SECTION III

BUILDING THE ROAD I - HISTORY
1. Discovery and Original Survey

The search for a suitable line of road between Sydney and the Hunter Valley began in 1819 with Howe's first expedition and did not end until 1833, when the final branches of the Great North Road were surveyed. The Bulga Road (see Map 3) had, from its discovery in 1820, never been considered a suitable line for the permanent north road because of both its ruggedness and its circuitousness in relation to the settlements in the lower Hunter Valley. John Howe himself was forced to "... unload the packhorses and manhandle the load 'into the valley called Puttee'\(^{1}\) and both Alan Cunningham and Peter Cunningham later described its precipitousness and length.\(^{2}\) Almost immediately after the opening of the road in March 1823, Major Morriaett, the Commandant at Newcastle, made an overland journey to Windsor which is presumed to have been the first in the vicinity of the Great North Road. The *Sydney Gazette* reported on 1st May 1823 that he "... arrived at Windsor from Newcastle after a most fatiguing journey of 109 miles which occupied nine days", and that, owing to the mountainous nature of the country, it was believed that extreme difficulty would be experienced in effecting an inland communication with the Hunter River.\(^{3}\)

A few months later Surveyor Robert Hoddle was instructed to investigate another area west of the Bulga Road as a possible land-link with the north. On his return from surveying Bell's newly-discovered line of road over the Blue Mountains he was directed:

... when on the range above the source of the Grose River (to) proceed a few miles to the Northward in order to observe the nature of the country in that direction that some opinion may be formed of the probability of finding a better road to the
settlement on Hunters River than the present one in use. (4)

In Hoddle's opinion "... cattle would find nothing to support existence" on such a line, and the location was even more roundabout than that of the Bulga Road. (5)

The repeated efforts made to locate a line of road and continual references to the extremely rugged and difficult country separating Sydney and the Hunter Valley were reminiscent of the earlier colony, hemmed in during the 1800's by the inhospitable and impenetrable ridges and gorges of the Blue Mountains. As in the case of the Blue Mountains, several colonists did very well out of the search for a northern line. John Howe (as has been discussed) was allowed a grazing permit and was granted land at Jerry's Plains for his discovery of the Bulga Road, rough and convoluted as it was. (6) In 1825 John Marquis Blaxland, the grandson of Gregory Blaxland, traced another line to the north, which, according to Mitchell's "General Plan of the Roads Northward from Sydney" (see Map 11), followed the line of present day Settlers Road along the east bank of the MacDonald River through St. Albans (see Map 2), joining the Great North Road in the vicinity of Laguna. (7) However, Mitchell was vague about its whereabouts - when Blaxland in 1829 made his claim for the discovery of the line, the former confused it with the Bulga Road, describing it thus:

... parallel to the ridge which extends from Wisemans towards the valley of the Wollombi, along which the present road is in a state of progress, there is another ridge on the west ... along the summit of this there is also a road named the Bulga Road or Blaxland's Road. (8)

Blaxland was granted 600 acres at Broke on the Wollombi Brook in renumeration for his efforts. (9) (see Map 1).
Another line was discovered over the ridges from Wisemans Ferry to Maitland in 1825 by Richard Wiseman, son of Solomon Wiseman. While Heneage Finch is generally credited with the location of the Great North Road (10), it appears that he simply surveyed the line discovered and revealed to him by Richard Wiseman. The latter, like Blaxland, later reminded the government of his contribution and the repayment due to him:

That at the time it was in contemplation of discovering an inland road to Wallis Plains (your) Memorialist undertook the task of discovering one upon the promise of ... a farm of land ... Your Memorialist having succeeded ... prays Your Excellency will be pleased to order ... such portion of land as (you) may see fit. (11)

In 1830 he was granted 640 acres in the Wollombi Valley "... in lieu of any promise which may have been made by Sir Thomas Brisbane". He also applied for and received land there to establish an inn, "The Traveller's Rest", which served the Great North Road. (12) (See Map 1.)

The original line of the Great North Road between Baulkham Hills and Maitland was officially traced by Heneage Finch in September 1825. The Australian in January 1826 reported a second expedition along the marked line in December '825 - "Surveyor Finch arrived at Newcastle on 23 December after travelling overland from Sydney by a new track crossing the Hawkesbury River at Wiseman's Farm". (13) It went on to state that the journey had been "difficult and fatiguing" but that the route was much shorter than that discovered by Blaxland.

Finch traced the line at least as far as the vicinity of Richard Wiseman's and Andrew Murray's properties on the Wollombi as shown on Archives Offices Map Nos. 4987A and 4987B (see Map 4). Apparently he did not consider it necessary to
show the line from there to Wallis Plains on his plan, the terrain being easy and the line direct. The first section branched to the north from the Windsor Road at Pye's Corner (Baulkham Hills) towards Castle Hill, Dural and Wisemans Ferry. At Baulkham Hills, John Pye had established the Lamb and Lark Inn in 1822, "... at the junction of the Windsor and Castle Hill Roads", and the road between Parramatta and Castle Hill had been surveyed by Grimes and Meehan in 1802. (14) The road from Castle Hill to Dural was marked out in June 1817 by Surveyor Meehan. (15) Finch's line thus incorporated existing roads, or tracks, between Baulkham Hills and Dural. From the latter point he simply followed the ridge to its termination at Wiseman's property and there marked a line descending towards the river through present-day Portions 96 and 120, Parish of Cornelia, which ran along part of present-day River Road, skirting the base of the mountain to the original ferry crossing (see Map 4 and Fig. 82). The latter was approximately a mile below the present crossing place (see Map 6). Finch's descent to Wisemans must have proven impractical, since the one constructed by Warner and Simpson was a different line altogether, incorporating a zig-zag descent of the precipitous ridge (see Figs. 16 and 82). There were still more alternatives open to Finch. He marked on his survey the junction with the Maroota-McGrath's Hill Road, a line which was surveyed in 1827 and eventually superseded Finch's line later in the nineteenth century. The junction with another ascent to the Hawkesbury was also marked, on the line of present-day Laughtondale Road. (16) It is possible that both these alternatives were early tracks established by Solomon Wiseman as a land-link with Windsor.

Finch's original ascent of the north bank of the Hawkesbury River (see Maps 4, 6 and Fig. 82) was also later abandoned, although in this case its construction was almost complete
when the new line was selected. Finch no doubt simply marked the trees and surveyed the line discovered by Richard Wiseman earlier that year. It is possible that the latter's discovery prompted the survey in the first place. As Map 4 shows, the line wound along the ridge top through isolated, uninhabited and unnamed country. The titles Ten Mile Hollow, Frog Hollow, Judge Dowling Rangea, Hungry Flat, Sampson's Pass and the names of various mountains were only given after the arrival of travellers, the convict gangs and Sir Thomas Mitchell. Finch included on his survey map information such as the location of steep ascents and descents, narrow ridges and rocky sections. At the present-day site of Wollombi, the line swung to the northeast towards Maitland and Newcastle, crossing the considerably easier terrain in that area in an almost direct line. Finch was also granted land, and, like Blaxland and Wiseman, selected it on the line of the future Great North Road. In 1826 he was assigned the survey of the Wollombi Valley and of the allotments for the Royal Veterans. He reported:

That part which I have written Government Reserve (on the plan) appears to me eligible for this purpose as well as on account of the quality of the land as of the probability of it becoming a thoroughfare of a future period. (17)

Planning of towns, allotments and reserves took place on the assumption of the future importance of the Great North Road. For himself Finch proposed "selecting a track at the lower part (of the valley) on the west side", (18) which he named Laguna. The symmetrically designed stone residence, Laguna House (still extant), was probably built by him in the early 1830's. (19)
As will be discussed in the following sections, Finch's line was subsequently criticised, and substantially altered by Thomas Mitchell in 1829. Mitchell also added several branches to the upper and middle Hunter Valley.

The extremely rapid settlement of the Hunter Valley and its obvious potential as the centre of colonial wealth induced the government to view the need for a Northern road as a matter of urgency. The Bulga Road was regarded as unsuitable almost before its official opening in 1823. Enterprising colonists took advantage of this situation, discovering lines of road and receiving grants, whether their discoveries were useful or not, as marks of appreciation for their efforts (see Plates 3, 4). The fact that Blaxland, Wescan and Finch all selected land located on the proposed line reiterates the firm contemporary conviction that the Great North Road would soon be a permanent, busy and important thoroughfare.

What also emerges from the examination of these early expeditions is that the establishment of such roads was not simply a matter of the government's assignment of an intrepid surveyor to blaze a trail, duly followed by the sequence of construction, opening and usage. (20) The original line marked by Finch was, rather, a conglomeration of existing roads, tracks, and newly discovered lines, governed more generally by the overall constraints of geography and the requirements of demography. It was used almost immediately by travellers whose wheels established a bush track and who no doubt made their own improvements long before the gangs reached the various sections. Finch's line was also considerably altered several times during the construction period. Sections were added and deviations made in response to engineering problems and according to Mitchell's grandiose schemes. Alternative lines were still being considered as
late as 1828 and the lines to the upper and middle Hunter were not actually surveyed until 1833. Ironically, much of the road was doomed to abandonment before it was completed and in some areas even before it was begun.
SECTION III/1

DISCOVERY AND ORIGINAL SURVEY

Notes


2. Ibid.; Peter Cunningham, Two Years in N.S.W., p. 75.

3. Sydney Gazette, 1 May 1823.


5. Ibid.

6. T.M. Perry, Australia's First Frontier - The Spread of Settlement in New South Wales 1788-1829, p. 63.

7. Wood, p. 60; With reference to Mitchell's "General Plan of Roads Northward from Sydney" (see Map 11), it is more likely that Blaxland's Road followed the line of the present-day St. Albans-Wollombi Road to its junction with the Great North Road at Mt. Manning, rather than at Laguna.

8. Mitchell to Macleay, 9 April 1829, A.O.N.S.W., S.J. to C.S.


12. Harrington to Mitchell, 8 May 1830 and 13 April 1830, A.O.N.S.W., Colonial Secretary to Surveyor General (hereafter C.S. to S.G.).


15. Ibid. p. 258.

16. Shown on the Lands Department map of Parish of Frederick, County of Cumberland, between Portions 81 and 2, with a reference to Road Map 3. 8118.

17. Finch to Oxley, 3 February 1826, A.O.N.S.W., Surveyors to Surveyor General in Letters to Surveyor General from Private Individuals and Officials hereafter S. To S.G.).

18. Ibid.
19. E. Hickey (ed.), et.al., Wollombi Valley, Description and History, Wollombi Valley Progress Association, 1980, p. 27. See also N.S.W. Calendar and Directory, 1892.

20. This impression is given by most accounts to date. See Upton; W.S. Parkes, Village on the Wollombi-Millfield 1828-1868; James Jervis, "The Great North Road" in J.R.A.H.S., Vol. 16, 1930, 102-111.
2. The Roads and Bridges Department

In order to administer the convict road gang system and the construction of roads, Darling established the Roads and Bridges Department at Parramatta in 1826. William Dumaresq was appointed Inspector of Roads and Bridges and his duties were:

... to determine on the direction of any new line of road and the general superintendence of 22 road parties and about 750 men distributed over a space of 250 to 300 miles. (1)

Lieutenants C. Stoddart and H. Vackall assisted him by "visiting and superintending the above parties". (2) The gangs at this early stage were supervised by members of Dumaresq's company, the Royal Staff Corps, but this soon proved unsuccessful. (3) As McNicoll points out, the failure of the scheme was not surprising:

... the soldiers had no incentive to keep convicts working, unlike civilian supervisors with prospects of promotion in the convict service; and they were in danger of being corrupted by the men in the road gangs. With the approval of the authority in London the company was disbanded. (4)

The soldiers were replaced by convict overseers about May 1827. Wilford, who succeeded Dumaresq as Surveyor of Roads and Bridges on April 1 1827 (5), supplied a lengthy document, "Instructions to Assistant Surveyors and Overseers" in May that year. (6) Each major road was allocated one Assistant Surveyor, usually a military man with at least some engineering experience, and each gang one overseer. At this stage the Department had five members, including Lieutenant Jonathon Warner who was assigned the construction of the Great North Road in 1827. (7) It continued to be located at Parramatta, a situation described by Mitchell as "convenient", as the roads to the North, South, East and West
radiated from it. (8)

In February 1828 Lieutenant Hughes succeeded Wilford and was replaced in June that year by Major Edmund Lockyer (see Table 1). (9) The latter remodelled the gangs, directing that each Iron Gang should contain fifty men and be supervised by one principal overseer and three assistants, and each Road Party of fifty unironed men supervised by one principal and two assistant overseers. He also established Bridge Parties comprising twenty-five of the better-behaved and more skilled convicts, including "rough carpenters, quarrymen and stone masons", which were to be supervised by one overseer. (10) The Department's activities were divided into five districts - Parramatta, Bathurst, Lower Branch (Wisemans Ferry), Newcastle and Argyle, each with its own gangs, Assistant Surveyor and overseers. (11) It became progressively more complex in its organisation and correspondence. By 1829 the office duties of an Assistant Surveyor included "Entry of Records, Road Department Correspondence, Weekly and Monthly Returns, Victualling Ledgers, Ration Tickets, (recording of) Teamsters, Runaways and other business ...". (12) Lockyer instigated the requirements of frequent reports of immense bureaucratic detail and the use of numerous standard forms for orders and reports.

In late 1829, Lockyer was informed that the Department of Roads and Bridges was to be made a sub-branch of the Surveyor General's Department, apparently as a result of machinations on Mitchell's part. (13) Lockyer became Assistant Surveyor of Roads and Bridges responsible to Mitchell and the latter directed in January 1830 that:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveyors of Roads and Bridges stationed at Parramatta</th>
<th>Assistant Surveyors stationed on the Great North Road at:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capt. William J. Dumaresq (1) 1826-April 1827</td>
<td>Lower Portland Head (Wisemans Ferry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieut. Wilford</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1827-Feb. 1828</td>
<td>Wollombi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieut. Hughes</td>
<td>Cockfighter's Creek (Warkworth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 1828-June 1828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maj. Edmund Lockyer (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1828-Jan 1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Nicholson (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1830-Aug. 1835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STATIONS AMALGAMATED**

- Renage Finch
  - Feb. 1830-Mar. 1831
- L.V. Dulhunty
  - Mar. 1831-May 1834

**STATIONS AMALGAMATED**

- L.V. Dulhunty
  - May 1834-Feb. 1835
- P.G. Ogilvie
  - Feb. 1835-May 1836

1. The position was then known as "Inspector of Roads and Bridges".
2. The Roads and Bridges Department was attached to the Surveyor General's Department during 1830 and after 1831.
... it will now be necessary that a Principal Branch of it, embracing the correspondence with the Government and with the Assistant Surveyor should henceforth be continued at my office in Sydney, while the details of Weekly and Monthly Reports from the Road Parties should be prepared at Parramatta by the responsible officer. (14)

Darling objected strongly to this alteration. While the "new organisation is not much different from the old", he feared that the "present arrangement will be found materially to interfere with the General Survey of the Colony". He wrote that Mitchell had been employed in "tracing and laying down the principal roads" only, and that he "had already more duty than he could conveniently perform". (15) As the establishment of this Department had been part of Darling's project for colonial roads, he was understandably upset by Mitchell's relentless pursuit of its control and his intention to claim the credit of the colony's new road system. Darling subsequently succeeded in rendering the Department autonomous again in December 1830 under John Nicholson who succeeded Lockyer on January 11 1830 (see Table 1). (16) By 1836 the Department comprised nine Assistant Surveyors, four clerks, 70 convict overseers and a military guard stationed at Wisemans Ferry. (17)

After Darling's departure, Mitchell managed to regain control over the colony's roads and bridges. Under Bourke, he became responsible for the survey of the whole colony, the valuation and disposal of crown lands, the construction of roads and bridges, the exploration of the interior and, in 1833, for the Department of the Colonial Architect. (18) Not surprisingly, this proved far in excess of his and the Department's capabilities, as he was later forced to admit. (19) Bourke in 1836 transferred responsibility for roads and bridges to George Barney of the Royal Engineers. (20)
Like many aspects of Darling's administration, the Roads and Bridges Department developed from simple origins with haphazard methods to a complex and immensely bureaucratic body in which Mitchell saw another avenue to fame. The same pattern, as will be discussed, emerged with regard to the road gang system and was reflected in the construction of the Great North Road itself.
SECTION III/2

THE ROADS AND BRIDGES DEPARTMENT

Notes

1. Returns of the Colony, 1826, p. 80.
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Returns of the Colony, 1827.
6. Wilford to Macleay, 23 May 1827, "Instructions to the Assistant Surveyors of Roads and Bridges", and Instructions to the Overseers of Road Parties, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
9. Wilford to Macleay, 14 March 1828, A.O.N.S.W., N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Office, Register of Letters and Petitions; Macleay to Wilford, 22 February 1828, A.O.N.S.W., Colonial Secretary to Surveyor of Roads and Bridges, (hereafter C.S. to S.R.B.); Returns of the Colony, 1828, p. 82.
10. Lockyer to Macleay, 25 November 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
11. Lockyer to Deputy Commissary General, 24 September 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
13. Cumpston, T.H.L., Thomas Mitchell - Surveyor General and Explorer, p. 61; Returns of the Colony, 1830, p. 31; Macleay to Lockyer, 7 December 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.
17. Returns of the Colony, 1830, p. 102.
19. Ibid., p. 145.
3. The Labour Force

The origins of Darling's road gangs lay in the fact that men under sentence in N.S.W. were able to and frequently did commit further crimes after their arrival. The road gangs and penal settlements may be seen as small-scale versions of the whole transportation system - they were relatively cheap, particularly the gangs, and they "got rid of unsavoury characters". There was also the added bonus that useful work might be extracted from these incorrigibles banished to the "distant road gangs". Several contemporary observers were exultant that such a neat solution had been devised - the gangs would keep the undesirables out of sight and mind, and would cut roads of civilisation through the wilderness. (1)

In accordance with his instructions to "revive the threat of transportation", Darling's initial plan was to work all convicts in irons on the public works for a certain period after their arrival. (2) This proposal was abandoned in the face of the general demand for suitable convict labour by settlers. Although the end of the Napoleonic Wars had resulted in a great influx of convicts to N.S.W., (3) a correspondingly large proportion of these inevitably became second and third offenders after their arrival in the colony. These were dealt with initially by removal to penal settlements isolated from the population centre of Sydney, and, after 1826, also by banishment to the road gangs. Darling responded to the charge that he was keeping too many convicts on government lands by pointing out that this was "... from necessity, the settlers finding it impossible from the badness of their character to retain them". (4) Oxley went further in his defence of the system in 1827:
The cost attendant on the construction of Public Main Roads is necessarily... defrayed by the crown. The convicts worked on the roads cannot otherwise be employed, they are principally incorrigible characters, there is no other mode of punishment which effectively answers the purpose at comparatively so trifling an expenditure. (5)

In subsequent years, Darling constantly reiterated the unavoidable nature of the road-gang system and often described the value of their work with pride:

When the character of the individuals comprising the Road Parties is considered, being the refuse of the whole convict population, combined with the important undertaking in which the parties are engaged making great leading roads throughout the colony the very moderate expense of their superintendence cannot fail to surprise everyone who has (seen) the large and expensive Establishments for prisoners... 1200 men are beneficially employed... their service has been secured at the modest expense of £1,621 a year. (6)

The latter sum covered the essentials of accommodation, rations, tools, equipment and clothing for the gangs. In response to the various difficulties posed by placing hundreds of "incorrigibles" at isolated stations in the bush, the road gang system and its administration, like most aspects of the colony's establishment, underwent an evolutionary process between 1826 and the 1840's. In this case the pattern was one of escalating regulation and regimentation, although the more rigorous measures were introduced, for the main part, by Darling's successor, Bourke, and were implemented after work on the Great North Road had been wound down.

