

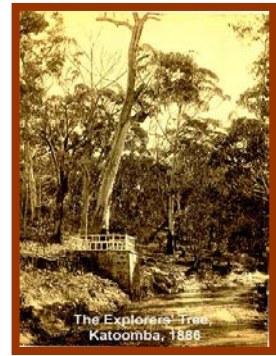
The Pulpit Post™

A not-for-profit local independent newsletter by locals on local issues

Dedicated to community and environment issues specific to Mt Elphinstone (alias Radiata) Plateau,
Pulpit Hill & Nellies Glen environs.

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The Explorers' Tree
Pulpit Hill, 1886

'Save Radiata Plateau'

Issue# PH91-01

Just over a year ago on 1st July 2006 Pulpit Hill residents met to discuss land use development issues threatening the locality.

Some long standing residents of Pulpit Hill may recall resident meetings back in April 1991 after Council approved a 50-bed academy and headquarters for the Transcendental Meditation on Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau. Some may also recall resident meetings starting in April 2004 when Maharishi's Global Administration through Natural Law Ltd proposed subdividing and selling off the plateau's 306.2 hectares. Neither plan proceeded, but during 2005 reports indicated that the owners were receptive to the idea of selling the plateau land to the State Government to be incorporated into the National Park estate. Does anyone know how to contact the owners of 28 Pulpit Hill Road to get their story?



On paper it's known as 28 Pulpit Hill Road.
On the ground down the end of this country lane this post serves as a prevailing reminder of the heritage values of Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau.

Photograph taken 3-Mar-07

We often take for granted that the character of the area in which we live will stay the way it is. Half the challenge is to know what is being planned.

On the weekend of 23rd-24th June this year, a Pulpit Hill resident noticed people counting cars entering and leaving the Pulpit Hill area and, when asked, said they were contracted by Council to do so.

An email enquiry 26-Jun-07 to Council's general manager about this counting has not been answered.

Some positive planning news was provided in March this year by Tim Hager, Information & Assessment Officer Metropolitan Region at the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) as follows: *"in reference to your specific query in relation to the lands between Narrow Neck and the Radiata Plateau, I can confirm that these are included in the recommended additions to Blue Mountains National Park."*

Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct

Issue# PH07-01

Few Mountains residents will be aware of the rich pioneering heritage associated with Pulpit Hill and the immediate precinct. With the assistance of local historians, the editor is finalising a historical heritage nomination for what's been termed the 'Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct' that includes a number of heritage objects, relics, sites and intangible values associated with the hill and its history, some dating back to 1813.

As part of the research for this heritage nomination, an historical walking tour of the Pulpit Hill precinct took place on 2nd June 2007 led by local historical surveyor, Bill Evans.

Over the years, Bill has built up an accurate and detailed knowledge of the historical objects and sites at Pulpit Hill. The tour started and finished at the Explorers Marked Tree and was enthusiastically attended by nineteen residents.



Local historian Bill Evans (with survey pole) leading local residents on an historical walking tour of Pulpit Hill on a sunny winter's morning.

Photograph taken 2-Jun-07.

One highlight of the tour was the controversial 'convict graves' situated on the top of Pulpit Hill. Historical accounts have long questioned the dubious authenticity of the graves. Anecdotal evidence is that between 1903 and 1910 new mounds of stones were added to the graveyard.

However, as Bill explained to us, one grave up on the hill is likely to be genuine. A few years ago, ground penetrating radar produced clear evidence of a rectangular shaped trench 6.5 ft long by 3 ft wide and over 6 ft deep carved through the ironstone layer.

Historical archives describe how during an expedition by French Naturalist, Rene Primvere Lesson in 1824 on climbing Pulpit Hill, found a fresh grave of a young man (Picot), who had been buried there in 1822. If correct this would possibly make the grave the oldest non-indigenous grave in the Blue Mountains.

Although the authenticity of the other stone piles being graves is doubtful, historians consider the graveyard provides important folkloric value to the community.



One of the convincing but dubious 'convict graves' on Pulpit Hill. But recent ground penetrating radar has verified the presence of one genuine grave nearby...but it isn't beneath any of the obvious piles of stones.

Photograph taken 2-Jun-07.

Pulpit Hill Heritage - The Cox's Road

Issue# PH07-01

Finding a way across the Blue Mountains became a preoccupation for early colonial exploration and expansion from Sydney. This was motivated by the desperate need at the time to secure food supplies for the expanding population, made worst by drought.

