

## BYGONE BROOKLYN

By Tom Richmond

## THE RESERVOIR



The old railway reservoir, high in the hills behind Brooklyn. The height of the wall has been reduced by National Parks for some reason that it best knows. It still remains an attractive stretch of water in beautiful surrounds.

When the railway reached Brooklyn in 1887, the climb up from the river, known as the “Cowan Bank” caused an immediate problem.

The motive power for the railway was steam and to create the steam, there had to be water. Many of the early locomotives laboured up the hill and a great deal of water was required. There was no water supply to Brooklyn, so they had to create their own.

This was done by placing a dam wall across what was originally known as “Deep Creek”. This formed a large reservoir and the water was piped to the railway station through fibrolite pipes. The water was piped to properties in the village centre as well as being used on the railway.

By 1902, during which the weather was very dry, the water supply was proving inadequate. A water train was used by the railway to fill tanks at the edge of the line near Deep Creek, bringing the water daily from Wyong.

At the same time, men were put to work enlarging the empty reservoir. By

August, 1902, the men, with the use of horses and carts, had deepened the reservoir and stored the sand from it on the river side of the dam wall. Heavy rain filled the new work, but men were still employed on the enlargement in September, when a dynamite fuse acted too quickly, ripping a shovel from a worker’s grasp and sending it into the face of a fellow worker.

A large amount of the spoil that had been placed to the front of the wall was carried down into the Inlet, contributing to siltation. To try to stabilise the sand, trees were planted, forming an unusual stand that is still identifiable.

In 1917, the railway applied for permission to construct a second dam. This one, which is smaller, is visible from the railway line above the school. Even after the arrival of the town water supply, the two dams continued to supply water for the steam engines. As the demands of railway engines became greater, it was not uncommon to find the reservoirs empty.

When they were not, of course, the extensive sheet of water, particularly at the older and larger dam, made swimming a strong local temptation for juvenile locals. Later, of course, when the reservoir became better known, it developed into a camping area off the Great North Walk.

Its placid waters offer little evidence of the very heavy use to which it was put in the halcyon days of steam on the railway.