In the earliest years of the road gang system (1826-27) the convicts' first operation was to put up their own temporary slab and bark huts in random groups at convenient intervals along the road, which became known as stations. (7) Darling in 1828 was quick to point out, with some pride, to his
superiors that the men were "... lodged in huts constructed by themselves, without costing the government even a nail in erecting". (8) Although there is no record of the actual construction or design of these transient, rude structures, it is likely that they resembled the huts described by Robert Dawson in 1828, which were erected by convicts assigned to settlers:

As soon as a party of convicts arrives at a settler's station, their first employment is to build huts for themselves which is done by forming the sides with split logs placed in an upright direction with a covering of bark upon a roof of poles. These are considered to be the more permanent kinds of buildings for convicts, but in the hurry of the moment, they are sometimes preceded by others of a more temporary nature, consisting only of a framework of poles tied together with narrow strips of young bark with a view to saving nails, while the sides are enclosed with sheets of thick strong bark. (9)

Several contemporary accounts, such as those of James Backhouse and Alexander Harris, describe the road gang huts as cold and draughty. Harris, mistakenly arrested as a bushranger and shut for a night in the lock-up of a road gang station on the Great North Road, found it to be a "... little roofed enclosure of a few feet square, very strong, but having the slabs in many places half an inch apart ...". (10) At the Devine's Hill stockade, opposite Wisemans Ferry, the gangs' superintendent reported in 1831 that "many complaints have been made of the extreme coldness of the sheds under which they sleep", while in the valleys of the Wollombi the men were "exposed to cold and damp". (11)

At least two major station/stockade sites survive on the Great North Road - on the hill above Wisemans Ferry and at the summit of Devine's Hill. As discussed in Appendix 1, Sections 1f and 3e, these sites comprise for the main part the remains of crude stone structures. The site above Wisemans with its
two distinct groups of structures appears to be of particular importance, representing a complex of buildings with stone foundations, hearths and ovens (see Figs 16-31). After the gangs were removed from the station in July 1832, the buildings were dismantled and the reusable timber parts sold to local settlers. The "Return of Materials composing the stockade and other public buildings at Lower Portland Head-River Hawkesbury" submitted by Simpson listed the various parts of the buildings:

150 yards of ground plates ) with a groove in each
150 yards of wall plates ) and for receiving the
ends of slabs
31 large posts 12 feet long ea : good for fencing
1850 slabs - say 9 feet long ea : good for fencing
& large paled gate with hooks and hinges, and
several hundred sheets of old bark. (12)

The terms "station" and "stockade" were by 1832 interchangeable, although the latter referred to large semi-permanent establishments rather than the camps of small isolated gangs scattered along the roads.

Hirst has pointed out that, in contrast to other aspects of Darling's period of governorship, in the establishment of road gangs, "the government fostered disorder on a large scale". As the system became more entrenched and the isolation and strangeness of the bush diminished in effectiveness as a prison, the number of escapes and subsequent bushranging incidents rose alarmingly. (13) After receiving a "Report on the No. of Convicts Escaped" in October 1830 and finding that about a third of the total number had absconded from Simpson's gangs at Wisemans (14), Darling placed a military guard there and also issued the first official instructions regulating the layout of road gang stations:
The camp or huts of the iron gangs are to be constructed in a square having only one entrance. A fire should be kept in the centre of the square and a lamp similar to those used in the streets of Sydney be burnt at each angle of it. The sides of the square exposed to the wind may be protected by skreens (sio) or a frame covered in hide made to rest against the sheds under which the convicts are to sleep. (15)

These instructions were the forerunners of a series of increasingly complex and detailed plans for stockades devised by Bourke in the following years. It is not clear when the high staked fence usually associated with the term "stockade" was introduced. Apart from one reference to a convict who "escaped over the enclosure" at Wisemans, there is no mention of such a fence, although both the Wisemans Ferry and Devine's Hill encampments were occasionally referred to as "stockades". (16) The term "enclosure" may in fact refer to the "large paled gate" mentioned in the "Return of Materials". By 1832, during Bourke's governorship, the fence was standard for all large stockades, and they were made still more secure by the arrangement of the buildings so as to allow continual surveillance (see Figs. 12 and 13). (17) The number and variety of buildings attached to the station/stockade increased rapidly with the growing entrenchment of the road gang system. Reference was made during Darling's period to huts for distributing rations, hospitals, barracks for soldiers, a dispensary for a medical attendant, stables, storerooms, powder magazines and stockyards where bullocks could be kept and slaughtered for fresh meat. (18)

The layout and management of stations and stockades thus became increasingly complex and officially regulated, culminating in Bourke's minutely detailed Stockade Instructions of 1837. (19) However, where smaller groups of men worked over large, isolated sections of easily-constructed road, mobility and the ready availability of building
materials became higher priorities than security and durability of accommodation. In 1828, Lockyer pointed out that the men wasted time searching for bark on the barren ridges, such as those between Wisemans Ferry and Mt. Manning, and in erecting huts which were only to be abandoned in a few weeks or months. His suggestion that tents be used instead of huts was approved and adopted. These were to be constructed with:

Three forked uprights eight feet clear of the ground, a ridge pole thirty feet long, to stretch sixteen feet on the ground in width within the tent — that part of it that lays on the ridge pole to be doubled, the outside to be painted white, to be shut in at one end and open at the other (cf. Plate 4). (20)

Subsequently, 580 hides were ordered for the gangs on the roads to Bathurst and Hunters River. (21) Where mobility and materials were not a problem, simple groups of huts continued to be built on the Great North Road until 1836, the end of the construction period. Small semi-permanent stations where the Assistant Surveyors resided were established first at Wollombi (1830-1834) and then at Warkworth (Cockfighter's Creek) (1834-1836), and contemporary maps of the newly-made road show small groups of huts dotted along the line towards and beyond the Wollombi Valley. (22)

The disadvantage of the tents was, of course, the lack of security. When Bourke arrived in 1832, he overcame both problems of mobility and security by introducing the "prisoners' boxes" — small rooms on wheels which could be drawn by bullocks and in which prisoners could be locked at night. The nature and dimensions of these boxes are shown in an undated "Sketch of Portable Wooden House to contain Twenty Iron'd Ganged convicts" (23) (See Plate 15.). Bourke had no doubt imported this idea from the experience of road builders
on the Highland Roads in Scotland during the 1810's and 1820's. Thomas Telford, the renowned road builder who supervised the work, later described the same progression from huts to tents to moveable boxes in his autobiography:

... the workman, for lodging or imperfect shelter were obliged to construct temporary huts, the frequent removal of which created trouble and expense, and the going to and from them occupied much time ... To remedy this, military canvas tents were purchased, which were indeed easily removable ... but were found too hot when each was occupied by ten or twelve men ... Nor was it until the roads had been made generally passable by wheel carriages in 1824 that an effectual remedy could be introduced ... a large caravan on wheels, capable of containing sixteen or eighteen men with a fire place, it is moveable from place to place ... and being always close at hand much time is saved, fatigue avoided and health uninjured ... (24)

In N.S.W. the caravans had the added advantage of being lockable, although, as Telford pointed out, they presupposed roads already made and easily traversable. Dulhunty was issued with three in 1833 when stationed at Wollombi, and these were covered in with "tarpaulings". (25)

Thus, while the large stations and stockades grew increasingly complex, accommodation for small groups of men scattered along the roads at the same time devolved along the same lines as had occurred in Scotland a decade earlier, becoming increasingly better adapted to both road-building and to the nature of the labour force.

The victualling of hundreds of men posted at isolated stations in the wilderness also posed considerable problems. The contracting system, whereby a local settler supplied the gangs in his area for an annual fee, was established early in the period and the government continually issued directives,
provided weights and measures and even appointed delegates from each gang in its efforts to ensure that the food was adequate and of good quality. (26) As discussed in Section III/5, the system was still open to abuse from unscrupulous contractors and collaborating overseers. Wiseman, the contractor for the Great North Road, built store huts at Frog Hollow and stockyards at Hungry Flat for slaughtering bullocks to assist in the victualling of five gangs stationed within a twenty-mile radius of his residence. (27)

The rations themselves comprised mainly meat and carbohydrates. The amount received by each man varied little over the period 1826-1832 (see Table 2). The standard quantity of meat was 1-1½ lbs per day and flour, in addition to maize meal, was included from January 1829. In 1832 the maize allowance was reduced and bread was introduced in place of flour. Sugar was included in 1826 at 2½ oz per day, but was reduced to 1 oz per day in the following year. The salt allowance varied between ¼ oz and ½ oz per day. Generally, the rations were reduced slightly during Bourke's harsher period of governorship. Soap was allowed at ½-⅓ oz per day, although since the convicts washed themselves and their clothes only on Saturday, it is more likely that it was distributed weekly. (28) The heat of summer produced particular problems for the provision of meat. By 1829 Government Instructions ordered that salt or preserved meat was to be delivered once a week in summer, or alternatively that fresh meat be provided three times a week. Lockyer maintained that this was still too infrequent, and suggested that slaughteryards be set up near the stations to ensure the freshness of the meat. (29)

The actual distribution and preparation of the food became closely regulated in 1829. Earlier, the men had each received
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Rations Issued</th>
<th>Per Day</th>
<th>Per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1825</td>
<td>Wheatmeal 1 1/2 lbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh meat 1 lb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar 1 oz</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt 1 1/2 oz</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap 1/2 oz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1825</td>
<td>Wheatmeal (1 1/4 lb)</td>
<td>8 3/4 lbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh meat (1 1/2 lb)</td>
<td>10 1/2 lbs</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sugar (1 oz)</td>
<td>7 oz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salt (1 oz)</td>
<td>7 oz</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap (1/2 oz)</td>
<td>3 1/2 oz</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1826</td>
<td>Wheatmeal (2 lbs)</td>
<td>14 lbs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh meat (1 lb)</td>
<td>7 lbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar (2 1/4 oz approx)</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt (1/2 oz approx)</td>
<td>1/4 lb</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap (1/2 oz approx)</td>
<td>1/4 lb</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1826</td>
<td>Wheatmeal (1 1/2 lb)</td>
<td>10 1/2 lbs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh meat (1 1/4 lb)</td>
<td>8 3/4 lbs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sugar (2 1/4 oz approx)</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salt (1/2 oz approx)</td>
<td>1/4 lb</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap (1/2 oz approx)</td>
<td>1/4 lb</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1829-1830</td>
<td>Maize meal 1 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh or</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt meal 1 lb</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flour 1 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar 1 oz</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt 1 1/2 oz</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap 1/2 oz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Wheat bread 1/4 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( or Flour 1 lb</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maize meal 1/2 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beef 1 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar 1 oz</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt 1/2 oz</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soap 1/4 oz</td>
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</table>
their rations once a week, and meals were cooked in the huts.

Lockyer reported in 1828:

The rations are drawn and issued weekly in advance and great loss is thereby incurred to the government ... many of the prisoners by Tuesday, where the rations have been issued to them on Saturday previous, have either consumed, exchanged or wasted the whole of the week's ration, the consequence is an inducement ... to commit fresh orizes of plunder to satisfy the cravings of hunger. (30)

It was upon Lockyer's suggestion that the system was altered and rations for each man handed over to a cook from each gang to prepare each day (see also Appendix 1, Section 1f). This system allowed "... a certain meal regularly every day and also prevents the precarious mode of their procuring one". (31) That the men in the gangs should be adequately fed was a high priority - when Wilford wrote to Macleay in 1827 reporting neglect on the part of the contractor at Liverpool which resulted in the gangs being without food for a day, he pointed out that:

... the road parties should be supplied with the greatest punctuality as any failure is calculated to produce a spirit of disobedience and insubordination among the men. (32)

The diet itself comprised 1 lb maize meal and 1 oz sugar boiled in one quart of water for breakfast, and 1 lb of fresh or salt meat, 1 lb of flour and 1½ oz salt cooked into a stew with damper or puddings for dinner (the midday meal). A portion of the latter was "to be kept for supper". (33)

Two suits of clothing or "slops" were provided annually to each convict, comprising:
2 Parramatta Frocks
2 Parramatta Trousers
3 Striped Shirts
3 Pairs of Shoes
1 Straw Hat or Cap (34)

The clothing apparently wore out quickly and, particularly in the early years, there were numerous reports of the Commisariat’s failure to deliver the articles when they were due. In October 1827, Wilford received:

... constant complaints from various prisoners who do not receive their slop clothing until several weeks after it is due, at present that which ought to have been issued on the first day of last month has not yet been supplied. (35)

By December the gangs had still not received their slops and were "quite destitute of clothing". (36) The delivery of the clothing, however, posed another problem, since those convicts contemplating escape seized the opportunity to take a new set of clothing to protect them. Ensign Reynolds of the military guard at Wisemans Ferry remarked that the receipt of the slops was a "... great inducement to their running away". (37)

At some stage during the late twenties or early thirties the distinctive bi-coloured cloth was introduced for the convicts' garb to assist in their easy identification. Byrne described them in the late 1830's:

Many large public establishments and convict depots exist here (Parramatta) and it is at the station of a large chain gang who exhibit a strange appearance as they march along dressed in clothes one half of which on the upper and lower portions of the body is composed of grey cloth, the other of canary of yellow. (38)

After Bourke's arrival numerous and lengthy instructions were issued to the supervisors of road parties which included
extensively detailed directives concerning not only all aspects of the dress and general appearance of the convicts, but also exacting requirements for mealtimes, food distribution and cooking, accommodation and security. (39)

Such instructions provide the most obvious illustration of the government’s increased regulation of the road gangs, although whether or not the myriad details were actually carried out is another matter. The early period of the construction of the Great North Road is, by contrast, characterised by the complete absence of such regimentation while the middle period saw the introduction of the first such measures.

In 1828, as part of his efforts to regulate and standardise the work and conditions of road gangs, Lookyer set out a daily routine to which they were to adhere. The overseers were to muster the convicts at 5 o’clock in the morning between 1 October and 31 April, "... as they have frequently to go some distance", breakfasting before they left the stations for their work places on the road and returning at 12 noon for dinner. At one o’clock they marched back to work until 6 o’clock when they again returned for their evening meal after which they retired. During the winter months the hours were slightly shorter - 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., and from October 1828 they were also worked until 2 p.m. on Saturdays and then "... conducted to a pond or river in the neighbourhood to bathe and wash their clothes". (40) This regime was no doubt frequently disrupted by rain, holidays and lack of tools, gunpowder or food.

Official instructions repeatedly attempted to ensure that, while at work, the men in the gangs were kept together in a relatively small area to enable close supervision. (41) In
reality, however, the nature of road work usually necessitated
the distribution of the men along the road for up to a mile
and that they be employed in many different aspects of the
work at the same time (see Plates 5, 6 and 7). Ensign
Reynolds thus reported in 1831 that:

The space occupied by the gangs when at work extends
for a mile along the road, now if it be expected
that two sentries can guard 140 prisoners they ought
necessarily to work in a prescribed extent of road;
and this, I presume, could not be effected, the road
requiring a greater distribution of labour. (42)

Since the convicts could not be employed in a small, easily
supervised area, there was ample opportunity for both neglect
of work and for escape.

Another measure nominally introduced by Mitchell was that the
gangs were to be "moved quickly over the ground" so that they
would not "so lazily domiciliate themselves in one place,
forming acquaintances with small settlers with the bye paths
to rob etc. ..." (43) Again, the practicality and application
of such a measure was entirely dependent on the nature of the
work underway. While some areas could be completed fairly
quickly, others required years of work, enabling the convicts
not only to "form acquaintances", but to become familiar with
the terrain and the location of food, shelter, guns and powder
in ease of escape. In 1830 Finch was unwilling to remove No.
7 Iron Gang from "a place so admirably suited to them", that
is, isolated, to the "midst of settlers with scattered herds
and property exposed to depredation". (44) The basis of
the road-gang system - the use of distance to rid the main
settlement of these men - was thus eroded both by encroaching
settlement in the valleys and the growing familiarity of the
convicts with the terrain which transformed it from a threat
to a haven. In subsequent years, more secure accommodation,
military guards, distinctive clothing and increased floggings
only partly overcame the problems of escapes and bushranging.

In his book Convict Society and its Enemies, Hirst asserts that in N.S.W., "Convicts were treated, not according to their crimes, but to their usefulness for private gain and comfort or public works and services". The skilled man, no matter what his background, was highly valued and in great demand in the colony, and settlers " clamoured for more labour" after Darling's arrival. Convicts were therefore to some extent able to "control their own destiny" by providing or withholding their labour as they pleased and encouraging a system of incentives which included payment, extra rations and taskwork which left them with their own time. They could not actually be forced to work hard by the threat of floggings, stretches in prison cells or on the treadmill. These were simply partly effective deterrents against absenting, drunkenness and laziness. They were "necessary to keep men at work not because tyrants were demanding that men work to excess, but because the openness of the colony made it easy to evade work". The distinction is drawn between the hard working, highly motivated free settler, interested in extracting work from convicts by whatever means necessary, and the superintendents and overseers of the road gangs and penal settlements "who had no personal interest in their work". The road gangs, he claims, lacked incentive, were "notorious for their laxity", comprised men who were "free to wander and rob" and achieved little. The overseers themselves were "unrestrained by interests and concerns of private masters", and "tended to the extremes of harshness and laxity". (45)

This model is to some extent supported by a comparison of the construction of the Great North Road with that of the first road over the Blue Mountains under the direction of William Cox in 1814-15. The latter was an extremely difficult line,
including several bridges and zig-zag ascents, and was opened by a small party of convicts in only six months. Cox's diary of the road's progress reveals both an intense personal commitment to the project and his concern for the men in the party. He noted their cheerfulness and their discomforts and took pains to provide rewards for particularly difficult work and procured special food to relieve the monotony of the rations. Frequently he used the term "we" rather than "the men" in his description of the work underway. The convicts were ultimately rewarded for their labour with pardons. (46)

In contrast, the work on the Great North Road was a punishment rather than an opportunity, meted out to men of the worst character whose supervisors were not particularly interested in their welfare. The construction period in this case dragged on for ten years.

