

GREAT NORTH ROAD

The Great North Road is a 240km convict built masterpiece constructed between 1826 and 1836 to provide an overland route from Sydney to Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. Much of the original convict built road remains in use today although a lot of the original surface is well buried under bitumen. Convict built remains, such as stone retaining walls, pick dressed cuttings, culverts, bridges and stone cut drains, can be seen when driving along the road, or when walking in Dharug and Yengo National Parks.

THE CONVICT TRAIL

The Convict Trail is the name for the Great North Road, the surrounding land, and historic buildings. The Convict Trail Project Inc. (CTP) is a community based organisation with the objectives of the care, protection and promotion of the Great North Road.



Above:Clares Bridge: Cover: "Hangman's" Cave, Devines Hill;; Inside: Walling Devines Hill

To achieve its objectives the CTP works with many partners, including the NSW Heritage Office, councils, Dept. of Corrective Services, NPWS, RTA & local tourism associations. The Project brings together community groups, individual members, tourism groups, State Government agencies and local councils including both Baulkham Hills and Hornsby Councils. For more information, including "conservation partners" visit the CTP website.

This brochure is part of a series of area specific electronic brochures written by the Convict Trail Project and available from the website below. The content of this brochure has been compiled in good faith but is published without responsibility in law or otherwise for its accuracy and without any assumption of duty of care by the Convict Trail Project. The sites are listed to allow you to appreciate how much evidence remains and what is supporting the road you are driving on.

Remember, do not trespass on private property. Many of the convict relics noted in this guide are used for traffic. You should only view them from safe locations.

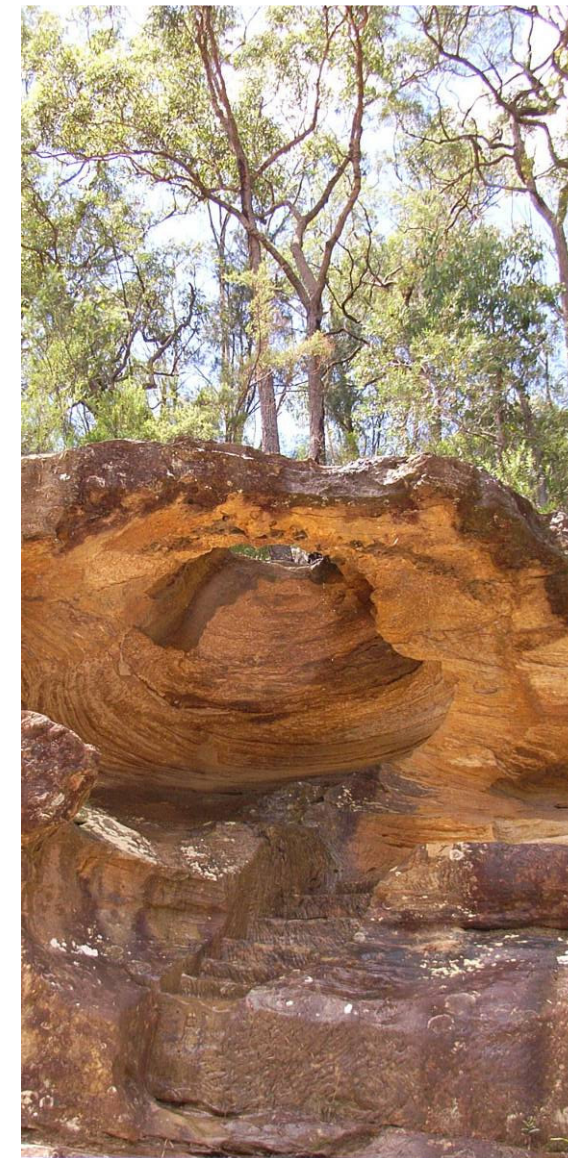
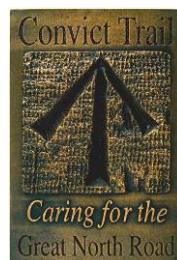
For extra information purchase an "Explore the Convict Trail" booklet or visit the Convict Trail Website www.convicttrail.org.

New members welcome.

