

BYGONE BROOKLYN

By Tom Richmond

THE DEVIL'S ELBOW

Almost on a daily basis, people pass one of the oldest pieces of heritage in the district without knowing that they are doing so. The first road to arrive at Brooklyn from the south was the old Peat's Ferry Road, constructed in 1848. It was so early that there were strill convicts working on it.



Stone work on the Devil's Elbow, showing the small bridge. Some of stone may have been used at Kangaroo Point. The site can be identified from the position of the small weir.

Parts of the road can still be seen in Muogamurra Sanctuary, where it ran along the top of the ridge, descending in a very steep feature known as the "Devil's Elbow". Most of this descent has now been destroyed by later road works, but a small stone wall can still be seen on the side of the hill, above the Pacific Highway, a little up the road from the Rest Park.

A story has been passed down over a period that the bridge on the original elbow collapsed on a number of occasions and that a convict was offered his freedom if he could build one to last. In fact, it lasted nearly a century before it was blown up in 1942 as a defence precaution.

Pictures taken during the construction of the Pacific Highway show that substantial fill was placed over the original descent so that motor vehicles could use it more comfortably. That fill has now been removed.

When a bushfire has cleared the growth away, it is still possible to identify several aspects of the Devil's Elbow. Drill marks for gunpowder can be seen on the rock face and a horse watering point still contains water fed from a second small weir on the northern side of the Elbow.

A rock feature on the approach to the bridge was known as the Sentry Box. It is now well above the road but in former years it would have been close to the road level.

Younger and more agile people can still climb onto the roadway above the bridge, but only a short piece remains because the Expressway cut through it.

At the top of the hill, above the Elbow, there is a branch road that formerly led all the way to Peat's Bight. It was known as "St John's Road" because it led to the a spot opposite the Anglican Church of St John on Bar Island. Before the Highway was built, volunteers carried out repair work on the old road and some motor vehicles came right down to Kangaroo Point. Others baulked at the dangerous descent and left their vehicles at the top of the hill before walking the remainder of the distance.

It is interesting to note that motor vehicles could reach Peat's Bight more readily than they could reach Kangaroo Point. Presumably, had there been owners of cars living at places such as Milson's Passage, it would have been logical for them to leave their vehicles at Peat's Bight, a short distance away.



In 1929, a vehicle is seen descending from the Devil's Elbow to the Pacific Highway below. The old road was used to provide access to the construction of the new one.