Yet somehow the gangs sent to the Great North Road, apparently unskilled and unwilling, in the end accomplished some of the most ambitious and impressive engineering of the colonial period. These were men whom settlers, in spite of their desperate need for labour, could not coax to work for them, who had committed more crimes and who were therefore unlikely to have been skilled and valued. Moreover, the builders of the ascent of Devine's Hill, the most dramatic section, were gangs comprising men who had run from other gangs and were apprehended. The road gangs apparently had no reformatory effect - Finch in 1830 complained of the assignment of ex-road gang men to his surveying party on the Wollombi. These men, he wrote, "... are always worse for being in a road gang". (47) Even if it were possible to force these men to build structures of a high standard and aesthetic quality, the nature of road construction precluded the close supervision necessary. Floggings ordered by the Assistant Surveyors, who had for expediency been made magistrates,
probably prevented complete neglect of work, and deterred at least some from wandering off. As with the construction of Busby's Bore, the "floggings and other punishments did no more than hold the line and kept the absences from being completely crippling to the enterprise". (48)

The odd juxtaposition of these unskilled convict gangs with the works they achieved might be better explained in terms of incentives, along the lines of Hirst's model for the colony's private sector. As discussed in Sections III/6 and III/8, both Percy Simpson and Henage Finch were inspired by a vision of the Great Road, requiring the best engineering possible, which would eventually earn them substantial renumeration and acclamation. They were probably further enthused by Thomas Mitchell's equally grand plans for the colony's roads which were eventually to span the continent and match the ancient Roman roads in importance and durability. But it was the overseers who actually supervised most of the work. While Hirst and several writers before him portray the convict overseers as lax or brutal, uninterested in the work, easily bribed and so on, there were some overseers on the Great North Road who were praised and valued for their ability to maintain discipline among the gangs and for their knowledge of road or bridge building. It was in fact the original overseers, men of the Royal Staff Corps who had had absolutely no incentive to keep the men at work, and their assignment to such tasks was quickly abandoned. (49)

The convicts who replaced them in 1827 were sometimes well-behaved men from the gangs, threatened with a return to them for inadequate work, or, after mid-1828, ticket-of-leave men who received 2/- per diem and a ration. (50) Lockyer wrote that there was "seldom a delinquency" among them. (51) They had, after all, the chance of attaining their tickets or their freedom. While some overseers were reported to have
intimidated the men, forcing them to take deteriorated or inadequate rations, Simpson in 1829 was pleased to appoint Overseer Castles who was "acquainted with the system of constructing roads and a good disciplinarian." (52) Finch and Dulhunty also described some of their overseers in favourable terms - MacDougall was a "very good and useful overseer", while the overseer of No. 7 Iron Gang was "very intelligent". (53) Hawkins, the overseer of a Bridge Party, had skills in bridge building so much valued that Dulhunty urged that he be removed from a station where he was employed building huts, to the Long Bridge at Maitland. (54) The Assistant Surveyors who were interested in constructing durable and impressive Great Roads evidently spent some time in instructing their overseers in the various methods of road building. The acquisition of such useful skills as rock blasting, stone masonry, embanking and draining, apparently in great demand in the colony and thus potentially valuable, possibly also provided incentive for the overseers to keep the men at work and maintain high standards.

Many of the convicts ran from their stations and in this sense, as Hirst points out, Darling's policy "fostered disorder on a large scale". (55) The number of escapes is not surprising in view of the living and working conditions of the men and the temptations provided by the absence of walls and of constant direct supervision. It is important to note, however, that the major works on the road each display a high degree of consistency in style and design of the retaining walls and drainage structures. The immense buttressed retaining wall supporting 2 km of the road almost continuously at Devine's Hill (see Appendix 1, Section 3c) could not have been built by gangs comprising completely different men from week to week or month to month as a result of abscondings. The key to this anomaly appears to be the
fact that, as discussed Section IV, only a small proportion of men in the gangs were actually involved in the aspects of construction which required some skills, such as stone masonry, blasting and drainage. The majority were employed in clearing the line of trees and scrub, cutting through earth and rock, filling embankments and breaking and carting stone, tasks which required little or no skill. Remembering that most of the men who were sentenced to these gangs would not have been skilled, it is likely that most of the runaways were from the latter group, while the men employed in highly skilled work chose to remain on the job. Perhaps they did not want to jeopardise their prospects after the expiry of their sentences, prospects which would have been considerably improved by their acquisition of such valuable skills as they practised on the roads; or perhaps they were given preferential treatment, praise or a measure of discretion by overseers and Assistant Surveyors eager and anxious to avoid interruption to the work underway and to maintain the standard of workmanship.

While the government thus found successively better solutions to the feeding, clothing and particularly the accommodation of the hundreds of men sent out to the gangs, there were never really effective measures against the numerous escapes, since this problem was endemic in the road building system. In fact, it mirrors the predicament of a colony where the only possible substitutes for "the walls, the wardens and the punishment cells" (56) were a range of incentives or the threat of flogging or other punishments. Whatever their methods, it is remarkable that the Assistant Surveyors managed to extract so much labour from such an unlikely source in order to realise the vision of the Great Road.
SECTION III/3

THE LABOUR FORCE

Notes


3. For a discussion of the effect of the Napoleonic Wars on transportation to N.S.W., see ibid., p. 127.


11. Ensign Henry Reynolds to Macleay, 6 May 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Finch to Mitchell, 28 May 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

12. Mitchell to Macleay, 1 August 1832, (enclosure), A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


15. Macleay to Mitchell, 27 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.

17. A sketch map of the unfinished stockade at Cox's River see Fig. 12 dated 1832 shows the convicts' huts arranged, as Darling ordered, in a square with only one entrance, but with a lookout hut, rather than a fire, in the centre. The whole was enclosed by a fence "12 feet high". See "Plan Accompanying the Governor's Instructions relative to the accommodation for men working in irons on the roads and for the troops stationed as a guard over them", A.O.N.S.W., Sketch Book Vol. 2 No. 57, Bourke to S.A. Ferry, 25 September 1834.


19. Royal Engineers Corps - Instructions (A-D) for Assistant Engineers (re construction and repair of roads and bridges. Issued by Command of the Governor of N.S.W. by the Commanding Royal Engineer - With memorandum re employment of convicts, 20 October 1837), Sydney, 1837.

20. Lockyer to Macleay, 16 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

21. Macleay to Mitchell, 12 November 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.

22. Mitchell to Macleay, 14 July 1834, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S. A sketch map accompanying this letter outlines a surveyor's cottage, detached kitchen, stable and store, and marks, although does not show, the "huts" of the convicts in the adjacent allotments. See "Sketch showing the Allotment at the village of Wollombi applied for by P. Doolan and the Road Station Huts" 17 June 1834, A.O.N.S.W., Sketch Book, Vol. 2, No. 56 (see Fig. 14). For maps showing other groups of huts see "Survey of the New North Road from the Hawkesbury River to the Reserve of Wollombi, G.B. White, April 1831, A.O.N.S.W., Map No. 5036; and "North Road from the Reserve of Wollombi to Broke as marked by Major Mitchell", G.B. White, 1833, A.O.N.S.W., Map No. 5092 (see Maps 14 and 15).

23. Anon. undated, held in Mitchell collection. This may have been the original sketch of the boxes introduced by Bourke c.1833.


25. Dulhunty to Mitchell, 17 June 1833, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
26. See Lockyer to De la Condamine, 29 December 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L., and enclosure, "Circular to Overseers", 15 January 1829; Macleay to Lockyer, 2 January 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.; H.R.A.A., Vol. XV, p. 647; Darling to Murray, 27 July 1830, sub-enclosure No. 4; Weekly and Monthly Road Gang Reports, 1 Volume, 1827-1830, A.O.N.S.W.

27. See Wiseman to Macleay, 2 July 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; John Jenkins Peacock to Macleay, 7 July 1829, a marginal note states that Wiseman’s area of supply was within a 20 mile radius of his home at Lower Portland Head, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Lockyer to Macleay, 4 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Wiseman’s hut at Frog Hollow are mentioned in the N.S.W. Calendar and Directory, 1832, and are shown on G.S. White’s “Survey of the New South Road from the Hawkesbury River to the Reserve of Wollombi”, see Map 147, April 1831, A.O.N.S.W., Map No. 5036.


29. Lockyer to Deputy Commissary General, 24 September 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Macleay to Lockyer, 2 January 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.

30. Lockyer to Macleay, 15 August, 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

31. Ibid.

32. Wilford to Macleay, 17 May 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


35. Wilford to Macleay, 13 October 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

36. Wilford to Macleay, 3 December 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

37. Ensign Henry Reynolds to Macleay, 6 May 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

38. J.C. Byrne, Twelve Years’ Wanderings in the British Colonies from 1835 to 1847, 1848, p. 150.

39. Royal Engineers Corps - Instructions (A-D) for Assistant Engineers (re construction and repair of roads and bridges. Issued by command of the Governor of N.S.W. by the Commanding Royal Engineer. - With memorandum re employment of convicts, 20 October 1837), Sydney, 1837.
40. Lockyer to Macleay, 25 June 1828, "Code of Regulations for the guidance and conduct of the Road Department", A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

41. Ibid.

42. Ensign Henry Reynolds to Macleay, 16 May 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

43. Mitchell to Finch, 14 April 1830, A.O.N.S.W., Surveyor General to Surveyors, in Letters sent to Private Persons and Officials (hereafter S.G. to S.).

44. Finch to Mitchell, 11 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

45. Hirst, pp. 36, 68, 77, passim.


47. Macleay to Mitchell, 27 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.; Finch to Mitchell, 6 October 1829, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

48. Hirst, p. 68.

49. McNicoll, p. 4.


51. Lockyer to Deputy Commissary General, 24 September 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

52. Simpson to Mitchell, 5 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Simpson to Mitchell, 8 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Simpson to Mitchell, 20 July 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

53. Finch to Mitchell, 23 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Dulhunty to Mitchell, 1 March 1833, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

54. Dulhunty to Mitchell, 9 May 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

55. Hirst, p. 94.

56. Hirst, p. 69.
4. The Early Period - Warner and the Road between Baulkham Hills and Wisemans Ferry

Documentation covering the beginning of the construction period of the Great North Road is scant in terms of both written and material remains. The Roads and Bridges Department had few staff and produced little correspondence, while the material remains were not well-constructed in the first place and consequently have not survived in large quantities or good condition. These factors in a sense aid in the reconstruction of the period - they indicate the early, simple workings of the road gang system and its administration, and the primitive nature of road construction. Two further factors to note in the examination of this period arise from the historical circumstances. First, during the whole construction period, gangs were initially placed at the most difficult sections along the line, where most work was required, while the easiest sections were left to last. This means that there is not necessarily a correlation between the location of a structure and its date of construction. Second, when Warner's successor, Percy Simpson, assumed control of the works, he decided that several sections required reconstruction or additional construction. As a result two styles of work, contrasting in quality and style are interspersed along the road between Maroota and Wisemans Ferry (see Appendix 1, Sections 1-10).

The petition from the Hunters River settlers to Darling of April 1826 appears to have prompted the commencement of construction. In the following month, the Australian reported:

The Great North Road is to be commenced, we believe, this day, Mr. Oxley and Captain Dumaresq having left town for the purpose of marking it out. (1)
Oxley and Dumaresq presumably directed thenotching of the trees in preparation for the arrival of the gangs (see Plate 2). Work eventually began in a modest fashion in September 1826, when two gangs totalling 67 men were posted at "Castle Hill North", probably just beyond the end of the road already in use between Baulkham Hills and Castle Hill. In December another gang of 35 men were stationed on "The North Road to Wisemans", somewhere further along the marked line, possibly in the vicinity of Dural. (2) Until the arrival of Lieutenant Jonathon Warner in January 1827, these gangs were supervised by soldiers of the Royal Staff Corps. (3)

Warner had served in the York Light Infantry Volunteers between 1809 and 1817 and after that company was disbanded, he became an officer of the Royal Veteran Companies in 1825, arriving in N.S.W. in 1826. (4) From his subsequent comments and the work completed under his supervision it appears that he had only rudimentary knowledge of road-building and certainly none of the ambitions of subsequent Assistant Surveyors. In spite of this, he was officially appointed Assistant Surveyor for the North Road in April 1827, having arrived at Wisemans three months previously. (5) Warner probably lived in a house rented from Solomon Wiseman, and he was succeeded by Lieutenant Percy Simpson in June 1828. He subsequently took up land near Brisbane Water where he was a magistrate and later at Lake Macquarie near Simpson's grant (see Fig. 40). (6)

When the first gangs arrived at Wisemans in March 1827 Warner immediately requested a scourger "... should any of the gangs or assigned servants be guilty of Drunkenness or Disobedience of orders, neglect of work, etc.". (7) A scourger was not provided until April, however, after a third request was made,
accompanied by reports of insolent and unintimidated convicts. (8) Warner's reports during 1827 and 1828 were mainly limited to administrative problems, convict escapes and apprehensions, and matters concerning rations and stores. In April 1827 there were three gangs under his command, two totalling 82 men stationed on the hill above the river at Wisemans (see Fig. 16), and one of 44 men stationed 20 miles (32 km) south of Wisemans who were "working towards that spot". In September another gang was sent to Wisemans and the four gangs included Nos. 3 and 4 from gangs and No. 25 Road Party at Wisemans, and No. 8 Iron Gang stationed "on the north Road" south of Wisemans. This arrangement was maintained until Simpson's arrival in June 1828 (see Figs 2 and 3). (9)

The work in which these gangs were employed was mainly path-breaking. They cleared, burnt off and stumped the line, and more occasionally formed horse roads and built walls. (10) The most southerly section, between Baulkham Hills and Castle Hill was apparently already well-used (see Section III/1) and the next thirty miles (48 km) to Wisemans was described by Dumaresq in August 1827:

The distance from Pye's (Baulkham Hills) to Wisemans Ferry is 34 miles, fourteen of which is already a fine broad avenue through the forest, cleared and stumped 3 and 4 rods wide and smooth enough to drive a coach and four (11)

The remainder of the line to Wisemans was described, however, as a "rugged footpath" over a "stoney and barren ridge". Lieutenant Wilford, the then Surveyor of Roads and Bridges, also reported on the progress of the road in August 1827, but was less lavish in praise. The first section, near Castle Hill, which Dumaresq called a "fine broad avenue" was actually "not yet fully formed". (12) As for the remainder, in March 1829, Simpson still referred to the line in the vicinity of
Maroota as "the old bush cart track, merely a bush road". (13) However Wilford did report in August 1827 that the road was open since "the cart attached to the Road Party there (at Wisemans) has been several times to Parramatta". (14) The material remains of the early period in this section include several sections of rough rubble retaining walls, and low chiselled side cuttings, or the remains thereof. The best preserved section has been cut off by the realignment of the road at 40.4 km/25.1 m north of Baulkham Hills. It runs for 688 metres along a steep slope supported by walling ranging in quality from Types 1a to 2a (see Appendix 1, Table 12), with a rough stone block culvert at 369 m the only evidence of formal drainage provision. The cuttings on the uphill side of the road bear chisel and jumper marks. (See Appendix 1, Section 1a, Fig. 90 and Photos 8-20). These structures contrast directly with the much more substantial work accomplished under Simpson's supervision, such as the retaining wall and Bridge 1, 51 km/31.2 m north of Baulkham Hills. (See Appendix 1, Section 1b and 1d).

The descent to Wisemans was also described in glowing terms by Dumasresq in 1827. It had been "... quarried out to the bottom ... evidently the result of great skill and perseverance", although according to Wilford, the formation had "... required a great deal of labour, and much will be yet necessary to perfect it". (15) Several of the road gang reports from 1827 describe the men in Nos. 3 and 4 Iron Gang "splitting and removing large rocks and earth at the point above Wisemans" - presumably the point of the ridge - and "... forming the line of road from the point above Wisemans down to the bottom of the hill" (See Figs 16 and 82 and cf. Plate 9). Rough walls were constructed at this time to support the formation which was only 1 pole (5½ yds/5 m) wide. (16) The descent was later elaborated by Simpson with the erection of massive
retaining walls and the addition of drainage facilities of much better quality. (See Appendix 1, Section 1d and Photos 37-68). In 1830 Simpson reported that heavy rains had caused a collapse in the "old section of wall" while the new had withstood them. (17)

On the opposite side of the river the ascent to the ridge was also built twice, but in this case, in different locations. (See Map 6.) The physical survival of the first attempt, built in 1828, offers an excellent opportunity for a comparison of the contrasting styles of Warner and Simpson. The first ascent was commenced about March 1828. In that month Warner reported that he intended to send part of No. 3 Iron Gang across the river to:

... form a rough cart road up the hill so as to enable me to send rations to No. 25 Road Party now about to erect huts about 2 miles from the top of the road which party (No. 25 Road Party) will also assist in making the cart road when they finish these huts. (18)

The building of huts for accommodation always preceded road construction. Progress on the ascent, according to Warner, was rapid. In the following month he wrote to Dumaresq:

The road up by the palling (sic) on Rose's ground is a very gentle ascent to the first turning ... and scarcely looks like going up a hill now it is made 4 yards wide. The part near the palling fence that looked a very steep side of a hill is an excellent road, and the highest wall is not more than four feet, as I have kept in by the winding of the hill to avoid all high walls in future as much as possible. (19)

As Appendix 1, Section 3f shows, the ascent is indeed steep and winding, including two sharp corners and four hairpin
bends with minimal turning space (see Fig. 92). It was later not considered to be an "excellent road" at all, and certainly not suitable as part of the great thoroughfare to the north. Mitchell was consequently ordered in 1829 to trace a better line, which was commenced that year (see Map 6 and Appendix 1, Section 3e). (20) Contrary to Mitchell's account, the new ascent was not completed in six months. The old ascent by Doherty's property and Rose's Run, although it had been left unfinished, was still in use in 1831, and the new ascent of Devine's Hill was not finally finished until 1832. Work on the ridge-top above the old ascent was thus probably still in progress at the end of 1828 by No. 25 Road Party. (21) Warner's approach to road building is clear in the above report and in its physical manifestations. He was interested in minimizing both time and effort (and thus expense) spent on construction, and hence the old ascent was narrow and winding so that only rough and relatively low walls would be required to support it. Drainage provisions were restricted to only a few primitive culverts (see Appendix 1, Section 3f and Photos 258-274).

The line to Ten Mile Hollow (then the Twelve Mile Valley) beyond the junction of the two ascents had only just been commenced when Warner was replaced by Simpson. Part of No. 8 Iron Gang were sent in April 1828 to build huts "about eight miles on the road on the north side of the river". (22) Warner crossed this section on horseback in May 1828, making no comment on it state, but reporting that he had found "a good place to descend into the hollow". (23) It was probably only slightly easier to traverse than when Dumaresq had done so nine months before, when the line was "by no means easy to find although the trees are notched all the way". (24)

Warner's 1828 expedition was made in the company of a convict,
John MacDonald, for the purpose of examining a new line from Ten Mile Hollow to Wallis Plains discovered by the latter in early 1828. Mitchell named it "Simpson's Line" on his 1829 "Plan of the Roads Northward" (see Maps 2, 11 and 20) because Simpson had strongly advocated its adoption in 1828. The latter reported at length in the *Sydney Gazette* under the pseudonym "ZZZ" in January:

... a new line of road from Wallis Plains to Wisemans on the Hawkesbury, by way of Singleton's Ferry on Mangrove Creek; by which road the journey may be easily performed on horseback in two days ... by present intended line of road, the journey, I believe, is four or five days, without grass or water; which MacDonald's line offers in abundance the whole way ... On this route ... an equally good ridge leads in twenty-six miles to Newcastle ...  