In 1814, Governor Lachlan Macquarie appointed then Deputy-Surveyor of Lands, William Cox to construct a simple cart and stock passage across Blue Mountains to the Bathurst Plains *"as quickly and with as little outlay as possible."* [Source: Karskens (Grace), 1988, 'An Historical and Archaeological Study of Cox' Road and Early Crossing of the Blue Mountains, New South Wales.']

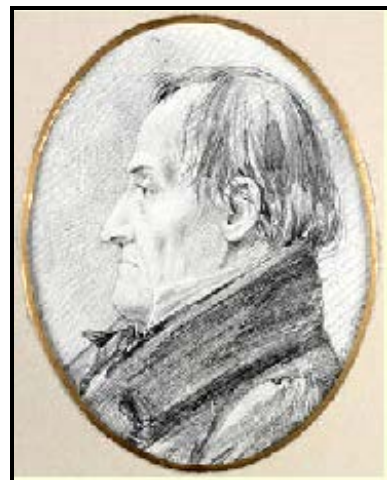
Cox's Road started from what was Woodruffe's Farm at Emu Island (1 mile north of the current railway

bridge over the Nepean River). Cox supervised a road gang of thirty-eight men (mainly convicts) under the protection of a guard of eight soldiers. [Yeaman (John), (undated), 'Footsteps in Time']. Cox followed the first successful route taken by explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth (May 1813), which had been subsequently surveyed by George William Evans (Nov-Dec 1813).

Cox's road gang started on 17th July 1814 and in just six months later by 21st January 1815, they had completed a rudimentary cart and stock way 12-foot wide stretching 102 miles over the Blue Mountains. Cox had strictly adhered to the ridgeline watershed to avoid costly delays of building crossings over creeks.

Remnants of Cox's Road can be found both on and around Pulpit Hill, including through Council's six hectare bushland site near the intersection of the northern entrance to Explorers Road and the highway, as well as near the entrance to the old brickworks. *"If one looks closely on the left bank of this 'track' at the wash away, one may still see the original Cox's cutting – that is the first 1/3 of a metre of earth that was cut away in 1814. This tell tale sign is virtually a trade mark of the Cox's construction through the entire length of Cox's Road."*

[Source: FitzPatrick (Ross), c1990? (unpublished manuscript), 'The Cox's Road Between Katoomba and Blackheath – What can be seen but is so often unobserved', 2nd Ed, p.4. Courtesy Blue Mountains Historical Society]



William Cox (1764 - 1837), by Charles Rodius, courtesy of State Library of New South Wales.

Cox's Road was celebrated as an engineering feat, but the poor quality of the road was soon criticised as being too rough and steep in places. William Lawson (one of the three explorers) constructed an alternative gentler grade 'deviation road' better suited to coach travel, which included a section around the western crest of Pulpit Hill; probably constructed around 1823.

Many re-alignments and upgrades followed over the decades to what became the Western or (Bathurst) Road and eventually the Great Western Highway.

Although overgrown today, an embankment of a remnant of Lawson's deviation is clearly visible in an

east-west direction though Lot 11 (406 Great Western Highway) on the bushland that council is railroading to develop for housing.



William Lawson (1774 - 1850), by unknown artist, courtesy of State Library of New South Wales.

According to local historian Jim Smith, *"the remnants of Cox's Road (and Lawson's Road) between Faulconbridge and Mt York have historical significance at State level as they are the oldest surviving sections of road in their original condition in NSW and are among the oldest non-Aboriginal artefacts in inland Australia. They are rare physical records of the initial steps made towards the expansion of the colony west of Sydney."*

"Cox's Road has a high symbolic significance as evidence of the conquest of the Blue Mountains barrier... The surviving sections show the minimalist and hurried construction techniques employed by Cox and provide rare evidence of road engineering styles and standards from the period of Macquarie's Governorship."

[Source: Smith, (Jim), Beaver (David), Betteridge (Chris), February 2006, 'Tracks into History – Conservation Management Plan for Walking Tracks of State Heritage Significance in the Blue Mountains, Part One, Department of Environment & Conservation (NSW), DEC2006/392, ISBN 1 74137 977 6, Section 4 'Cox's Road', p.13.

Both these heritage roads warrant heritage protection to stabilise and conserve the archaeological evidence of these symbolic first roads over the Blue Mountains.

According to the above source (p17), *"management should be in accordance with the recommendations made by Grace Karskens in 'Cox's Way: Guidelines for Conservation, Management and Interpretation', pp106-116, unpublished report, 1988."*

Australia's National Heritage List includes sections of the Old Great North Road which was built from 1826, yet Cox's Road predates it and arguably is Australia's most historic road. Recently, the National Trust has taken a special interest in preserving remnant sections of Cox's Road. *"The National Trust branches of the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Bathurst have combined to create the Cox's Road Project Committee to "Facilitate the identification, interpretation and conservation of Cox's Road".* The chairperson of the committee, Ms Rhona Leach, may be contacted on 4757 2424.

