

Izzard's property was sold to Alfred E. Burton in 1904, and again to John Gray Wood in 1935.

Peat's land was largely retained by his heirs, with Mrs J. Moss and John Campbell and Co. still owning part of it in 1921. The other part had been sold to Alfred E. Burton.

William Henry Wood had purchased Britten's block in 1906. He also bought part of Sullivan's original parcel in about 1908. The remarkable "Ned" Higgins bought the other part of that land. He was a Hornsby Shire Councillor. Up to his death in 1929, he had orchard holdings along Marramarra Creek. His family built their own boats and Ned became a well-known personality in the District up to his death in 1929.

In effect, Jack Wood gained control or ownership of the whole Crater area during the 1920s and 1930s. He operated a dairy on Seymour's former property, now known as "The Old Dairy". Cattle were moved from the Crater to Seymour's Gully by means of St John's Road, the Highway and Brooklyn Road.

Activities were interrupted by the Second World War. When the Japanese advance of 1942 appeared to leave Australia vulnerable to attack, preparations were made to defend Sydney in case of attack. Tunnels were dug under major roads, so that explosive charges could be placed in position to cut the roads and delay the enemy. Brooklyn was considered to be very important in the defence plans. There was a permanent army presence, guarding the railway bridge from attack. Guns were placed on either side of the River and a submarine boom constructed. At one stage, an army camp was established in Peat's Crater.

It was thought that an attack on Sydney could be possible. One strategy available to the enemy was to land at the Hawkesbury and move overland towards the City. It was considered vital to destroy the roads that may have been used if the railway and the Highway had been blown up. Consequently, explosives were placed under St John's Road and a tunnel may still be seen there. A bridge in the Crater was demolished, as was the bridge at the Devil's Elbow. Small vessels were rounded up and taken to Crosslands, where they were stacked up for the duration of the War. Unfortunately,

a flood swept them away and many were lost.

The wartime period brought about a number of permanent changes. The destruction of the bridge at the Devil's Elbow isolated the Peat's Crater area from Brooklyn, although it could still be accessed from the Hilltop junction of the Highway with Peat's Ferry Road.



The "Devil's Elbow", a feature on the old road. The bridge was destroyed in 1942 as a wartime measure.

MARVELLOUS MUOCAMURRA



INTRODUCTORY NOTES BY
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THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY LATER CRATER OWNERS

When the railway reached Brooklyn in 1887, the road ceased to be the principal means of transport to and from the River. The traffic had probably never been heavy, but now it declined to a trickle. Without use, there was no demand for repair. The road began to deteriorate. Its decline was hastened by traffic using it during the duplication of the railway. In 1909, Arthur Small wrote to Hornsby Council complaining that the road had become "almost impassable" in wet weather and that it was, in fact, dangerous for vehicles.

Mr Small was referring to horse-drawn vehicles. As the Great War progressed, and the advantages of motor vehicles were seen, a new demand was created for road surfaces good enough to carry cars and trucks. Many claims have been made as to the first vehicle to cross the old road to Brooklyn, but the earliest authenticated instance appears to have been in 1917, when an unknown motorist drove down the Old Peat's Ferry Road to Brooklyn. He then loaded his car on to the train to take it to Gosford.

The journey could not have been achieved comfortably. The road badly needed repair work, but Hornsby Council was not prepared to spend the large amount needed. Locally, the matter came to a head when Brooklyn residents, in 1923, learned that they were to be asked to pay "Bridge Tax". This was a special levy imposed on the Councils that would benefit from the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Led by the fervent Irishman, William Henry Wood, Brooklyn demanded that the road be rendered suitable for vehicles. If Brooklyners were to be charged the tax, they should have access to the road system.

The matter was rapidly taken out of the hands of the locals. Newcastle Council convened a conference in 1924 and the Councils requested a grant from the Commonwealth to build a new road from Sydney to Newcastle. While arguments waged about the most appropriate route to be taken, a car found its way down and back from Brooklyn along the old road. From then on, numbers of cars chanced the journey, although some preferred not to make the final descent. Volunteers, mainly from Brooklyn, worked to clear the road, repair drains and mend surface damage. The old road had been well built and it was still to serve an important role in the construction of its replacement.

In August, 1925, a sum of money was allocated for the construction of the new Sydney to Newcastle Road. It would be the first major road built in New South Wales with motor vehicles in mind. The newly formed Main Roads Board was to control the project, with major input from local Councils. By September, 1925, the new road had been surveyed and notices had been placed on the old road warning that it should not be used because of the dangers caused by blasting. Nevertheless, many cars continued to use it.

By 1926, the construction had become huge. The *Advocate* described it:

One has to see the work to realise what is being done, to see the army of men - over 400 of them - the rough rugged country, and the difficulties of getting supplies. The matter of supplying water is perhaps the biggest problem for there is practically none on the route, and in addition to the water for drinking, there is the problem of water for domestic use and the scores of horses on the job. Thus along the route are now gathered forty odd square tanks to which water has to be drawn each day, first of all by the Railway Department to the siding at Cowan Station and from there by cart and by lorry to the various tanks. One sees here and there a moving camp and on the top of Hill 80, a regular township in canvas. At Cowan there is at present an up to date blacksmith's shop and a neat weatherboard office made in sections which can be unbolted and moved to a new position and re-erected overnight.

The men who were working on the Highway formed large camps. Life in these camps has been recorded. In an interview quoted in Mick Joffe's *Yarns and Photos*, Bert Jackson has related that his mother was a cook for the men. She had a kitchen camp near "Ocean View" in the vicinity of the present "Wedgewood" buildings.

Later, she had a camp where Oliver's service station later stood.

The men went down tracks onto "the highway" to work. They used the hilltop because the old road gave them access for supplies and because it was flat enough for about 100 men to camp.

His mother's kitchen was just a big hessian shed for feeding the men who were working on the highway. The meals were cooked in pots or in camp ovens. Cut lunches were sent down each day to the men.

By May, 1930, the Highway was concreted and ready for use. The crossing at the Hawkesbury was achieved by means of vehicular ferries, with the *George Peat* and the *Frances Peat* being specially constructed for the purpose.

The Pacific Highway was the first major road built with motor vehicle traffic in mind. It was immediately popular and queues of cars were common at both the Kangaroo Point and Mooney Mooney ferry approaches.



The land parcels in Peat's Crater changed hands as the years went by. John Crumpton's holding was subdivided after his death and, by 1921, a number of people held sections of it. They were: Thomas Crumpton, E.De Gyulay, John Vicars, Robert Crumpton, Mrs Violet Vicars and Allen Bartholemew.