Simpson's interest in the new line stemmed from the location of his 2,000 acre property Kourumbung (now vicinity of Cooranbong, see Map 1 and Figs. 40 and 41) in a "strategic position on the new road, being at precisely the right place from Maitland and Newcastle to become an overnight stopping place." Warner, upon his return from examining the new line, reported most favourably, stating that he did not "see the least difficulty in making a road" and recommending that it be adopted. His lengthy narrative describing the line again stressed economy of labour and speed and simplicity of construction. For the numerous creek crossings, for example, he invariably recommended rough slab bridges:

"As there are immense large trees near all the creeks ... very strong slab bridges could be made over any of them with labouring men and without the assistance of mechanics."

Dumaresq, forwarding the report to the Colonial Secretary, commented that while "being considerably shorter and of more easy construction then that originally proposed", the new line
"would be of no use, if adopted, to settlers occupying the Upper Branches of the River Hunter". (30) As discussed in Section II/2 the latter group included Dumaresq himself.

Work consequently continued on the line towards Wollombi selected by Finch but the controversy concerning the best line of road did not abate. Lockyer re-examined Simpson's Line in April 1829, and this time the report was decidedly unfavourable:

... independent of its being a most difficult country it is much longer and quite off the line of communication for Branch roads to come into ... (it is) abounding with creeks, a number of Bridges would be indispensable and for the last thirty (miles) to Mangrove (Creek) a most difficult country to make a road, as well as from Mangrove to the Twelve Mile Hollow, a distance of six miles, the labour required would not be less than what is now required to open the road from Twelve Mile Hollow to Mr. (Richard) Wiseman's on the Wollombi. (31)

It thus appears that Warner and Simpson had exaggerated the merits of the new line in terms of ease of construction and directness. Nevertheless, other interested parties continued to clamour for its adoption. John Jenkins Peacock wrote to the Colonial Secretary in July 1829 offering his services in providing rations:

As such a road would go through one of my farms ... I will supply the gangs in that district at the same rate as Mr. Wiseman now does until the expiration of the contract. (32)

Macleay was still receiving such correspondence in February 1830, when the Reverend L.E. Threlkeld of the Bahtanbah Aboriginal Mission on Lake Macquarie (see Fig. 41) provided another detailed report on the line, stressing the reduction in distance, the availability of grass and water and the ease of construction. Although these letters were disregarded and the construction of the original line continued, part of
Simpson's Line was later incorporated into a line between Ten Mile Hollow and Gosford (see Map 20). It was gazetted and opened in 1871, improved in 1896 (34) and by 1927 it was part of the one of the two main routes to the north. (35)

The stationing of the first gangs totalling 67 men near Castle Hill in September 1826 marked the rather modest beginnings of the Great North Road. The approach to road building of its first engineer, Warner, also reflected this modesty, as the crude nature of the early structures illustrate. However, only a year after the arrival of the first gangs, the number of convicts had increased to about 200 men and Dunaresq, attributing great engineering skills to Warner and exaggerating the road's progress, had written of its future significance in the most effusive terms.

While not overly impressive or of easy carriage, the first 34 miles/54 km was opened by the clearing of the line, the initial construction of the most difficult sections and the excavation and formation of the massive approaches to the Hawkesbury River during the early period. The gangs achieved the considerable task of path breaking, involving the clearing of thickly timbered terrain, the removal of vast rocky outcrops, and the formation, where necessary, of the initial cart road, with the first rough retaining walls. The line was thus left prepared for the arrival of Simpson and his far more ambitious engineering.

Another aspect of this early period was the as yet unfixed nature of the location of the line, in spite of, and even as a result of, growing expectation of its importance. Although No. 25 Road Party laboured for almost a year on the precipitous first ascent of the north bank of the Hawkesbury, the whole section was considered unsuitably steep and narrow.
(and presumably insufficiently impressive) and was simply abandoned in favour of the new line on Devine's Hill in early 1829. The ongoing indecisiveness concerning Simpson's Line was a result of the exhortation of men anxious to profit by the relocation of such an important thoroughfare. They were obviously familiar with the success enjoyed by Solomon Wiseman, whose fortuitous choice of land allowed him to reap the numerous benefits of its proximity to the road.
SECTION III/4

THE EARLY PERIOD - WARNER AND THE ROAD BETWEEN BAULKHAM HILLS AND WISEMANS FERRY

Notes

1. Australian, 24 May 1826.

2. Wilford to Macleay, 25 September 1827, "Detailed Report of the Number of Convicts who have been Employed in Making and Repairing Roads from December 1826 to September 1827", A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


6. Macleay to Simpson, 7 January 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.; Macleay to Hughes, 28 June 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.; Charles Swannock, WISEMANS FERRY, Central Coast Printery, 1965, p. 13; See a plan of Warner's land at Lake Macquarie in A.O.N.S.W., Sketch Book, Vol. 2, 43, "Sketch Accompanying Mr. Jonathan Warners Appt to purchase 60 acres at X dated April 13th, 1831", (see Fig. 40).

7. Warner to Macleay, 12 March 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

8. Warner to Macleay, 2 April 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

9. See Weekly and Monthly Road Gang Reports (hereafter Road Gang Reports), 1 Volume, 1827-1839, A.O.N.S.W.

10. Ibid.

11. Dumaresq, Letter II.

12. Wilford to Macleay, 4 August 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

13. Simpson to Lockyer, 10 March 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

14. Wilford to Macleay, 4 August 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

15. Dumaresq, Letter III; Ibid.

16. See Weekly Reports of Nos. 3, 4 and 8 Iron Gangs for 7-12 May 1827 in A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

17. "Assistant Surveyor Simpson's Report of the Road Branch for the Hawkesbury District and North Road to 'Wollombi' for April 1831", in Road Gang Reports, A.O.N.S.W.

18. "Weekly Report of No. 3 Iron Gang ... from 3rd - 8th March 1828", in Road Gang Reports, A.O.N.S.W.

19. Warner to Dumaresq, 28 April 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

21. Lockyer to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Simpson to Mitchell, 5 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.O.; Simpson to Mitchell, 9 May 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.O.; A member of the gang carved "23 Rd Party" in a cutting near the junction of the old and new ascent. Although vandalised, it is still visible today (see Photo 271, and Appendix 1, Section 3f).

22. Warner to Dumasesq, 23 April 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

23. Warner to Dumasesq, 7 May 1828, "Description of the line of road from Wiseman's to Wallis Plains (McDonald's Line) ...", A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

24. Dumaesq, Letter III.


28. Warner to Dumasesq, 7 May 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

29. Ibid.

30. Dumasesq to Macleay, 13 May 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

31. Lockyer to Macleay, 8 April 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

32. John Jenkins Peacock to Macleay, 7 July 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

33. Rev. L.E. Threlkeld to Macleay, 9 February 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

34. See Lands Department Maps R.5183 1603 and R.1020.

5. Emancipist Enterprise: Solomon Wiseman at Lower Portland Head

Solomon Wiseman was no doubt delighted when Henesage Finch marked the line of the Great North Road through his property at Lower Portland Head in 1825, and lost no time in erecting suitable buildings and applying for various licences and contracts in order to take advantage of this proximity. The road there ran along two ridges north and south of the Hawkesbury, and, since the precipitous termination of the ridges necessitated years of convict labour to render them trafficable, the area around Wiseman's property became the focal point of construction. Both Warner and Simpson were stationed there and used it as a base from which they supervised gangs spread out at various points to the north and south.

Wiseman, a journeyman lighterman, was convicted of stealing timber and arrived in Sydney in 1806. After he was pardoned in 1812, he engaged in various activities, including shipping and innkeeping until 1817, when he was granted land at the Hawkesbury. His occupation of the grant at the confluence of the Hawkesbury and MacDonald Rivers (the latter was then known as The Branch) dates from about 1819 (see Fig. 42). In 1826 he constructed his home "Cobham Hall", an elegant two-storey Georgian mansion on the rise overlooking the rivers. (See Appendix 1, Section 1g; Plates 16, 19, 21; Photos 69 and 70; and Fig. 42.) Since the road had already been marked at that stage he probably had the building's use as an inn in mind all along, for in October 1826, he wrote to Darling:

That petitioner having gone to a very great expense in erecting a respectable dwelling ... in a remote part of the country on the new road leading to
Newcastle and which is a very convenient house of accommodation for travellers but the receipts of which, in consequence of its remoteness will not cover the expense of a licence aside from the money laid out on the building ... (2)

The licence was granted to him free of charge as requested and his inn, "The Branch", became the main stop-over point for travellers, located halfway between Pye's Corner (Baulcham Hills) and Wollombi. As discussed in Section II/1, travellers invariably found the journey between Dural and Wiseman extremely dreary and, upon reaching the descent to the Hawkesbury, were startled and delighted by the beautiful views of the river and the green valley floor, and relieved to find food and shelter at Wiseman's "respectable dwelling" (see Plate 25). (3) Some outbuildings were added to the inn in 1829 and Wiseman requested the loan of a stonemason from the gangs who were constructing retaining walls nearby. On this occasion he was curtly informed that there were no stonemasons available except those in irons, who were "consequently ineligible for removal". (4)

Wiseman also seized control of the river crossing to the north bank. In September 1827 he applied for and was granted the lease of the ferry for seven years "... on condition that the government horses and property shall be allowed to pass free". (5) In spite of the fact that Nicholson, the Master Attendant, had already arranged for the purchase of "a boat suitable for the crossing place at Wisemans on the Hawkesbury River" in April that year, it was a boat built by Wiseman which became the first punt (see Plates 16 and 17). (6) Only two years later he requested that his lease be extended to 21 years, since:

... up to the present time (the ferry) has only been a source (sic) of trouble and expense, and ... the only traffic across the ferry with little exception has been the supply of the government establishment
and the passage of the public officer not liable to charge ...

By this stage, the original punt was "... rendered totally useless from the worms having destroyed the whole of her planks" and Wiseman had completed and launched a larger punt "... at a much heavier expense than the former". A horse boat had also been commenced and he proposed to erect "fencing and ... sufficient punds for the security of cattle crossing at the ferry". (8) He was, however, unsuccessful in persuading the government to extend the lease. Macleay replied in November 1829 that he had five years yet unexpired "... which appears quite enough to afford you the encouragement which your undertaking requires". Undeterred, he made the same request in January 1830, this time adding a "boat for foot passengers" to the list of expenses. The official response was, however, the same. (9) Subsequently, his enthusiasm for the ferry appears to have waned. In 1831, Percy Simpson was outraged by the unreliable service, and complained of the "inconvenience and delay experienced ... by settlers and persons in government employ ... owing to Mr. Wiseman not keeping a regular ferry and puntman." (10) When ferry charges were fixed by Act of Council in 1832, it was found that Wiseman had been charging up to twice as much as ferry lessees elsewhere. His strong objection to the fixed fees fell on unsympathetic ears, (11) and his disillusionment with the ferry as a money-making venture led him to sell the three punts to the government in July 1832 for £267. The ferry was subsequently let to James Henery, who had been the lessee of the Sydney Toll Bar. (12)

Wiseman was contracted to supply the gangs on the road with rations of flour, peas, salt, meat, maize meal and soap (see Table 2). In 1828 he was provided with four bullocks "for the purpose of carrying provisions to the iron gangs who
cannot leave their stations" and he was obliged to provide food for up to 700 men within a twenty-mile radius of his house. (13) After Therry met Wiseman in 1830, he described him as "a person of great natural shrewdness and of considerable prosperity", who had boasted of an income of £3000-£4000 per year for the supply of rations to the gangs. (14) The quality of food was a subject of continual complaint. At one stage Simpson went so far as to forward a sample of bad flour to the Colonial Secretary. When the lack of complaint from the convicts regarding rations was pointed out, he replied that:

... the prisoners are so completely under the surveillance of their overseers, that they dare not avow their resentments, on the subject of rations without their (the overseers) approbation, all of whom are in the interest of the contractor (Wiseman) and receive more abundant and superior quality of rations. (16)

Wiseman's unscrupulous and dishonest behaviour was also revealed when he attempted to force the overseer of No. 9 Iron Gang, Henry Martineer, to take a greater quantity of meat for the gang than was permitted. The latter stated under oath that Wiseman "had threatened to take his horse, ride off, and have his ticket taken". No action was taken against Wiseman, though Martineer, upon his own request, was removed to another area. (17)

Early in the construction period, Wiseman was also employed to repair the tools of the gangs with the blacksmiths lent to him by the government. Wilford enclosed the bills with an apologetic note to Macleay:

I have to observe that his (Wiseman's) demand is considered high, as he had a blacksmith lent to him for the double purpose of repairing the tools of the road-parties and working for the neighbourhood ... (18)
Wiseman was paid the requested sum, but further such expenses were avoided by the posting of a blacksmith with the gangs. (19)

Inspired by the success of his inn, Wiseman in 1830 applied for a grant of land at Ten Mile Hollow for the same purpose. (20) This was, again, a convenient stopping point, mid-way between the ferry and Wollombi, and was beside one of the very few areas of suitable flat land along the ridge. He was granted 100 acres there, ten acres of which had previously been promised to John Johnston for the same purpose. It was considered, however that it was "... more beneficial to the public to allow Wiseman to establish an Inn here than Johnston." (21) There is no record of a licence or an inn at Ten Mile Hollow, although partly exposed, well-built stone cellars or foundations there suggest that the project may have been begun and abandoned. (See Appendix 1, Section 33, Fig. 38 and Photos 213 and 214.)

A final connection between the Great North Road and Wiseman was his leasing of several buildings for government use, including the house of the Assistant Surveyor, where Simpson, and probably Warner, lived (see Fig. 42 and Plate 20); a barn where the convicts were gathered for religious services, and a building used as a police court. (22) Both Warner and Simpson appear to have found Wiseman difficult to deal with, and with their many complaints invariably conveyed exasperation, outrage and an inability to come to terms with this abrasive, wealthy ex-convict. Wiseman refused to pay slaughtering dues imposed by Warner and he infuriated the latter in 1828 by allowing his pigs to foul the scarce water supply:

... upwards of one hundred (of his) pigs daily rolling themselves in the salt water mud, and then running into a fresh water creek that I have had
much trouble in securing so as to retain fresh water for the use of the gangs. (23)

Besides the problems of poor quality rations and the irregularities of the ferry, Simpson found the area of Lower Portland Head “decidedly the dearest in the colony” where he was “procluded ... from obtaining milk, vegetables or other incidental aids for a family of eleven persons”. (24) After a long and bitter struggle over the payment of rent by Simpson on the house leased to him by Wiseman, Simpson was finally evicted from it in May 1832, while suffering from “cold and lumbago”. (25)

Wiseman thus emerges as an abrasive, rapacious and thoroughly interesting character whom officials found infuriating and travellers described as kindly, hospitable, honest and hardworking. Therry was most impressed:

In the colony his conduct was industrious and his character for probity irreproachable. I saw him often afterwards, but never without a telescope in hand, with which he kept a lookout for travellers as they descended the mountain pass on the opposite side of the river to his house. He gave to all a friendly greeting. (20)

Wiseman’s enterprising activities and constant stream of requests to the government were, however, not particularly unusual. While to modern eyes he might seem intolerably greedy, the Colonial Secretary’s office was no doubt constantly deluged with requests for land, convict servants, special consideration, application for licences, offers of contracts, claims for reimbursement and remuneration, suggestions for relocation of roads and so on, especially in this period of rapid expansion. It appears to have been typical of the government’s response that Wiseman’s requests were generally met with generosity and co-operation, while his reported wrong-doings received either a blind eye or
leniency. Envy probably played a part in Simpson's and Warner's dislike of him, and the former made efforts to place himself in a similar situation by urging an alteration in the line of the Great North Road as previously discussed. Wiseman's opportunism was generally admired by private individuals and encouraged by the government. Such activities, after all, hastened the civilisation of the country and broke down the barriers of isolation and distance.

Wiseman played an integral and vital part in the construction of the Great North Road, since he acquired the monopoly of interest in it. He controlled the traffic by his ferry over the Hawkesbury; he provided accommodation for travellers and leased buildings for officials and government activities; he supplied rations to up to 700 convicts and probably controlled the supply of food purchased by private individuals. While the drawbacks of his sole control over these key aspects of both road construction and travel were obvious to the government, it was equally clear that his efforts greatly reduced the difficulties of road construction by gangs in this isolated area. The functions he performed would otherwise have been undertaken by the government itself.

Wiseman's promising empire suddenly fell flat, however, in 1832. The gangs were removed and with them his victualling contract and leases, while at the same time, the volume of traffic slackened and diminished with the introduction of a regular steam boat service between Sydney and Newcastle. As a result, his inn was not so well-patronised, the ferry became unprofitable and was sold, the inn at Ten Mile Hollow was never built and the village of Wiseman's Ferry remained an isolated outpost, in spite of its early promise. The ultimate failure of all Wiseman's ventures reflects the decline of
importance and eventual abandonment of the Great North Road itself.
SECTION III/5

EMANCIPIST ENTERPRISE : SOLOMON WISEMAN AT LOWER PORTLAND HEAD

Notes
2. Wiseman to Macleay, 6 October 1826, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
3. See Mitchell, Three Expeditions, pp. 7-8; Dusaresq, Letter III; Robert Dawson, The Present State of Australia, 1830, p. 304; Lieutenant A.W. Bratton, R.N., Excursions in N.S.W., Western Australia and Van Dieman’s Land During the Years 1830, 1831, 1832, and 1833, London, 1833, p. 86; Roger Therry, Reminiscences of Thirty Years’ Residence in N.S.W. and Victoria, London, 1863, p. 120.
4. Wiseman to Macleay, 1 May 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Dullunty to Harrington, 11 May 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
5. Wiseman to Macleay, 4 September 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Macleay to Wiseman, 25 September 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
7. Wiseman to Macleay, 22 September 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
8. Ibid.
10. Simpson to Macleay, 3 January 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
11. Wiseman to Macleay, 30 March 1832, with Memorandum relative to rates fixed by Act of Council, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
14. Therry, p. 120.
15. Simpson to Mitchell, 5 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
16. Ibid.

17. Simpson to Mitchell, 8 June 1830, (enclosure), A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

18. Wilford to Macleay, 9 June 1827, (and enclosure), A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

19. Dumaresq to Macleay, 16 June 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

20. Harrington to Mitchell, 13 April 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

21. Ibid.


23. Warner to Macleay, 11 February 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

24. Simpson to Macleay, 3 October 1829, (Memorial to Darling), A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

25. Simpson to Mitchell, 9 May 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.J.

26. Therry, p. 120.
6. Second Period - Simpson and the Road between Wisemans

Ferry and Mount Manning

... this road, if well supplied with gangs, will be the grandest improvement in the country. (1)

By 1830, Dumasresq's prophecy seemed to have been fulfilled. Under the superintendence of Lieutenant Percy Simpson, the increased number of road gangs achieved structures and formations of such magnitude that contemporary travellers never failed to be impressed and no doubt reassured by the air of permanency and civilisation emanating from this road through the wilderness (see Plates 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25).