[Source: Gazette 26-May-07]

Councillors vote to develop Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH97-01

As previously reported, last winter Blue Mountains councillors unanimously agreed to allocate \$178,000 to prepare 6 hectares of community land for subdivision and sale under its 2006-2007 Capital Works Programme (Council CWP Project 70/127302 'Pulpit Hill Subdivision').

In February this year, Councillors referred resident concerns about irreversible damage to Pulpit Hill's natural and historical heritage to its Finance and Assets Working Party. This Working Party is currently chaired by Cllr Myles and its Liaison Officer is Neil Farquahson.

One has reservations about the capacity of finance staff to properly evaluate the natural and historical heritage merits of an area. The following extract of the 'Terms of Reference for Council's Finance and Asset Working Party' at face value would seem to attest to this:

To *"provide a forum to maintain and enhance Council's financial strength and performance through:*

- *Overseeing the management of Council's finances;*
- *Monitoring the collection of revenue, the expenditure of monies, payment of accounts and insurance premiums; and*
- *Accounting for Council's finances and protection of assets."*

"Key issues for consideration include:

- *Better managing, utilising and maintaining built assets through the development of an asset management strategy and system;*
- *Develop and use Asset Management Plans to direct the allocation of resources;*
- *Develop and monitor the long term financial strategy of Council to ensure we are living within our means;*
- *Address the mix of affordable asset provision and asset maintenance for the City*
- *Contribute to the implementation of a Capital Works Program;*
- *Set efficiency improvement targets to increase savings and internal revenue."*

[Source: BMCC Working Party protocol was conducted at the Councillor Briefing Session on 25 July 2006 following a Notice of Motion at the Council Meeting on 20 June 2006].

This Working Party has a financial management mandate but no expertise or direction in matters concerning heritage. Was the decision to refer heritage decision making to this Working Party disingenuous? Unlike many councils including Warringah, Willoughby, Wingecarribee, Hornsby (and with Bathurst proposing one), Blue Mountains Council does not have an historical heritage committee nor a heritage officer.

Dept of Planning recommends Protecting Pulpit Hill

Back on 28-Nov-06, Manager Conservation Team with NSW Department of Planning, Mr Vincent Sicari, wrote

to Council's Town Planner, Ms Susan Dickerson, on the subject of a separate development application at 49 Explorers Road as well as regarding "potential heritage items in the Pulpit Hill area". In his letter, Mr Sicari encouraged Council *"to seek a full report from its heritage adviser on the potential heritage values of the Pulpit Hill area."* He suggested that *"Council may wish to consider listing part of Pulpit Hill as a heritage item on its Local Environment Plan..."*

Council's proposed development includes carving a new access road off the northern section of Explorers Road south through the bush up the back of Pulpit Hill. It will destroy clear remnants of both Cox's Road and Lawson's Deviation Road. The subject Council land stretches up to the 'convict graves' site.

On this issue back on 3-Jul-06 Ward 1 Councillor Terri Hamilton clarified by email: *"Councillors have not made any decision about selling this land, as none of us has, as yet, been briefed on the matter. The allocation in the budget was in case it was decided to go ahead and this had not yet been discussed by councillors in any form. I can assure you that, if there were any likelihood of this proceeding, there will be full community consultation including a public meeting."*

On this same issue back on 3-Jul-06 Ward 1 Councillor, Mayor Jim Angel, clarified by email: *"There is little point of having public meetings if we have not yet decided to do anything."*

Council Update:

Last Tuesday 28-Aug-07 at Council's Ordinary Meeting under the sub-heading 'Using Land for Living', councillors voted to: *"Investigate and prepare development application for consolidation of seven into three land parcels to allow sale of Council owned land at Pulpit Hill (CWP): Difficulties encountered locating a consultant to undertake the project. Surveyor has now been engaged to design and prepare application for consolidation of existing lots."*

Source: Council Ordinary Meeting, 28-Aug-07, Item 2, p19

According to Council's Management Plan 2006/2007 Quarterly Progress Report (Jun-07) attached to this Business Paper, the survey and environmental consultants have been engaged at a cost to Council of \$19,000.

SCA Acquisition Proposal Rejected

On 14-Feb-07 the Gazette reported the NSW Environment Minister (then Bob Debus) announcing that the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) will spend up to \$2 million per year to buy land that protects Sydney's drinking water catchment areas.

