near the GNR can be found grinding groves and art sites, as well as sites suitable for camping.

Thomas James Bridge The report of Hawkesbury City Council for 12 June reads:

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

- *Second delivery of steel for the Wisemans Ferry side of the bridge*
- *Steel fixers on site tying steel for the Wisemans Ferry side of the bridge*
- *Preparation works for the installation of the dish drain along the rock face side of the road*
- *Pouring of the kerb for the dish drain*
- *Loading out of material from the slips*

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

- *Information from the designers on the St Albans reinforcement and ground anchor designs*
- *Continuation of steel tying on the Wisemans Ferry side of the bridge*
- *Continuation of the preparation works for the installation of the dish drain along the rock face side of the road*
- *Loading out of material from the slips*

Due to sickness there is no recent photograph of the site

The 2024 June Roughley Memorial Lecture: Presented by Professor Grace Karskens' highly acclaimed book, *People of the River: Lost Worlds of Early Australia*, is a history of both the Aboriginal people and the settlers on Dyarubbin, the Hawkesbury/Nepean River, from deep time to the nineteenth century. Grace will also speak about her collaborative work with the Dharug and Darkinjung people of the Real Secret River: a Dyarubbin project.

NOTE: - Change of Venue

When: Saturday, 10 August at 2 pm.

Where: Galston Uniting Church, 11 School Road, Galston.

Admission: Free with a gold coin for afternoon tea. Homemade marmalade and jams on sale. A pleasant afternoon in a rural setting. All welcome!

Enquiries: Michael Bell, 02 9653 1365 or 0466 341 729.

And in closing My thanks once again go to Liz Roberts who provides all the copy for this newsletter. All I do is get it ready for publication, this time from Waitara [so good to be home].

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