Percy Simpson's military career began in 1809, when he was an Ensign in the First Garrison Battalion, and he became a Lieutenant of the Royal Corsican Rangers in 1813. He was appointed Judge-Advocate in the Ionian Islands during 1813, and after a year was sent on a "particular service of trust" to Sicily. Returning to the Ionian Islands in 1814, he took up the post of Chief of the Local Government and Military Commandant of the Island of Paxos for three years. Upon the disbanding of his company in Corfu in 1817, Simpson returned to England but failed to receive the promotion for which he had hoped and remained on full pay of the 5th Veteran Battalion. (2) His situation was no doubt typical of many officers after the Napoleonic Wars, and, as he found his pay "... very inadequate to support himself, his wife and children", he wrote to Earl Bathurst in February 1822:

... he (Simpson) ventures to implore your Lordship to be pleased in consideration of his past services, to appoint him to fill some civil station either in the Colony of New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land (where his knowledge of surveying and roadmaking might be useful) where he would cheerfully remove to with his family at his own expense... (3)
He subsequently arrived in N.S.W. in 1822, with his family and a letter of recommendation from Lord Torrens to Governor Brisbane, and was almost immediately appointed Commandant of a new agricultural station at Wellington Valley in the isolated central west of N.S.W. The settlement was unsuccessful and was abandoned in 1826, (4) whereupon Simpson selected and took up 4,000 acres at "Koorambung" (present day Cooranbong) near Lake Macquarie (see Figs. 40 and 41). His efforts to raise cattle there, which Clouten terms "an agricultural experiment in a frontier region" were also largely unsuccessful. (5) Shortly after his attempt to persuade the government to alter the line of the Great North Road, as discussed, he replaced Warner as Assistant Surveyor at Wisemans Ferry on 18th June 1828. (6)

Simpson probably had formal qualifications as a surveyor and engineer, although the source is unknown. Apart from his references to his skills, as cited above, and to "the improved system of roadmaking in England," (7) the practical outcome of his work reveals that he was well-versed in the new methods emerging from the contemporary road-building revolution.

A well-written man, Simpson was, like most new settlers, an opportunist who sought wealth and status in the new country. He was also ambitious, headstrong and rather outspoken, clashing several times with his supervisors on various matters during his period of supervision. (8) It appears from his memorial to Darling of 1829 that at least part of his motivation in constructing such grandly scaled section of road was his desire for promotion, increased salary and improved situation. His work certainly succeeded in impressing the governor, and everyone else, but had the opposite effect of confining him to Wisemans Ferry and the North Road until 1832.
Darling himself ensured this in September 1830, when Harrington informed Mitchell that Simpson:

... in consequence of the important nature of the work in which he is employed, and the manner in which he has executed it, is to be continued until further directions are given. (9)

Although his road building was spectacularly successful, it did not make him rich. He was declared insolvent in 1831 which caused some consternation in England because he, like Warner, had been appointed a magistrate in order to enforce discipline in the gangs. However he made good his debts by 1832 and upon the completion of the Great North Road at Wisemans Ferry he became Assistant Surveyor of Roads for the Parramatta district and during the 1840's built a large house, Oaklands, in the Dundas area. (10)

After his arrival in Wisemans Ferry in July 1828, the distribution of Nos. 3, 4 and 8 Iron Gangs and No. 25 Road Party remained unaltered until the end of the year. The workforce was augmented by the addition of No. 9 Iron Gang in September, which was stationed around the Maroota Forest area (see Map 5), within eight miles of the ferry, until October 1829. (11) In spite of Lockyer's specific directives, the number of convicts in each iron gang continued to fluctuate considerably about an average of fifty, ranging from 31 men (No. 9 Iron Gang, January 1830) to 65 men (No. 4 Iron Gang, April 1829), while in No. 25 Road Party, the only unisoned gang, the convicts were more numerous, averaging about 60 and ranging from 43 in April 1829 to 93 in May 1830 (see Figs. 3-5). (12)

Simpson was thus entrusted with the supervision of up to 700 of the most obdurate criminals in the colony, and as they became more familiar with the area, they escaped in increasing
numbers, forming gangs of bushrangers plundering local settlers and the road stations. (13) In an attempt to counter this, Darling in September 1830 ordered the 39th Regiment to Devine's Hill to guard the iron gangs stationed there. Simpson immediately objected, arguing that the soldiers would "subvert or undermine that order and regularity which has so conspicuously existed in the convict gangs under my supervision", and would interfere with the progress of the works because of their "want of experience in road making and method of working convicts." (14) Simpson's tirade betrays a jealously protective attitude to what had obviously become something of a personal project. In reply, Darling requested a report on the number of escaped convicts from all gangs and upon discovering that those who had absconded from Simpson's gangs (68) made up over half the total number of escapees (132), curtly dismissed Simpson's objections. (15) The military remained at Wisemans Ferry, stationed in the stockade at the top of Devine's Hill (see Fig. 32), until the completion of work there in mid-1832. (16)

No. 25 Road Party was still constructing the road over the ridge just beyond the first ascent of the north bank of the Hawkesbury when Mitchell instructed Finch in December 1823 to loosen and survey a new line of ascent of the "hills opposite Wisemans". (17) Apart from being winding, precipitous and narrow, the old ascent was far too indirect for Mitchell's approval, and Finch accordingly surveyed two new lines further north. He submitted sketch plans, elevations and a lengthy report which stressed the extremely rugged and practically impenetrable nature of the terrain (see Photo 103). At the point "E" on one of the lines, he wrote that "... a wall 100 feet high must be built which would "enhance the magnitude of the work". The alternative line required "... in some parts ... removing (of) large masses of rock, but appears liable to
no objection but the great labour required to complete. (18)
Although neither of Finch's new lines were eventually adopted,
his comments were pertinent to the nature of the line later
selected by Mitchell. In his Report on Roads (1856), Mitchell
wrote that Darling had instructed him to "attend to the
question of a line of ascent", whereupon he himself went to
Wisemans Ferry in January 1829, and "... after some days of
reconnaissance and making a survey, the line of ascent was
found". Map 6 compares the old and new lines of ascent. No
mention was made of Finch's earlier attempt, and Mitchell was,
as usual, quick to point out the saving of 2 miles in
distance as a major benefit of his line. (19) He officially
renamed Twelve Mile Valley as "Snodgrass Valley" but this name
never came into general use. (20) The ferry crossing place
was also removed approximately a mile further north to its
present position (see Map 6).

By April 1829 the gangs had completed most of the road between
Baulkham Hills and Ten Mile Hollow, apart from the access to
the Hawkesbury River. Lockyer reported to Macleay on May 1
that it was necessary to decide on the remainder of the line
to Wallis Plains. (21) The cart-track by now well established
along Finch's survey line (see Maps 4 and 12) was considered
inappropriate for the Great North Road and a revision of its
location was deemed necessary. Mitchell made an expedition to
the area and produced two long reports and two maps (Maps 11
and 12) in which he explained and justified both his specific
choice of line between Laguna ("Young Wiseman's") and Ten Mile
Hollow, and the more general plan he devised for the remainder
of the road. The first report dealt with two reasons for the
general plan, first:

... circumstances ... leave little room for
selection elsewhere: to the eastward where they
(the ravines and ridges) are bolder and to the
westward, where the hills also rise towards the Blue Mountains, there is no continuous ridge of equal extent with that to this point from the Hawkesbury northward, and it is plain that any deviation further to the westward would be a more circuitous route ... (22)

The concern with circuitousness and its avoidance was the key to Mitchell's thinking and dominated his process of selection. The fact that the existing line was the most direct was also linked with Mitchell's second reason - that branches could easily be made from such a centrally located line in order to serve the whole Hunter Valley rather than just its lower reaches. The central point was Wollombi (see Maps 1 and 11), where the road was to branch "at equal angles" to Maitland and Broke respectively, and at Broke it branched again to Patrick's Plains in the middle Hunter and to Warkworth and beyond in the Upper Hunter. This was an economical plan in terms of construction, since:

... a considerable saving of road making may be effected between these points, by carrying the road for a certain distance an intermediate direction so as to describe the letter T rather than V. (23)

This scheme was only the beginning. As Jeans points out:

His (Mitchell's) exploring efforts and hopes of a lasting contribution to discovery came to be centred on finding a route to the northwest and so to Asia. He planned his Great North Road for extension to Fort Essington, 2,000 miles to the Northwest. (24)

Mitchell's second report dealt with the details of the line he selected between Laguna and Ten Mile Hollow (see Map '2). Beginning at the northern end of the section, Mitchell almost completely ignored Finch's line and thus the established track, writing that in principle he had "endeavoured throughout to combine the straightest direction with that of the least declivity according to which principle, of course, the hills and rocky points are to be avoided". (25) Between
Richard Wiseman's property and Mt. Simpson, the line was removed from the "flats of the Wollombi" which were liable to flooding, to a "flat and narrow valley" further west, which was more direct. The ascent of Mt. Simpson was described as having a "moderate declivity" with the lower portion requiring "some making along the sides of two hills", construction which was justified because it "would be preferable to cutting a road of much greater length along the sides of the swamps". He also proposed to shorten the line even further by "reconnoitring on a direct line", showing this as a broken line on the plan (Map 12). Evidently this proposal proved impractical since the line which was eventually built bears no resemblance to that shown on his plan (see Fig. 83). The labour involved in the ascent of Mt. Simpson (Ramsay's Leap) was also underestimated, since the massive construction there was some of the heaviest undertaken on the entire road (see Appendix 1, Section 4d; Photos 309-315; and Figs. 103-105).

From the summit of Mt. Simpson to Mt. Manning Mitchell described the line as running between "profound Ravinea" but made no mention of the heavy works necessary at Mt. McQuoid and Mt. Simpson (see Appendix I, Sections 4a and 4b; Photos 284-292 and 293-308; and Figs. 94 and 95). The line was also altered between Mt. Manning and Sampson's Pass. While the old line traversed "a range of rocky knolls", the new line crossed a "smooth flat on the westward (Circuit Flat) nearly clear of timber" with a "surface of small ironstone gravel" and "running water at hand". At Sampson's Pass a "ledge of rock" provided an ascent and another large loop in the old road was cut off by proposed construction in a "rocky corner" on the south side of Sampson's Pass. The new line then concurred with the old to the northern end of Judge Dowling Ranges where Mitchell located another ledge "midway between
the summit and the (present) road" which "needed only to be cleared". At the south end of the range he roughly followed the old line to Mt. Baxter, and between the latter and Ten Mile Hollow, where "... (the) hills comprise the most difficult part of the present path" he again was "happy to find a ledge" by which they could be avoided. At Ten Mile Hollow, from whence the road was already complete, he marked a reserve for a village, remarking that the soil was good there. Reserves were also planned at Geber Gunha, Hungry Flat, Sampson's Pass, Dennis' Dog Kennel and Mt. Finch (see Map 12). His vision of the road apparently included a series of small hamlets clustered at convenient intervals along the great thoroughfare. (26)

On the whole, the report conveyed the impression that Mitchell had located a perfect line which was not only far shorter but required minimal construction. As the material remains of subsequent construction show, the latter advantage was exaggerated. On later maps the line differs in several sections from that originally selected by Mitchell, suggesting that alterations had been necessary during construction (see Fig. 83). Gangs were placed on the new line immediately, (27) with Simpson responsible for the sections south of Mt. Manning and Finch supervising the area beyond, towards Wollombi.

By October 1829 No. 9 Iron Gang had completed the road in the vicinity of Maroota Forest, within 8 miles of the Ferry, ending the construction of the road south of the descent to Wisemans Ferry. (28) The latter section extended 1 km south of the river, with Nos. 3 and 4 Iron Gangs stationed there during 1827 and 1828. (29) Simpson continued the massive work begun by Warner on the descent, greatly improving the construction standard of the masonry and drainage and adding a
bridge (Bridge 2) near the summit (see Appendix 1, Sections 1d and 1e).

Both north and south approaches to the river frequently draw praise from travellers, usually accompanied by references to the usefulness of the convict road gang system. At the ferry crossing a stone wharf on the south side of the Hawkesbury was begun by No. 25 Road Party, which was posted there between January 1831 and July 1832, but it was still unfinished in April 1832 when the Master Attendant, Nicholson, inspected the punts. (30)

The zig-zag descent to Wisemans had the longest construction period on the entire road. Although the structures on the ascent of Devines Hill were larger, they were completed more quickly as a result of the concentration of the labour of between two and four gangs there over three years (see Figs. 4-7). During the construction of the Devine's Hill ascent travellers continued to use Warner's ascent via Doherty's and Rose's Run, in spite of an unfinished portion across the ridge at the summit (see Map 6). (31) Today heaps of unused, abandoned cut stone by the side of the old road (see Photo 270) strikingly illustrate the sudden departure of No. 25 Road Party in January 1829 to commence Simpson's much more ambitious alternative. This gang was first placed on the section closest to the river, and built the large stone conduit bridge (Bridge 3) with its attached culverts and retaining wall, and the stone wharf (now destroyed) on the north bank of the river between January 1829 and September 1830 (see Appendix 1 Sections 3a and 3b; Photos 100-108; and Figs. 116, 128 and 129). Assistance was also given to No. 3 Iron Gang which undertook the largest part of the ascent of Devine's Hill between January 1829 and May 1832. (32) During 1831 Nos. 7 and 8 Iron Gang were also added to the labour
force in a bid to hasten the completion, and all the convicts were accommodated with the military guard in the stockade on a flat section near the summit (see Appendix 1, Section 3c; Photos 275-283; and Figs. 32-37). (33) Simpson, who saw the difficulty of the Devine’s Hill line as an opportunity to display his ability, constantly stressed the vast amount of blasting, quarrying and formation necessary and the “lefty and massive side walls” which were being erected (see for example Photos 149 and 162). (34) Today the extent of laborious work is clearly evident in the heavily buttressed revetment, the elaborate drainage system and the massive rocky cuttings scattered with jumper marks and chiselling (see Appendix 1, Section 3c and Photos 109-184).

Mitchell’s later account, implying both the facility of construction and speedy completion, is thus inaccurate. While he maintained that the line was open six months after his survey was made, the new ascent was in fact still impassable in June 1830 because, as Simpson reported, “... from the nature of the work necessarily carrying on, a cart road cannot be kept clear for some time”. He added in a negative fashion that “... the old road by Doherty’s is open and by which carts are not prevented from reaching Snodgrass Valley”. Finally, in May 1832, Simpson announced that “... the ironed gangs will have no employment where they are now at work (Devine’s Hill) as that portion of the road will be completed”. (35) In the same year in his Three Expeditions, Mitchell claimed that it was “Mr. Simpson who, under my direction, had accomplished this work”. (36) Technically he was correct, since for some of the construction period the Roads and Bridges Department had been under his supervision. However, his lack of engineering knowledge and the absence of any direct supervision over Simpson renders his appropriation of the credit for the impressive work unjustified and unfair.
In spite of the vast amount of labour expended on the road in the vicinity of Wisemans Ferry, Mitchell was at the same time planning to abandon this line in favour of "... making the road cross the Hawkesbury at about five miles below Wisemans", in order to "cut off the angle ... formed by the road crossing the Hawkesbury at Wisemans" thus rendering the line "a very perfect one" (37) (see Map 11). The proposal was reiterated in his second report. This is perhaps the most obvious example of Mitchell's disregard for both established settlement and for the expense of construction already underway or complete in his obsessive quest for straight roads.

By March 1830 the road between the summit of Devine's Hill and Ten Mile Hollow was open and complete. It appears to have been constructed solely by No. 8 Iron Gang which had earlier opened the road between Castle Hill and Wisemans Ferry (see Figs. 3-5). (38) Both sections reveal lack of skill with regard to masonry - the walls range in style between Type 1a and 2b (see Appendix 1, Table 12), with those of the poorer quality more common, while the culverts are primitive and roughly finished (cf. Appendix 1, Sections 1a and 3, Photos 8-20 and 186-203). Between Devine's Hill and Mitchell's Loop structures are limited to low, mainly damaged rubble walls of partly cut or uncut stone, with an absence of coursing and jointing (see for example Photos 187, 189, 193). Several rough stone culverts resemble those on the first ascent from Wisemans Ferry (cf. Photos 190, 192 and 267, 268). The Mitchell's Loop section is more substantial, with a continuous, even retaining wall and several culverts. Presumably Mitchell gave unofficial directives to alter this section from its original location higher up the ridge, for the name survives only on survey maps (see Appendix 1,
Section 3H; Photos 194-196; and Fig. 93). In any case, more careful work was required to construct this pass. From January 1830, No. 8 Iron Gang spent several months around Ten Mile Hollow and the "7 Mile Post" (see Fig. 5). The latter area has several hairpin bends with only remnants of rough retaining walls surviving (see Photos 203-204). The gang also built numerous simple timber culverts, some of which are still intact (see Photos 195, 196, 201, 206-208). A ramp of stone walls, and a wall, 11.8 km and 12.9 km north of Wisemans Ferry respectively, are of much better quality, though not extensive (see Appendix 1, Section 3 and Photos 210, 211). The steep descent to Ten Mile Hollow must have required large sections of revetment, but only a few rough remnants survive, mainly as a result of modern maintenance works.

No. 9 Iron Gang was meanwhile placed beyond Ten Mile Hollow in November 1829 and constructed the section to Giber Gunha in the vicinity of Mt. Baxter until they were removed in April 1830. In January that year Simpson reported:

... (No. 9 Iron Gang) has been engaged on the Bridle Road cutting northward of Snodgrass Valley which has been effected as far as Giber Gunha where as at several places ... the progress ... has been arrested by extensive rocky substances requiring a good deal of blasting and quarrying which to render the Road safe and in some cases passable must be cleared as the operations proceed. The road is making 10 feet wide and is proceeding with accuracy and precision according to the line laid down by the Surveyor General. At Giber Gunha a side wall of some considerable extent is requisite, the foundation for which is preparing. ([47])

The side wall referred to is most likely the substantial revetment 21.1 km north of Wisemans Ferry near Mt. Baxter (see Map 1; Appendix 1, Section 3m and Photos 224-227). By March 1830 the gang was "constructing a bridle road to open the north line over Hungry Flat" and also still building the
pass at Giber Gunha/Mt. Baxter. It was slow work as a result of considerable excavation in order to "maintain a level base throughout this part of the road". Part of No. 25 Road Party was also stationed at Giber Gunha in October 1830, possibly to complete or repair work there. (42)

Near Ten Mile Hollow a stone bridge was constructed by John Clare's Bridge Party between January and September 1830. This party had been formed from No. 25 Road Party and probably incorporated the more skilled stonemasons from it. (43) The bridge (Bridge 4) is the largest and most ambitious bridge on the road with its sweeping curved abutments and large central pier (see Appendix 1, Section 3k; Photos 215-218; and Figs. 130-132). After its completion the gang was moved to Sampson's Pass, presumably to construct the smaller, simpler stone bridge there (Bridge 5, see Appendix 1, Section 3o, Photos 244-248 and Figs. 133-134). (44)

The road over the Judge Dowling Range to Hungry Flat and Sampson's Pass was opened mainly by No. 8 Iron Gang between May and December 1830, with part of No. 25 Road Party also posted there in October that year (45) (see Fig. 5). Like the section below Ten Mile Hollow, the structures are today fragmented and intermittent, but suggest that they were originally extensive, although loosely constructed. There are numerous examples of chiselled and blasted cuttings, chiselled side drains and solid stone surface (see Appendix 1, Section 3 and Photos 229-236). The small amounts of "making" proposed by Mitchell for Sampson's Pass proved to be an underestimation. Between May and December 1830, No. 8 Iron Gang also opened this extremely rocky section by blasting the rocky ledge away and erecting rough retaining walls continuously for approximately 1 kilometre (see Appendix 1, Section 3n and Photos 237-243). (46)
Another impressive bridge was built at Circuit Flat spanning Little Mogo Creek. Although it is not documented, the style and detail strongly suggest that it was also constructed by Clare's Bridge Party, probably in 1831 after it completed the bridge at Sampson's Pass. It is interesting to note that a suitable rock ford nearby could easily have been utilised to cross the creek but would have involved a slight deviation in the line. This suggests that Simpson, like Mitchell, was interested in maintaining a straight road, and perhaps also that his ambitious structures sometimes exceeded the actual requirements of the terrain (see Appendix 1, Section 3p; Photos 252-256 and Figs. 135-136).

