



Convict Trail Project

September 2024 Newsletter

A VIRTUAL WALK UP THE GNR: At Fernances Crossing and Murrays Run.

[Contributed by Elizabeth Roberts] Today we will visit the culverts at Fernances Crossing and Murrays Run, and explore why they are so named. Today both these culverts are on short abandoned loops on what were tight corners at the heads of two gullies. This section of road near Mt Finch was referred to in the 1820s as Murray's Valley or the back of Murray's Farm. They provided a major obstacle for the Road Gangs working here as the road crossed from one side of the valley to the other through a swamp, over several creeks and up steep hillsides – all requiring arduous work. This work was mostly carried out by Road Party 27 with assistance from Iron Gang 7 for a short period. What remains of this hard work are the two abandoned large stone culverts, each built slightly differently and known as Fernances Crossing and Murrays Run. Instead of driving over them, one can now pull off the road to look at them.



When travelling north the first you reach is Fernances Crossing [left]. For some reason have crashed into the hollow area in front of the culvert although it is not a particularly sharp bend. In the last crash, the name sign erected by the CTP was removed with the vehicle and had not yet been replaced. Both culverts are of similar but different construction. Both were on the centre of a curved stone retaining wall that carried the road over the heads of small gullies.

In both, the stones are laid in random irregular and uneven courses, the stones have rough uneven margins and a variety of sizes. At Fernances Crossing, the culvert outlet lintel is carved into a decorative semicircle in front of a square box culvert whereas at Murrays Run the outlet is an arch with a key stone in front of a box culvert. This detailing is extremely elaborate and decorative and are the only known example of its kind.

These two large culverts are the only ones that survive in this section of the Road. [from GNR Conservation Management Plan].

Fernances Crossing is named after the Macdonald Valley family whose sons moved up to take up Conditional Purchases in the 1870s. [Blaxland Parish Map – H. Reid].



Murrays Run [above] is named after Andrew Murray, a horticulturist who came to NSW with Macarthur's plants in 1817 and was later appointed Overseer of Government Domain in Parramatta in late 1822. After experiencing a severe drought, Murray, together with his brother-in-law James Milson, and George Blaxland took their cattle to the Wollombi Valley where they left their stock at what became Murrays Run, Blaxland Run and Milsons Run. Later they were granted land, Murray getting 1280 acres up a valley to the east of the Road. Murray ran stock on this land but never lived here [The Pick – Volume 3]
NOTE – for many years the Wollombi Community have looked after these culverts and have paid to have the grass around the culverts mown regularly. This is greatly appreciated.

CTP NEWS:

Thomas James Bridge: Work at the Thomas James Bridge continues with the following works are being carried out this week and next.

- Drilling of the ground anchors of the St Albans side of the bridge, subject to the finalisation of design.
- Works on the reinforcement steel scheduling for the retaining walls on the Wisemans Ferry side.
- Final application of spray grass has been completed
- Anticipated completion of the ground anchor drilling on the St Albans side of the bridge by the end of next week
- Deliveries of the steel reinforcement for both the St Albans and Wisemans Ferry side of the bridge – these are expected to continue until the end of the month
- Blinding shotcrete layer at CH 300 slips early next week, followed by final shotcreting layers over the coming weeks

Work on Chainage 300 landslips are continuing, with the production nails expected to be finished over the next week. Shotcrete is scheduled to be completed over the coming weeks, which will bring this project to completion. The site is located on the Southwestern side of Settlers Road, 300m West of the Wisemans Ferry Vehicle Ramp.

Please note that Central Coast Council has engaged Delaney Civil to carry out landslide remediation works to the West of the Wisemans Ferry. These works will continue to take place between the hours of 6:30am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and from 6:30am to 2pm on Saturdays. Please expect continuous truck movements during these hours.

Please continue to adhere to the traffic conditions on the temporary access road:

- 42 tonne weight limit / 20km/h speed limit
- Maximum vehicle length 12.5m / Articulated trucks are not permitted.

Delaney Civil prioritises the safety and well-being of the community. The project is progressing according to the program, however external factors and unexpected circumstances during the landslide repairs can occasionally lead to extended delays. Delaney Civil acknowledges that these delays are inconvenient and apologises for the inconvenience caused, every effort is being made to minimise disruptions while the project is completed as efficiently as possible and to the highest safety standards.

[Update from Hawkesbury Council]

Road Repairs at Bucketty

When viewed on 28.8.2024, it seems that all the filling was completed and a temporary fence has been constructed along the top. This collapsed area was filled in stepped stages. Each step has a firm edge made of black landscaping plastic wrapped over metal reinforcing with the fill tamped by a large machine. Geotech fabric was installed between the original work and the repair. The workers have now moved onto two smaller washed out areas further up the road.



And in closing In the next newsletter there will be details of the CTP AGM for 2024 so please contact me [Mari] if you have anything that you would like to have added to the agenda.