Write to: CTP, 7 Coolabah Close,

Thornleigh NSW 2120

Photos: E.A.Roberts

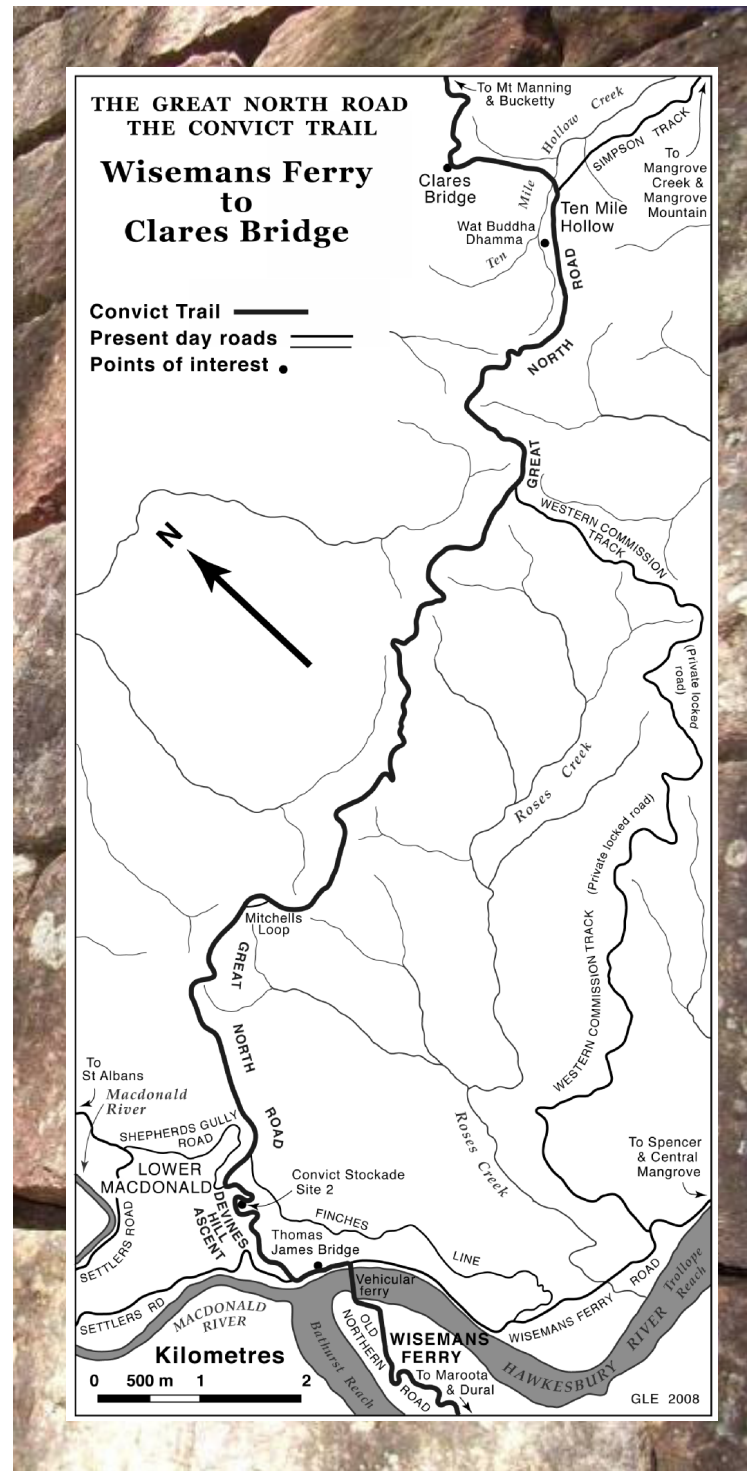


The Great North Road
The Convict Trail

Wisemans Ferry to Clares Bridge

Wisemans Ferry to Clares Bridge

This first part of this section of the Great North Road is called Devines Hill. It contains the most spectacular evidence of the road and in early 2008 was nominated for World Heritage Listing. Here the National Parks & Wildlife Service, which manages the road as far as Ten Mile Hollow, has installed many interpretative signs. The ferry, opened by Wiseman in 1827, is the oldest continuously operating ferry in Australia. On leaving it and turning left, the road crosses Thomas James Bridge. Built in 1830, it is the oldest functioning bridge on mainland Australia (see separate brochure). The road then enters the Dharug National Park and climbs the steep Devines Hill, where substantial work was involved in cutting away the hillside and building up retaining walls. Limited by the size of their handtools, the convicts removed sandstone to achieve the required road level. In some parts they had to cut away five layers of stone from the rock-face while building massive retaining walls to support the outer edge of the road. Graffiti from 1830 can be seen high on one cut face. Visit Hangmans Cave. It was so named in the late 1890s to impress and horrify tourists. (In fact, hanging could only be ordered by the Supreme Court and usually took place in the gaol yard.) The cave had a solid roof in the 1830s and was probably used as dry on-site storage. Round the corner and above the cave is the site of the stockade for Iron Gang No.3. It had a well which offered a



dependable supply of water. From 1830 onwards, soldiers were camped outside the stockade in order to guard this Iron Gang twenty-four hours a day. Farther up the hill, the Shepherds Gully track joins the western side of the road. This track was possibly built at the same time as the road. Giving access to the Macdonald River valley, it allowed the collection of timber from Wrights Creek and the procuring of fresh water from the river during drought. On the east is Finchs Line. This was the original ascent, abandoned in 1828 as too steep and too long. (The Devines Hill route cut off two miles – about three kilometres.) This is the end of the section nominated for World Heritage and is the farthest most day trippers will walk. From here the road lies along the ridge-line and is now mostly travelled only by intrepid bushwalkers, cyclists or work vehicles. It is then joined from the south by the Western Commission Track. This was built for the construction and service of the high-voltage electricity pylons and is now used for vehicular access to the Wat Buddha Dhamma retreat. From this junction to Ten Mile Hollow the Great North Road can at times be very busy. (Walkers should listen for motor vehicles.) Ten Mile Hollow, now a primitive camping area with a pit toilet but no water, was originally the site of a stockade, then of an inn. Here Simpsons Track heads east (separate brochure). One kilometre north of Ten Mile Hollow is Clares Bridge, built in 1830 at the head of a sweeping gully, where its design displayed the extensive skills of the road's builders.