The final, most northerly section under Simpson's supervision, the Mt. Manning area, was constructed between May and December 1830 by No. 9 Iron Gang which cleared, blasted out and formed the road. (47) In a particularly deep hollow 0.65 km north of Mt. Manning a large ramp of battered stone walls was constructed to maintain a gentle gradient (see Appendix 1, Section 4a; Photos 284-292 and Fig. 94). Like the retaining walls near Little Maroota Forest and at Gibber Gunja/Mt. Baxter, the work was again neatly dressed, coursed and jointed (cf. Photos 26, 27 and 225, 226). Clare's Bridge Party was possibly also involved in the construction of the ramp, since it was stationed at Mt. Manning in February 1832. No. 9 Iron Gang appear to have been removed from the Great North Road altogether in December 1830. (48)

As shown in Figs. 3-7, construction during 1828 and 1829 was limited to the road below Ten Mile Hollow, while 1830 marks the period of the most intensive activity, with gangs spread between Wisemans and Mt. Manning. During 1831-1832 the gangs were again concentrated at the approaches to the Hawkesbury river.
The arrival of ambitious and skilled military men such as Simpson and Mitchell eventually transformed the simple cart track to the north, with its makeshift and hastily-built structures, into a Great Road which was proudly claimed to be "as good as any in England". The line traced by Finch and beaten out by travellers until 1829 was considered in need of review and, in the alterations he made and the expanded plan he formulated, Mitchell came to see the line as a potential "perfect road". The labour force was increased and the road gang system became more firmly entrenched as the arrangements for victualling, sheltering and guarding the convicts became more and more complex. Between 1828 and 1832 the gangs were shuffled around over the entire length of Simpson's area, applied to the most difficult sections first and finally converging on Wisemans Ferry during 1831 and 1832 to complete the most mammoth task, the passes from the river to the ridges on either side.

The enthusiasm for road-building proved contagious. Finch, who was posted on the section between Mt. McQuoid and Wollombi in 1830, was evidently inspired by Simpson's success and sought to emulate it. The rising stone walls, the "fine broad avenue" and the massive, perhaps unnecessarily extravagant bridges are a succinct and conspicuous statement of the colony's view of itself and its progress.
SECTION III/6
SECOND PERIOD - SIMPSON AND THE ROAD BETWEEN WISEMANS FERRY AND MOUNT MANNING

Notes

1. Dumaresq, Letter III.

2. Army Lists, 1809 to 1817; Frederick, p. 339; Clouten, pp. 37-50; Colonial Office Records, Memorial of Lieutenant Percy Simpson of the late 5th Royal Veteran Battalion to the Right Honorable Earl Bathurst, 26 February 1822, C.O. 201/111, Folio 581.


5. Clouten, pp. 40-44.

6. Maclean to Hughes, 28 June 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.B.

7. Simpson to MacLeay, 3 October 1829, (Memorial to Darling), A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

8. See Lockyer to Maclean, 8 April 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Simpson to Mitchell, 7 October 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

9. Harrington to Mitchell, 15 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.

10. H.R.A., Vol. 16, p. 265, Darling to Howick, 6 June 1831; p. 276, Darling to Goderich, 20 June 1831; p. 621; Simpson to Maclean 27 March 1832; p. 773, Goderich to Bourke, 14 October 1832; Clouten, p. 89; National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), Recorded listing report for Oaklands House, Bellingdon Road, Dundas, N.S.W.

11. See Road Gang Reports; Lockyer to Maclean, 25 September 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Maclean to Lockyer, 9 November 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.B.

12. See Road Gang Reports.

13. Simpson to Mitchell, 18 February 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Warner to Maclean, 21 April 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Maclean to Mitchell, 27 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.; Simpson to Maclean, 10 August 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; in a letter to S. North, the Superintendent of Police at Windsor, Simpson wrote that "marauders take to the valleys where it is impossible horses can be conducted and they escape by secreting themselves therein", A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

14. Simpson to Mitchell, 7 October 1830, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


17. Mitchell to Finch, 29 October 1828, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to S.

18. Finch to Mitchell, 23 December 1828, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G. and maps A.O.5171, "Ground Plan of Different Roads Proposed" and "Elevations of Lines laid down on the Ground Plan" and A.O.5172, "Sketch of a Hill on the ... showing the Proposed ... North Road", December 1828.


20. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road between Young Wiseman's ... and the Twelve Mile Hollow", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

21. Looker to Macleay, 7 May 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

22. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road Northward from Sydney", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

23. Ibid.

24. D.N. Jeans, An Historical Geography of N.S.W. to 1801, Sydney, 1972, p. 43.

25. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road between Young Wiseman's ... and the Twelve Mile Hollow", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

26. Ibid.

27. Looker to Macleay, 4 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

28. Macleay to Looker, 9 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.

29. Road Gang Reports; Looker to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

30. Road Gang Reports; Nicholson to Macleay, 27 April 1832, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

31. Simpson to Mitchell, 5 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

32. Road Gang Reports.

33. N.S.W. Calendar and Directory, 1832, p. 124; Simpson to Mitchell, 16 April 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Simpson to Mitchell, 30 July 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.


37. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road Northward from Sydney", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

38. Road Gang Reports; Simpson to Mitchell, 5 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

39. See Department of Lands, "Crown Lands Office Survey of Great North Road, St. Albans Turn-off to 1.7 km past Ten Mile Hollow", 25 March 1980.


41. Ibid.; Lockyer to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.I.

42. Simpson to Mitchell, March 1830, "Report of the Assistant Surveyor of the Road Branch for the District of Lower Portland Head for March 1830", in Road Gang Reports, A.O.N.S.W.; Mitchell to Simpson, 8 October 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to S.


44. Ibid.

45. Road Gang Reports.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.
7. The Hunter Valley Roads

While the gangs under Warner and Simpson toiled on the Great North Road above and below Wisemans Ferry, gangs were also sent to Newcastle in 1827, and in 1829 began construction of the branch of the Great North Road between Wollombi and Maitland. In a sense it is difficult to strictly separate the North Road from the road system which developed in the Hunter Valley at the same time, since the latter branch was considered part of that system. Moreover, the economic importance of the Hunter Valley made not only a land-link with Sydney necessary, but also roads linking the centres within the valley itself - Newcastle, Maitland, Morpeth, Patrick's Plains and the districts of the upper Hunter (see Map 18). While there was at least the alternative of a sea voyage from Sydney to Newcastle, ships could not penetrate the valley via the Hunter River further than Morpeth, which consequently became a major port. (1)

The various branches of the Great North Road towards the valley appear to have been based on bush tracks formed by settlers. Until Mitchell's intervention in 1829, all the roads in the valley were constructed along these early lines, and according to Cunningham in 1827, this was the norm of road building in N.S.W. (2) Finch did not even include the line of road beyond the Wollombi on his map, presumably because either the track was already clearly marked, or because the country was so easily traversed that he did not consider it necessary (see Map 4). In 1825, Finch would have reached the established road to Wallis Plains and Newcastle at Parson's Hill. To the west it continued towards Patrick's Plains via Lochinvar, Allandale and present-day Whittingham, crossing Black Creek and Jump Up Creek and the Hunter River at Singleton Ford. To the east the road was well established,
but from Maitland to Newcastle it was difficult as a result of 21 creek crossings and the Hexham swamps (see Maps 1 and 18). (3)

Assistant Surveyor Patrick Campbell was sent to Newcastle to direct the road parties on 22 May 1827. Two gangs had been stationed there in April that year, presumably working on the streets and on the road towards Wallis Plains. (4) Between July and October, one Road Party was stationed at Wallis Plains (Maitland) as was the other in November. During 1828 No. 27 Road Party commenced work on the Great North Road towards Wollombi and were stationed at the Parson's Hill junction, while No. 28 Iron Gang returned to Newcastle (see Fig. 3). The Newcastle Road Department was augmented in 1829 to five gangs, Nos. 27, 29 and 42 Road Parties, No. 7 Iron Gang and the Newcastle Bridge Party, which were distributed as shown on Fig. 4 over the original roads linking Newcastle, Maitland, Morpeth, Patrick's Plains and Wollombi. (5)

It is likely that little heavy work was required for most of these lines, since they crossed easy terrain and were already partly "made" by the traffic using them. Peter Cunningham, describing the original road from Wallis Plains to "Mr. Singleton's ford (Singleton) at the head of Patricks Plains" in 1827 wrote that the country was:

... generally so even and so thinly timbered and clear of brush that the banks of a few rivulets and gullies only require to be lowered or bridges thrown across, nature having done the rest. But the road, even as it is, cannot be found much fault with, there being only two or three difficult gullies which require, in crossing, a partial unloading of the drays. (6)

The road between Newcastle and Wallis Plains, which had been ordered to be built by Brisbane as early as 1824, was much more difficult as a result of numerous creeks and swamp lands
and was constantly in need of repair. (7) No. 27 Road Party was stationed on it from March 1829, No. 29 Road Party from January to March 1830 and from December 1831 to January 1832. More work was done by an unknown gang from September 1834 (see Figs. 4-6 and 9). (8) In the early stages it was described as "... a plain beaten path leading through the woods along the left bank of the river". (9) By November 1829, Lookyer reported that it:

... is very good, with the exception of the last three miles in approaching Newcastle which is owing entirely to the bad material, a heavy sand, to remedy which I propose on a supply of bullocks being obtained to log it across and place gravel on it. (10)

However, the road was described in May the following year as "nearly impassable" and by March 1835 again as "impassable" with only five of the 21 bridges intact. (11)

A "considerable" number of men at Newcastle, including some invalids, were reported in February 1828 as "dispensible but not fit for private service" and it was they who formed No. 27 Road Party which was posted "on the road towards Wiseman's", that is, Richard Wiseman's property at Laguna. (12) A year later the Australian had only negative comments on its progress - "The new line of road from Wallis Plains to Wiseman's is in a plight less miserable than the mouldering breakwater at Newcastle". (13) Major Lookyer's report a month later (March 1829) was less gloomy. While the line between Ten Mile Hollow and Richard Wiseman's was, as yet, only open to "horse and foot travellers":

... from this (R. Wiseman's) to Wallis Plains, a distance of forty miles, Drays and Carts with Bullock teams constantly travel, the road from Wallis Plains being opened, burnt off and cleared to within 18 miles of Mr. Wiseman's farm on the Wollombi ... (14)

By November, No. 7 Iron Gang was employed on the remaining
seventeen-mile section between Baker's Farm and Richard Wiseman's, the line being:

... over chiefly a flat surface and easy to make, except the points of ridges which will require some heavy work to round them ... (45)

This section appears to have been completed by March 1830, as No. 7 Iron Gang were then removed to Watagan Creek near Wollombi.

Like much of the Great North Road, the shape of the Hunter Valley roads was significantly altered by Mitchell's replanning in 1829 and resurvey in 1832 (see Maps 11, 15 and 16). The old settler's tracks may have been convenient, but on a large map (and within a larger vision) they appeared circuitous, badly proportioned and lacking in pleasing symmetry. In his 1829 report, Mitchell proposed a line between Broke and Patrick's Plains (see Map 16) which was different from the established track (Broke-Wittingham, of Maps 16 and 18) and an additional line between Patrick's Plains and Warkworth. This map also included a rough sketch of a more direct line between Wallis Plains in the lower Hunter to Patrick's Plains (see Map 11). The details of the two branches from Broke to Warkworth and Patrick's Plains respectively were discussed in the report:

8. The general line being continued along the Wollombi, first in a general direction northward from Coroheare (Wollombi) seven miles and then due North eleven miles (direct directions) to the Village Reserve of Broke would at length reach the open country on Hunter's River; and from this point a road might be made to Patricks Plains twelve miles distance in a direct line, which would be accessible to all the central parts of the Hunter Valley. (17)

Mitchell's new line thus continued more directly on from the Newcastle-Wallis Plains road, forming a junction with the Great North Road near Stoney Creek (at present-day Farley)
along the route of the New England Highway through Branxton and Belford, but leaving that route before Singleton and leading directly towards Warkworth (see Map 18). From there it was to cross the Hunter River at Leamington and continue towards Liverpool Plains and the Hastings and Manning Rivers. However the exclusion of the established inn on the banks of the Hunter at Singleton resulted in the settlers' continued use of the original tracks instead of the newly-planned lines.

The proposals threw the works already underway into chaos. The construction work already complete between Wallis Plains, Patrick's Plains and Singleton became redundant. Lockyer ventured several pragmatic queries concerning the plans:

... (I) also beg to be informed whether I am to proceed with the road as stated in Paragraph No. 8 of Major Mitchell's report (cited above), though I would suggest ... whether it would not be better to complete which is already in progress and avail myself of the means I may find disposable without scattering the gangs and Road Parties on new lines which cannot possibly avail until the main Great Road is open. (19)

He suggested that the old roads in the valley might be slightly improved in order to serve "some years before the formation of regular roads". Mitchell's response to this expedient measure was that "Mr. Campbell would be better employed in continuing the line of road to and across the Hunter River than as at present in completing old settler's roads up the river ..." (20) When an alteration to the Hunter Valley line was suggested by a settler, Earle, he betrayed irritation and impatience in his reply to Macleay:

I beg to assure his Excellency that neither black natives nor settlers are likely to suggest any real improvement on a general line of road determined by actual survey of the ground ... (21)
In spite of Mitchell's opposition, and perhaps without his knowledge, gangs apparently continued to work on the old line between Wallis Plains and Singleton until December 1829 and a Bridge Party was stationed at Jump Up Creek on that line between January and July 1830 (see Figs. 4 and 5). (22) Campbell was relieved of his post in February that year and the Newcastle and Wollombi Road Departments were combined under the supervision of Heneage Finch, stationed on his property at Laguna. (23)

The new Hunter Valley lines, including those between Stoney Creek and Warkworth, Broke and Warkworth and Broke and Patrick's Plains, were not actually surveyed and marked out until 1833 (see Maps 15, 16 and 18). These were cleared by private individuals under contract and constructed in a desultory fashion by gangs under the direction of Peter Ogilvie, as discussed in Section III/9.

While several contemporary travellers observed that generally, the construction of a road in N.S.W. was preceded by and thus based upon a rough cart track formed and often discovered by settlers, it was Mitchell's firm conviction that the "two kinds (of roads) are not likely to coincide in direction". As a result the Hunter Valley was criss-crossed with an array of half-finished roads causing duplication of construction work. In the end, the unplanned town of Singleton flourished, while the official town of Leamington was never established: settlers accordingly used the original tracks and ignored Mitchell's lines.
SECTION III/7

THE HUNTER VALLEY ROADS

Notes


2. See Peter Cunningham, Two Years in N.S.W., p. 222.


4. Wilford to Macleay, 22 May 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Wilford to Macleay, 25 September 1827, "Detailed Report of the Numbers of Convicts who have been Employed in Making and Repairing Roads from December 1823 to September 1827", A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


6. P. Cunningham, p. 76. See also Mitchell to Macleay, 22 January 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

7. Ferry, p. 71.

8. Road Gang Reports: Lockyer to Macleay, 8 April 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.; Duthanty to Mitchell, 17 July 1834, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.


10. Lockyer to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

11. Finch to Mitchell, 19 May 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Ogilvie to Mitchell, 19 March 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

12. Macleay to Wilford, 23 February 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.


14. Lockyer to Macleay, 8 April 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

15. Lockyer to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

16. Road Gang Reports.

17. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road Northwards from Sydney", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.


19. Lockyer to Macleay, 30 November 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

20. Mitchell to Macleay, 22 January 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

22. Road Gang Reports.

23. Mitchell to Finch, 19 February 1830, A.O.W.S.W., S.G. to S.
8. Third Period - Finch, Dulhunty and the Ganges on the Wollombi

Elevated by Simpson's spectacular engineering and Mitchell's grandly-worded plans to the status of a "Great Road", the northern line was by 1830 considered to be the most important of the roads then underway and construction activity was accordingly stepped up. (1) The Newcastle Road Department was amalgamated with the new Wollombi station under the supervision of Hensage Finch from February 1830 until his replacement by Lawrence Vance Dulhunty in about June 1831. Like Simpson's work, many of Finch's projects have endured to provide an excellent material record of the road's construction, in spite of numerous subsequent and ongoing alterations.

The section for which Finch and Dulhunty were responsible was referred to as "the Wollombi", a title loosely encompassing the area of road between Mt. McQuoid and Dennis' Dog Kernel (present day Buketty), in the south, to Wollombi and thence northeast to Newcastle and northwest to Broke. Today these roads are used as alternative routes to the Hunter Valley, and while sections between Mt. McQuoid and Mt. Simpson and between Wollombi and Newcastle are sealed, most of the remainder is still earthen surfaced, and retains its original winding alignment and steep grades.

Hensage Finch M.A. was the second son of Vice Admiral the Hon. E. Finch and grandson of the Earl of Winchelsea. The letter from Earl Bathurst notifying Darling of Finch's appointment in 1825 as a surveyor stated that he had "... graduated brilliantly in Mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford" and had "extremely high qualifications". (2) The design of the works at, for example, Mt. McQuoid and Mt. Simpson indicate that he
had been trained in or had acquired a knowledge of road construction and masonry. The supervision of the Wollombi Road Station appears to have been his first experience in road building in N.S.W. and he took up the post in February 1830, residing at his property "Laguna" where the gangs, stores and bullocks were also stationed. (3) Finch's first instructions from Mitchell directed him to place the gangs "as much as possible on the road lately marked out", that is, the line south from Richard Wiseman's property (see Map '2'), and to "apply the ... gangs in force to the several difficult parts of the new line under Mount Finch and Mount Simpson" and also on "the side of Mt. McQuoid". (4) The line which Mitchell had just marked out (see Map 12) thus took precedence over the rest of the roads for which Finch was responsible - those between the various settlements in the Hunter Valley. The new road in the difficult sections was to be only 10 feet wide (3.05 m) to start with, but "to this extent the road must be made secure". No. 7 Iron Gang, which Finch later described as his "most efficient party", had already been placed on the Great North Road between Wollombi and Maitland, while the branch towards Broke and beyond had "not yet been carefully surveyed". (5) Finch's early response to his instructions revealed his enthusiasm for the work in which he was involved. The "ascent from the Wollombi to the ridge" he described as "very good"; he had "great pleasure in hearing the accounts which travellers give of the increased facility afforded by parts of the road already made" and he was "sanguine in my expectation of seeing light carts pass to Sydney in the course of six months". (6) In June 1830 he referred to Simpson's section, stating that "much labour will still be required to complete a road equally secure with the other part". (7) Obviously Simpson's
achievements had inspired him to do likewise and no doubt he was hopeful of the same renumeration and acclaim which Simpson expected.

In contrast to Mitchell's 1829 report, the mountains and valleys of the Wollombi proved to be formidable barriers requiring both path-breaking and heavy construction. Finch was forced to alter the line slightly on occasions because of "immense and irregular masses of rocks (which) have hitherto formed an almost impassable barrier". (8) At Mt. McQuoid, No. 29 Road Party between June 1830 and at least January '31 constructed two substantial sections of fine stone retaining walls incorporating a large culvert and a bridge, and cut a large portion of the pass from solid rock. (See Appendix 1, Sections 4b and 4c; Photos 293-308; and Figs. 95 and 102). (9) The ascent to the ridge at Mt. Simpson also proved a mammoth task. In September 1830, Finch reported that it was "forming and already made halfway up the hill", but that "on account of the abrupt termination of the range, a great deal of labour has been required to form the latter part of the road". (10) During 1830, Nos. 27 and 29 Road Parties constructed the road between Mt. Simpson and Murray's Farm (near Mt. Finch) and probably were involved in the first operations of clearing and cutting the line. No. 42 Road Party was stationed exclusively at Mt. Simpson during 1831 and most of 1832 (see Figs. 5-7). (11) The latter party probably built the massive curved retaining wall with its buttressing flume at Ramsay's Leap (see Appendix 1, Section 4d, Photos 309-315 and Figs. 103-105). It is likely that the remainder of the descent, which wound precariously along the steep contours of the mountain side was originally supported by a continuous retaining wall of equal standard. However, only a fragment of the latter remains near the base as a
result of road widening (Appendix I, Section 4). It appears therefore that Finch fulfilled his ambition of matching Simpson's work in scale and quality.

The other major obstacle was the Mt. Finch area, also referred to as "Murray's Valley" or the "back of Murray's Farm" where a swamp, several creeks and steep climbs again required much arduous labour. This was one of the first areas to receive attention — Finch placed No. 27 Road Party there not long after his arrival and it remained there during 1830 and 1831, while No. 29 Road Party and No. 7 Iron Gang also spent short periods there. (12) Two large stone culverts and one stone and timber culvert survive in this area (see Appendix I, Sections 4f, 4g and 4h; Photos 319-324; and Figs. 106 and 107). The less difficult section through the valley towards Finch's station (Laguna) was mainly constructed by No. 7 Iron Gang and No. 42 Road Party during 1830, and completed in 1832 by Nos. 27 and 42 Road Parties. (13) To the north of his farm, Finch concerned himself mainly with the major crossings over Watagan Creek at the south entrance to Wollombi, and Narrone Creek at the north east entrance to it from Maitland. The latter bridge was commenced by Hawkin's Bridge Party by June 1830, and Finch reported that he was awaiting Mitchell's instructions as to the line over Watagan Creek, to which Mitchell's survey had not extended. On receipt of these instructions in October, he respectfully pointed out that the crossing place selected was easily flooded, with the low banks necessitating the construction of a very long bridge "so as to connect the high land on either side". If, however, the line were removed from the "present horse track on the left bank" to the ridge on the opposite side, which he understood would "... be a subject for consideration when you lay out the road", the road could cross at a spot where "the high land approaches much nearer and the channel is much more
capacious". (14) Finch marked the suggested line on his "Plan of the New Road from Wiseman's Farm to Wollombi" and a comparison with G.B. White's official survey of the completed road in 1832 reveals that his suggestion and plan were adopted (see Maps 13 and 14).

When Darling decided in early 1831 to inspect the new road for himself, both Simpson and Finch hurriedly made their respective sections trafficable. Finch wrote that he "rode over the line under my superintendence and pointed out to the overseer the readiest mode of removing the obstructions which at present render it unsafe for a wheel-vehicle". (15) Unfortunately for Finch, the friction which had been mounting between Darling and Mitchell over, among other matters, the attachment of the Roads and Bridges Department to the Surveyor General's Department, (16) had soured the Governor's view of the new road to the point where he was enraged to find Finch stationed on his own property, and accused Mitchell of favouritism and misappropriation of government resources. He reported to Murray in March 1831:

... I discovered on my late tour to Hunter's River...
Mr. Finch who was attached to the Road Department by Major Mitchell, residing on his own farm, a grant of 2,000 acres on which and contiguous to Mr. Finch's residence, several buildings were erected by the government for the use of the road department. A Blacksmith's shop, store and Hospital, Mr. Finch being in possession of a complete Field Equipment consisting of Huts, Bullocks, and men, six of each in number maintained at the expense of the government. (17)

The latter group was a surveying party with which Finch had been supplied, since he was considered by Mitchell to be "available for the general survey of the colony". Darling was further infuriated by the fact that other surveyors were "kept idle for four months at Port Macquarie for want of the necessary equipment", while Finch could not possibly be utilising his, "... considering the extent of road and number of parties under his orders". (18) Finch's hopes of
commendation and recognition for his work were dashed and he was removed from the position soon after, and replaced by L.V. Dulhunty. Mitchell found this most inconvenient. He complained to Murray in February 1831:

On the North Road, the person who is to succeed Mr. Finch is not acquainted with the country nor what is to be done on the roads I laid out there, whereas I had instructed Mr. Finch on the spot, this officer having also previously surveyed that country. I am therefore under the necessity of proceeding to that part in order to report to Mr. Finch's successor (Mr. Dulhunty) the instructions I had already given to Mr. Finch. (19)

While Mitchell was probably denigrating Dulhunty's ability as a roadmaker as a result of his own opposition to Darling's orders, both the written and material records of Dulhunty's period suggest little of the expertise and enthusiasm of Finch. His reports were vague and uninspired and no surviving structures from his specific period of supervision have been located, although he did direct the completion of Finch's major works at Mt. McQuoid, Mt. Simpson and Mt. Finch. Finch meanwhile evidently became embittered by his abrupt dismissal and disillusioned with Mitchell. A memorandum, probably written by the Colonial Secretary, reported that:

It appears that the Surveyor General in a letter dated 2nd July 1831, reported that having written to Mr. Finch to urge his progress in the survey to the northward and southward of the Goulburn (River), he received a reply in a style different from that usually observed by that officer alluding to his "difference" with Major Mitchell, signified his intention to leave the Department and requested no more instructions be sent to him. (20)

Dulhunty's period of supervision marks a de-emphasis of the Great North Road, with gangs returning to work on the Hunter Valley Roads and the Long Bridge at Maitland (see Figs. 8'-0'). By 1833 the workforce on the North Road had shrunk to two road parties, Nos. 13 and 14 (formerly Nos. 42 and 27 Road Parties respectively) and Byrne's Bridge Party. (21) Dulhunty was
stationed at Wollombi and the road station probably formed part of the nucleus of the township (see Figs. 14 and 15). During 1831 and 1832 he directed the works between Mt. McQuoid and Wollombi, and in late 1832, Mitchell selected the lines of the remaining branches between Wollombi, Broke, Patrick's Plains and Warkworth (see Maps 15 and 16). Along with the new line through the Hunter Valley, Dulhunty's first task on the new section was the construction of the bridge over the Wollombi Brook at Wollombi, and he stationed McDougall's Bridge Party there between January and May and between July and December in 1833. (22) The bridge was apparently of some magnitude, but has been replaced. The line between Wollombi and Broke shown in Map 15 again wound along the steep sides of the narrow Wollombi valley, and the meandering of the river below, combined with Mitchell's efforts to keep the line as straight as possible, resulted in nine crossings of the Wollombi Brook, in addition to several creek crossings further towards Broke (see Appendix I, Section 5). In June 1833 the gangs were employed in cutting the road "round the rocky points north of my (Dulhunty's) camp and also to clear and open the line generally at the more difficult places below that place". (23) MacDougall's and Byrne's Bridge Parties were also posted at various times during 1833 and 1835 at the first three crossings of the Wollombi Brook. In June 1835 the third was left unfinished and the remaining six were presumably forded by travellers. (24) The gangs spent only approximately a year on the difficult section between Wollombi and Broke and Dulhunty moved the station to Warkworth, or Cockfighter's Creek about October 1834. (25)
Finch's early association with the road, his interest is it as a result of the location of his property, and his familiarity with Simpson's success inspired him to continue the construction of the road in an equally impressive fashion. As in Simpson's section, the terrain between Mt. McQuoid and Wollombi was for the main part difficult and required a tremendous amount of pathbreaking and construction by the gangs. Large numbers of convicts were again stationed for long periods on particular projects. The resulting structures were immense, and those which have not been destroyed have survived well because of their careful construction.

Subsequent work directed by Dulhunty was probably far more makeshift, because it was undertaken so hastily. River crossings were left unbridged, and the lack of physical evidence suggests that few masonry structures were built by the reduced number of convicts. Darling's visit in 1831 and Finch's subsequent dismissal from his post thus proved to be a turning point in the construction period. Finch's replacement by Dulhunty and the removal of the Governor himself not long after appears to have negated the impetus towards achieving a fine and permanent Great Road. Parallel to these developments was the introduction of steamboat services between Sydney and Newcastle in 1832, which also robbed the road of its potential role as the vital link between the two.
SECTION III/8

THIRD PERIOD - FINCH, DULHUNTY AND THE GANGS ON THE WOLLOMBI

Notes

1. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.; Macleay to Lockyer, 26 October 1829, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.R.B.; Simpson to Mitchell, 15 February 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Macleay to Mitchell, 16 February 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S. to S.G.


4. Mitchell to Finch, 19 February 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to S.

5. Ibid.; Finch to Mitchell, 4 October 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

6. Finch to Mitchell, 3 April 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

7. Finch to Mitchell, 23 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.; Road Gang Reports.

10. Finch to Mitchell, 14 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

11. Road Gang Reports; Finch to Mitchell, 23 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

12. Ibid.

13. Road Gang Reports; Dulhunty to Mitchell, 18 May 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

14. See Finch to Mitchell, 3 April 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Finch to Mitchell, 23 June 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Finch to Mitchell, 23 September 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Finch to Mitchell, 13 October 1830, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

15. Finch to Mitchell, 4 January 1831, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.


17. H.R.A., Vol. 16, p. 125, Darling to Murray, 28 March 1831; See also Mitchell to Macleay, 28 March 1831, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

18. Ibid.


20. Memorandum (unsigned), 32/854, 1832, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
21. Road Gang Reports; Correspondence between Dulhunty and Mitchell 1831-33, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

22. Road Gang Reports; Dulhunty to Mitchell, 5 January 1833, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

23. Dulhunty to Mitchell, 15 June 1833, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.


25. See correspondence between Dulhunty and Mitchell, 1834, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
9. Bedlam Point to Dural - Towards the "Perfect Line"

No. 8 Iron Gang had just completed the road between Castle Hill and Dural when Mitchell took the first steps to supersede it. He directed Finch to examine the ground in the Parish of South Colah and Field of Mars (present-day Pennant Hills and Ryde), since:

... my object is to ascertain whether a short cut may be taken with the road there, that being the direction in which a road would join that at Wisemans. (1)

Mitchell had kept in mind the requests and petitions of settlers at Kissing Point, near the north bank of the Parramatta River, for a punt to cross the river, connecting them with Concord, on the south bank. (2) An earlier petition made by the settlers of Concord for a road between the water and Parramatta Road had been successful. The line was marked out by Oxley in 1825 and partly constructed in 1826 and 1827 (see Map 7). Thomas Walker, of Concord, also made several requests for the completion of this road and the establishment of a punt. (4) Mitchell found these requests convenient, since they provided an opportunity to add a branch to the Great North Road which would remove an angle in its line. He set out the scheme in his 1829 "Report on the Road Northwards":

... there are two angles which ought to be cut off, when the line would become a very perfect one ... these are 1st the angle formed by the road at Parramatta, 2nd that formed by the road crossing the Hawkesbury at Wisemans ... The first mentioned angle will be avoided by the road which is to cross at Kissing Point. (5)

He never got the chance to rectify the second imperfection, but shortly after his re-survey of the Great North Road, he examined the area around Kissing Point for a suitable crossing
place. Once again, he decided that the road already constructed was unsuitable (see Map 7), and selected another less than two miles further east. The alternative crossing places suggested by the settlers, marked A, B and C on his "Sketch of Part of the Parramatta River Showing the Proposed Situation for a Punt near Kissing Point" were all dismissed for various reasons in favour of his choice at D between Bedlam Point and present day Abbotsford Point (see Map 7). The merits of this spot included, first, the width of the river, which he wrote was "the narrowest part ... below the flats" at 220 yards; second, the "ridge approaches the river here by a gradual ascent (with) no hollows or steep hills to obstruct it"; third, the water was eight fathoms deep close to shore; fourth, while the land on the south side "belongs to Doctor Harris, who cannot object to such an improvement ..."; the land on the north side below the Bedlam Telegraph "belongs still to the Crown"; fifth, the road would run directly along a ridge, while the Concord Road "... must rise and fall several times"; and finally, the inevitable argument of directness - "the actual distance would be less by this road from the new church at Kissing Point (St. Anne's) to Iron Cove Bridge, than it would be by any other road". Further:

... by this road direct communication would be opened between Sydney and the country beyond Lane Cove ... The road to Wisemans would also be shortened four miles. (6) (See Map 8.)

The line he selected in fact completed the great diagonal formed by the North Road with the Great Western Road and the line of the coast (see Fig. 81) as he later illustrated in his report to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in 1834. (7) However, the settlers at Concord could not have found it very useful, since for them it was an extremely
roundabout way to reach the church and school at Kissing Point, while their own road was left unfinished.

The subsequent construction of the "Kissing Point" and "Dural" roads, as the two sections of this line were known, apparently did not match the scale or ambition of the original concept. A few gangs performed hasty and intermittent work. To the south, No. 23 Road Party worked on the section known as the Kissing Point Road between January and April 1830. During March and April they were reported to have completed a stone wharf, which was probably on the south side of the river (see Appendix 1 Section 2a; Photos 90-92 and Fig. 115). At the same time, No. 34 Road Party was stationed on "the New Road to Dural" further north in March 1830 and a Bridge Party was working in the Dural area between January and March, probably bridging the three streams between Pennant Hills and Dural. (8)

Contemporary maps of the Parishes of Hunters Hill, Field of Mars and South Colah show that the road simply became part of an existing complex web of roads in the area. (9) By March 1831 Mitchell reported that the road to the water on each side had been cleared and, because the original Great North Road between Castle Hill and Dural was "extremely bad and circuitous" it would be "a great accommodation to the Public if the Punt and the road from Kissing Point to Best's (Dural) were opened ... even in the present state of the road." (10) The actual establishment of the punt service was a long and tortuous procedure. The Master Attendant, Nicholson, was instructed in February 1830 to supply a boat for the crossing place. Although his report was approved in March that year, (11) two years later the appointed lessee of the ferry, James Bardsley:
... having gone there (Bedlam Point) to ascertain if things were ready for his taking possession, he found neither punt nor small boat, nor wharf where a punt can land ... neither carts nor carriages can come within a mile of the punt house, the road being impassable. (12) (See Plate 26.)

Mitchell, who had been occupied with an overwhelming amount of other work, explained that he had not been able to inspect the site himself because he had not been able to procure a boat. (13) A Bridge Party of fifteen men was hurriedly dispatched to Bedlam Point in April 1832 "... with orders to finish the ascent from the point on the North side of the river". (14) The Bridge Party was still stationed there in September 1832 and it was probably during this period that the stone wharf at Bedlam Point was built (see Appendix 1, Section 2b; Photos 93-96, Plate 26 and Figs. 112 and 113).

Regarding the road ascent, Mitchell wrote later that his plans were misunderstood in his absence and the line was initially constructed in the wrong place, "over an abrupt hill". This was rectified by the marking of yet another line "intermediate between the first made and the original planned line never made" (see Appendix 1, Section 2b, Map 9, Fig. 114 and Photos 97-98). The punt was finally opened later that year. Plans for an accommodation house for four persons on the north shore of the Parramatta River were also drawn up and appeared in March 1830, and the construction of a stone house there is recorded in the Returns of the Colony, 1830. (17) Although these plans have not been traced, it is possible that the stone cottage "Rockend" standing at the summit today is the house built for that purpose (see Appendix 1, Section 2c; Fig. 114 and Photo 99). In any case, the government's intention was to provide the necessities of food and shelter for the travellers in this then-isolated area - services usually made available by the inns established by private individuals.
Before he turned to his numerous other duties, Mitchell lavished attention on the Great North Road, and the addition of this branch is another example of his efforts to make the line "perfect". Once more, the shaping factor was the reduction of distance, while roads which had already been made were avoided or abandoned and settlers' needs served only where convenient. While the theory behind Mitchell's zealous plans was new, the subsequent construction of this section of road and the establishment of the punt were strongly reminiscent of the haphazard and slow progress of road works in earlier years.
SECTION III/9

BEDLAM POINT TO DURAL - TOWARDS THE "PERFECT LINE"

Notes

1. Mitchell to Finch, 6 December 1828, A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to S.


5. Mitchell to Macleay, 8 October 1829, "Report on the Road Northward from Sydney", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.


7. Mitchell to Macleay, 2 September 1834, "Report to the Secretary of State", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.

8. Road Gang Reports.


10. Mitchell to Macleay, 3 March 1831, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.


12. Macpherson (Collector of Internal Revenue) to Macleay, 30 March 1832, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

13. Mitchell to Macleay, 6 April 1832, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.

14. Simpson to Mitchell, 27 April 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.

15. Simpson to Mitchell, Monthly Journal, September 1832, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.


10. Final Period - Dulhunty, Ogelvie and the Road Towards the Upper Hunter

Mitchell's mistake in the Upper Hunter was to ignore the presence of Benjamin Singleton's Plough Inn on the banks of the Hunter and the established track towards it from Broke via Whittingham. (1) Instead he marked two symmetrical branches to Warkworth and to Patrick's Plains at the Minnimah property (see Maps 16, 17 and 18). Both were avoided by travellers in favour of the earlier line. (2) In 1927 the latter was still described as part of the main route to the Upper Hunter (see Map 20) and it was thus only relatively recently superseded by the present Broke-Singleton Road (see Map 2). (3) Of Mitchell's two branches, only the northwest arm survives - the northeast arm is visible only as a broken line on the relevant Parish maps (see Map 17). The Broke-Warkworth road is today sealed and there are no apparent original structures.

During Dulhunty's superintendence from the station at Cookfighter's Creek, Warkworth, Bourke decided to experiment with the clearing of the roads by contract, and an advertisement appeared in the Sydney Gazette in February 1834:

... for the clearing, burning off and stumping of the new line of road recently marked through the Hunter Valley ... the whole width of 99 feet or a chain and a half to be cleared. (4)

The list of sections attached included the two branches of the Great North Road north of Broke:

The line of new Sydney road from its junction with the Maitland Road (near) Cockfighter's Bridge back to the junction of the Patrick's Plains Road and the village Reserve of Broke 13 miles 8 chains (Broke-Warkworth Road)
The new line of road to Patrick's Plains from the Reserve of Broke to the Maitland Road at Minnimbah (Minnimbah) 10 miles 7 chains (Broke-Patrick's Plains Road). (5)

Thus during 1834 and 1835 these branches were cleared by private contractors and constructed by convict gangs. Dulhunty was directed to keep the works of the Road Parties "distinct from that of the contractors" in his progress reports. (6) Shaw observes that the contracting experiment was a failure and that "before he (Bourke) returned, he was getting nearly all the road work done by men under punishment in the ironed gangs ...". (7)

When Ogilvie arrived at Cockfighter's Creek in February 1835 he was equipped by Dulhunty with "a sufficient knowledge of Roads and Bridges to enable him to undertake the superintendence thereof" (8) as the latter had been instructed to do. In spite of the inference of Ogilvie's ignorance in such matters, his reports contained far more technical information and terminology than those of his predecessors. He was also responsible for the new line of road down the Hunter Valley to Maitland. By March 1835 the road from his station at Cockfighter's Creek towards Cobb's Station (the junction of the Great North Road with the Hunter Valley Road at the Minnimbah property) was "sufficiently complete", and a gang was still constructing a substantial bridge over Cockfighter's Creek. (9) In April No. 18 Road Party (formerly No. 27 Road Party) was sent back to Mt. Simpson to repair the road there and "... render more substantial the parts that have given way until the whole is made good to Twelve Mile Hollow". (10) The middle branch of the Great North Road, between Broke and Cobb's Station was "in a state of forwardness" in July as a result of the work
of the contractor Mr. Coulston and was subsequently constructed by No. 13 (formerly No. 42) Road Party from August 1835, as Ogilvie reported:

No. 13 Road Party is still side cutting east of the village reserve of Broke ... the silicious nature of the cemented gravel through which they have to cut has prevented their making greater progress [see Figs. 10 and 11].

Generally, Ogilvie was pessimistic regarding the road's completion. By May 1836 he was still of the opinion that it would be "some years to finish". He complained bitterly that "the number of working men in the two road parties are only ten and many of those are cripples", and he observed of the Hunter Valley roads: "I am lead to believe that before the Eastern extremity of the line could be completed, the Western would be quite out of repair". This inability to deal with the distances covered by the roads contrasts markedly with the confidence of the earlier Assistant Surveyors.

Whether or not the last branches of the Great North Road were actually finished is unclear. In 1836 Ogilvie presented another long and dismal report enumerating the large amount of work still to be done between his station at Maitland, particularly at the creek crossings, and bemoaning the lack of labour to complete it. He was removed shortly after and was not replaced, and the Hunter Valley and Great North Roads were left, presumably unfinished.

The end of the construction period marked the beginning of public criticism of the Great Road in terms of its condition, expense and location. The Australian which had published the earliest laudatory accounts of the road, reported belligerently in 1836 that:
... selfish Governor Darling falling in with an obliging Surveyor General ... together concocted a road to their family estates over the Wiseman's Punt ... which cost this colony £90,000, a road which few go over to Maitland or Newcastle. (174)

That Darling should be accused of collaboration with Mitchell over the location of the road is highly ironic. The mention of "family estates" is a reference to Darling's brother-in-law William Dumaresq's property St. Heliers in the Upper Hunter Valley.

The final stages of Mitchell's grandiose scheme were thus characterised by Ogilvie's pessimism, by the government's de-emphasis of the Great North Road in terms of reduced and inadequate convict labour, and by futility in the sense that settlers continued to use the original more useful lines they had established towards and in the Hunter Valley. It thus appears that the roads under Ogilvie's supervision were doomed to abandonment before they were commenced.
SECTION III/10

FINAL PERIOD - DULHUNTY, OGILVIE AND THE ROAD TOWARDS THE UPPER HUNTER

Notes

5. Ibid.
6. Dulhunty to Mitchell, 17 June 1834, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
7. Shaw, p. 258.
8. Ogilvie to Mitchell, 2 February 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
9. Ogilvie to Mitchell, 5 March 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
10. Mitchell to Ogilvie, 13 March 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Ogilvie to Mitchell, 28 April 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
11. Ogilvie to Mitchell, 26 July 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.; Ogilvie to Mitchell, 16 August 1835, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
12. Ogilvie to Mitchell, 9 May 1836, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
13. Ogilvie to Mitchell, 24 July 1836, A.O.N.S.W., S. to S.G.
11. Supersession

Even as the few remaining gangs struggled to complete the last sections in 1836, the Great North Road had already been to a large extent abandoned. In 1835 the Australian Almanack Dictionary commented that:

... the road from Sydney to the Hunter which was formed with great labour and expense, should have been almost entirely abandoned to ruin from a conviction, it would appear, that the steamers present a more eligible mode of communication with the Metropolis. (1)

Although the Great North Road was classified in 1833 as a main road and therefore kept at public expense, it evidently quickly fell out of repair through neglect, and complaints concerning both its poor condition and the more general aspect of its location were common in the late 1830's and the 1840's. (2) The Sydney Morning Herald was particularly critical. In 1841 it claimed that "The greater part of the passage is a formidable undertaking even on horseback. There is a want of suitable accommodation and scarcity of water ..."; in 1843 the road involved a "long, tedious and circuitous journey", and in 1844 a new alternative via Pest's Ferry was considered far superior since it would "avoid the inconveniences and jumps-up of the Great North Road". (3)

While the impetus towards road building generally dwindled after Darling's departure and with Mitchell's preoccupation with exploration and the general survey of the colony, it was the introduction of the steamers linking Sydney and the Hunter Valley from mid-1831 which really negated the intended importance of the northern line of road. Mitchell conceded as early as 1832 that "The land communication became, in consequence, an object of less importance than before", although he considered it "... not the less essential to a
respectable government or where an armed force has been organised as in N.S.W. solely for the suppression of bushrangers". (4) When reporting to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in 1834, in an effort to evade the fact of the road's redundancy, he made the unlikely assertion that the two forms of transport would actually be complimentary:

The available lands of ... (County Northumberland) ... are accessible either by roads or water communication ... the chief communication with Sydney is by means of steam vessels which ply between it and Maitland, and this advantage will be brought still more within reach of the colonists ... by the new lines of road in progress ... (5)

By the end of his career as Surveyor General, however, he admitted that:

This, perhaps the most elaborate public work in the colony, has been allowed to remain ever since without repair and, strange as it may seem, without having ever been much used by the Public. (6)

It was both the arrival of steamers and "the length of road over a most barren mountainous country for upward of 30 miles" which were "discouragements which no engineer could avoid". He added, wistfully:

Nevertheless such work deserved to be kept in repair, one line of land communication between the seat of government and the northern part of the colony having been the desideratum from the earliest days of settlement ... (7)

He was therefore, in retrospect, unreconciled to the fact that the great thoroughfare which he had planned to form an almost perfect line in accordance with modern theory, as he understood it, had become another deserted old road for which the government did not consider the large expense of maintenance necessary or justified.

For the passenger, the trip between Sydney and the Hunter by Steamer was far quicker and more comfortable than by road.
Therry wrote in 1863:

My first circuit duty in N.S.W. led me to the town of Maitland which is now reached Sydney by an agreeable sea route in four or five hours. In 1830, the period to which I refer, it was only approachable by a three day ride over a rough mountain road. (8)

James Backhouse in 1843 described his 1836 journey by steamer to Maitland as a "fine passage, the sea being so smooth as scarcely to give motion to the boat". (9) Water transport had actually long preceded overland links to and in the Hunter Valley. The early cutters connecting Sydney, Newcastle and Morpeth averaged two days each way, although the round trip could take as long as a fortnight. (10) The settlers of the Hunter region found this most unsatisfactory, stating in their 1826 petition to Darling that they were:

... at present compelled from want of a road to carry on (their trade and transport) by water to the very great inconvenience, risk and serious injury of their property. (11)

From the 1810's the main communication link between Newcastle and Walls Plains was also by water. Although the land distance of 20 miles was increased to 80 by the winding of the river, the latter was preferred to the "footpath" through the swamps and over the numerous unbridged creeks. In August 1824 a regular passenger service was advertised in the Sydney Gazette. (12)

On June 12 1832 a much more reliable and speedy mode of water transport was established between Sydney and the Hunter Valley. The Sophia Jane, a steamer built in 1826, had arrived unannounced in Sydney a month earlier under the command of her owner Lieutenant Edward Biddulph R.N. In reducing the travelling time to Newcastle to seven hours, she was admired as a "wonder boat" in the colony and apparently attracted most
of the passenger trade. (13) The equally famous William IV, built at Clarence Town on the Williams River between 1831 and 1835, soon joined the service. (14)

Overland transport of goods and stock did continue, although greatly reduced, but even here the Great North Road did not fulfill its original function, since the discovery of new lines and resurrection of several old ones diverted the remaining traffic. The earliest discovered route to the north, the Bulga Road (see Map 3) was used as the land-link at least until 1827. Wilford informed Macleay in that year that:

From all the information I can collect, the line of road (Bulga Road) is of much importance, more particularly until that by Mr. Wiseman is practicable - as it at present is the principal line of communication to Hunter's River District. (15)

Morgan maintains that the route continued to be used for stock during the nineteenth century, and between 1890 and 1900, as a result of increased local usage, approximately £3,500 was allocated to it for the construction of retaining walls and drainage structures. (16) During World War II it was deemed a militarily safer road than the then new Pacific Highway along the coast, and was sealed for the use of motor vehicles, and became known as the Putty Road (see Map 2). (17)

Another line of road which predated the Great North Road was that between McGraths Hill and Maroota, via Catal Creek (see Map 2). The junction with Finch's line is shown on the latter's 1825 survey map and the whole appears on Mitchell's 1829 "General Plan of Roads Northwards ..." as a "made road" (see Maps 4 and 11 respectively). As Upton suggests, this line originally linked Wiseman's property on the Hawkesbury with Windsor and was probably established by Wiseman
himself. (18) In 1828 the Surveyor of Roads and Bridges, Hughes, reported to the Colonial Secretary somewhat prophetically that he believed the line to be of "considerable importance" and "in the event of a communication taking place between Windsor and Wisemans it will then become a great public road". (19) While the ridge between Glenorie and Maroota remained barren and isolated, settlement thrived along the alternative route further west. Settlers at Pitt Town and Cattai Creek must have provided a much more hospitable journey than the official line which was gradually superseded. By 1927 the Great North Road between Glenorie and Maroota was described as "disused" and in poor condition, while the McGrath's Hill/Maroota section was included in the main route to the north (see Map 20). (20)

According to Upton the road between Bedlam Point and Dural was never much used, owing to "... difficulties with the location and ... other causes". (21) He was probably referring to the lack of settlement along the line and to the tedious and dangerous ferry crossings at Bedlam Point. The fact that the line was never completed may have made it difficult to traverse. In any case, the post service ceased in 1889 with the opening of the Gladesville Bridge and the new Victoria Road from Sydney via Balmain and Drummoyne (see Appendix 1, Section 2, and Maps 8 and 10). (22)

Blaxland's line, located in 1825 along the MacDonald River also eventually replaced part of the Great North Road (see Maps 2 and 20). Again, the presence of settlement along the fertile MacDonald Valley appears to have diverted traffic away from the barren ridge top between Devine's Hill and Mt. Manning. Until the establishment of the Webb's Creek Ferry at Wisemans Ferry in the early twentieth century, travellers followed the Great North Road to the summit of Devine's Hill
and there descended via Shepherd's Gully to Book's Ferry (also known as Whalan's Punt) from which the road wound along the valley to St. Albans. (23) While Blaxland's line supposedly rejoined the Great North Road in the vicinity of Laguna (see Map 11) the present day line (St. Albans Road/Main Road 181) does so at Mt. Manning (see Map 2). The road was surveyed by Pitt in 1864, at that stage still a bridle track. Subsequently, it was "gradually improved to carry vehicular traffic" and the whole line was formally opened in 1884. The old line via Ten Mile Hollow to Mt. Manning fell into disuse altogether. (24)

In 1834, Deputy Surveyor General S.A. Perry reported on the proposed marking out of a road between Brisbane Water and Maitland. In spite of the difficulties such as lack of means of construction for such a road:

I would submit that a road which should connect the whole of that coast district with Maitland would be a work most desirable for the improvement of Northumberland and is likely to prove highly advantageous both to the lands on Brisbane Water and the coast and also to the town of Maitland. (25)

This was evidently the line between Brisbane Water and Maitland referred to in the N.S.W. Calendar and Directory for 1832. Upon describes it as the forerunner of the present main road between Gosford and Maitland (see Maps 2 and 20). (26) Simpson’s line, as discussed in Section III/4 was another early alternative and appears to have been partly incorporated into the road between Ten Mile Hollow and Gosford (of Maps 11, 20 and 2). The line was gazetted in 1871, upgraded in 1896 and by 1927 it formed part of the main route between Sydney and Gosford. (27)

Yet another early line in this region was noted by Upton on an 1830 survey map, running between Mt. McQuoid and Brisbane
Water. (28) This line was apparently part of the route later known as the Peat's Ferry Line, which connected Sydney and the Great North Road at Mt. McQuoid via Mooney Mooney and Kangaroo Points on Broken Bay (see Maps 2, 19 and 20). The first section of this line was also discovered in the 1829's - Surveyor Govett reported in 1829 that there were already two lines between Sydney and Kangaroo Point:

... the one to cross at the north of Mangrove, the other at Mr. Peat's residence a few miles lower down ... the originality of the measure was Mr. Peat who undertook and carried out the making of the entire line from Brisbane Water to his residence, and from there again to near Sydney, proposing at the same time to establish a punt at Fairview. (29)

George Peat, a ship-builder, owned land on both sides of the Hawkesbury River, including "Fairview". In 1843 he built a two-masted sailing lugger as a punt to cross the river in order, Upton maintains, to convey his cattle to market. The Peat's Ferry Line thus ran along a ridge from Milson's Point through Aaron Pearce's (Pearce's Corner near Hornsby) to Kangaroo Point on the Hawkesbury. From the opposite side of the river, Mooney Mooney Point, the track could be followed along the well-defined ridge to Mt. McQuoid where it joined the Great North Road towards Wollombi and the Hunter Valley (see Maps 19 and 20). (30)

The road was surveyed and some construction work undertaken during the 1840's. (31) In May 1851 Ferry reported that the works on the south side of the river were drawing to a close and proposed that convicts on probation be employed to clear away underwood and small trees between Peat's Ferry and Wollombi. Jervis points out that a note in Mitchell's hand - "I wish now to look at the first letters on this (to me most unpleasant) subject" - is indicative of his opposition to the new road and possibly explains why it was never
completed. (32) By 1856, in the face of growing usage of the Peat’s Ferry Line and popular censure of the Great North Road, he was baffled by the abandonment of the latter in favour of:

Roads, considered more direct, (which) have however since then been found, the ferry across a mile of water has proved a serious impediment, whilst the roads first selected and made have been allowed to fall into ruin. (33)

He was of the opinion that, had the government persevered with the original road and discouraged the use of other lines, the growth of population and “roads fit to travel on” would by 1856 have “compensated for going a little round”. The assertion that the longer, rather than the more direct route, ought to have been used is ironic in view of the rigid approach to road-tracing Mitchell espoused in the 1820’s and 1830’s, and of the abandonment of several major works at that stage because of their circuitousness.

The construction of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge in 1889 completed the rail link between Sydney and Newcastle, removing virtually all traffic on the various roads to the north. Roads everywhere fell into disrepair as a result of the dominance of rail transport until the introduction and spread of the motor car in and after about 1905. (34) In ’25 the route to the north was once more under review and detailed examinations of the alternatives were made by the Main Roads Board. In November and December that year the Peat’s Ferry Line from Berowra to Kangaroo Point and from Mooney Mooney Point to Gosford via Central Mangrove were proclaimed Main Roads (see Maps 2 and 20). Heavy construction was undertaken in the following years and on May 17 1927 it was opened as the Great Northern Highway, renamed in 1931 as the Pacific Highway. (35) Today massive works are still underway to complete the Sydney-Newcastle Freeway which will almost
completely supersede the 1920's work (see Map 2).

A year before the completion of its upper branches, some sources already described the Great North Road as a grand folly. During the following ten years, particularly with the discovery and construction of the Peat's Ferry Line, criticism of the location and condition of the Great North Road became progressively stronger and Darling was vilified as, among other things, a foolish squanderer of public money. Reflecting upon the failed project in 1856, Mitchell mournfully lamented the abandonment of such a fine piece of engineering. His allegedly foolproof theories of road tracing had been foiled by unforeseeable technological innovation and, in the end, fulfilled all the criteria of wastage and redundancy which he had particularly sought to avoid. In retrospect, it is clear that his plans were to a large extent predetermined by the selection of the general location and completion of a considerable section of the Great North Road before his arrival in the colony. Therefore although more direct or more favourable lines were available, as discussed, he could not have actually selected such alternatives, even if he had wanted to.

Land transport to the north of Sydney thus developed over the nineteenth century in exactly the opposite manner from that which was originally envisaged. Instead of people, stock and goods flowing along a great "artery", over fine and well-maintained highways through districts settled at convenient intervals, the little traffic which did not go by steamers was dispersed, and trickled down a haphazard, criss-crossed network of unplanned and unmade tracks. Occasionally sections of the Great North Road were incorporated in the
routes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus the concept of the single, all-encompassing line for road, which had been a basic theme of the road's planning, disintegrated almost immediately. Its numerous subsequent changes of name and the transferral of its name to other roads led to the obliteration of the most obvious record of, and subsequent confusion over its original location. In the vicinity of Sydney, Mitchell's branch between Abbotsford and Dural slowly disappeared into the myriad suburban streets (see Appendix 1, Section 2 and Map 10). The only section of the entire road officially retaining its original title is the Great North Road between Parramatta River and Abbotsford Point, and there, amidst the footpaths and suburban houses it is particularly incongruous.

It is, however, as a direct result of the early abandonment of the road that so much material evidence survives, providing a record not only of the ambitious work from the middle construction periods, but also of the more modest attempts of the early period. Darling's intention to provide the colony with good roads, embellished by Mitchell and executed on a grand scale by Simpson and Finch is thus clearly illustrated as a continuum of various stages of planning and construction of a ten-year period. The road's predominance for less than four of those years (1828-1832) appears in retrospect to represent the beginning of a century and a half of the same pattern of surveys, construction and abandonment of numerous lines in the pursuit of better land communication between Sydney and Newcastle.
SECTION III/11
SUPERSESSION

Notes

3. Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1841; 20 September 1843; 24 April 1844; See also Australasian Chronicle, 21 June 1840.
5. Mitchell to Macleay, 2 September 1834, "Report to the Secretary of State", A.O.N.S.W., S.G. to C.S.
7. Ibid.
8. Therry, p. 120.
11. Hunter's River Settlers to Darling, 19 April 1826, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
12. Wood, p. 6; Byrne, pp. 150-152; Wood, p. 88, Peter Cunningham, p. 75.
15. Wilford to Macleay, 21 June 1827, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
17. Ibid.
19. Hughes to Macleay, 22 May 1828, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
22. Levy, pp. 73, 110.
24. Upton, p. 163.
25. Ferry to Macleay, 10 November 1834, A.O.N.S.W., C.S.I.L.
26. Upton, p. 163.
28. Upton, p. 163.
34. Newell, p. 51; The Roadmakers, p. 43; Upton, p. 163.
35. Upton, p. 240.