The six hectares of bushland on Pulpit Hill that Council wants to develop for housing is just across the highway from SCA's Cascade Dam subcatchment, making it a reasonable prospect for SCA land acquisition.

So the editor wrote off to the SCA presenting a number of arguments why SCA would benefit from acquire the land from Council. One of the arguments

presented was that the land is already zoned water subcatchment and under SCA's ownership and control would serve to better preserve and protect the water supply catchment.

Unfortunately, SCA rejected the suggestion. One positive outcome however, is that SCA has since required Council to complete a Water Cycle Management Study as part of Council's plans to develop the site. A copy of the response letter from Sydney Catchment Authority is attached to this newsletter.



A well preserved culvert hidden beneath the old railway line below Pulpit Hill discovered on the walking tour, which probably dates to 1866.

Photograph taken 2-Jun-07.

DA for 49 Explorers Road Withdrawn

Issue# PH06-01

In correspondence received by the editor from Blue Mountains council's Development Assessment Officer, Paul Koen, dated 6-Jul-07, the development application (DA) for this property has been withdrawn by the owner.

The DA was received by Council in June 2006 from the applicant, Whelans Australia Pty Ltd of York Street Sydney, which proposed a "boundary adjustment" between the vacant paddock at 49 Explorers Road (SW corner of Saywell Road (DP 10148) and the adjoining bushland to the west, which forms part of Karuna Sanctuary, 418 Great Western Highway (DP B16211). [Council File Ref: S06/0031].

As a result of the owner withdrawing this application, no boundary adjustment is to take place.

What Does Pulpit Hill Mean to You?

Issue# PH07-02

What did Pulpit Hill mean to Major Henry Colden Antill while in the company of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his wife way back in 1815?

Friday, 28th April 1815:

"...This day's journey was found a severe one for cattle, the road very stony and a number of severe hills for the loaded carts. Passed one which we called Pulpit Hill, from a large

rock on its summit resembling a pulpit. A little before 2 o'clock came to our resting place, 41 miles from Emu Plains and 13 from our last ground. The country we passed over this day was the most barren possible, and abounded with bold romantic scenery. We found here a spring of water a little to the right of the road, but the grass was the same as yesterday." [Source: Major Henry Colden Antill – "Journal of an Excursion over the Blue or Western Mountains of New South Wales to Visit a Tract of New Discovered Country, in Company with His Excellency Governor and Mrs Macquarie and a Party of Gentlemen." 1815; courtesy of Springwood Library Local Studies]

Since the first explorers, Pulpit Hill has over the many decades, provided a convenient resting place for explorers and travellers crossing the Blue Mountains. The following account is one of many such journeys:

"In the first two days, the caravan gets as far as the Nepean; the next day carries them as far as the Pilgrim; the next to the Valley; the next two days are consumed in reaching the Twenty Mile Hollow; the next to the Weatherboard; next day to the Pulpit Hill; next day to Andrew Gardiner's inn; next to the foot of Mt Victoria (here they generally manage to lose their bullocks for a day or two); the next day to Keinan's public house, thence to enliven the military at No. 2 Stockade; ..."

[Source: The Australian 23 Feb. 1836 [Courtesy Babette Smith]

'Weatherboard' was situated at what is now Wentworth Falls and 'Andrew Gardiner's inn' ('The Scotch Thistle Inn') was situated at what is now Blackheath. Pulpit Hill was conveniently midway between the two. There was no Katoomba ('The Crushers') or Leura or Medlow Bath. Pulpit Hill's settlement at nearby Cherry Tree Flat pre-dates any settlement at these locations.

Pulpit Hill's namesake, the pulpit shaped rock formation named by Macquarie in 1814, was destroyed in probably late 1867 *"when its rock was utilised as ballast in the construction of the railway across the mountains."* [Source: Bateson (Henry), 'Explorers Tree – Truth About a Legend', SMH 18-Mar-1933, (article courtesy of Tom Colless)]

George Williams Evans map of his survey crossing of late 1813 identified 'Pulpit Rock 33 Miles', in which the 33 miles is likely measured from the ford across the Nepean River at Emu Island. Cox marked it on his map as "Hollow Rock." [C. Atwell 1994, p26]



Pulpit Hill from Rowan Lane. Given the clear historical accounts of a pulpit rock once having been a prominent identifying feature on top of the hill, could the original pulpit rock have been situated below where the Railcorp communications tower now stands?

These days there are at least six other pulpit rocks named across the Blue Mountains...and still in situ.

Chainsawed Woodland on Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH07-03

Readers may recall the photo on the back page of the summer 2006 issue of **The Pulpit Post** showing the remains of chainsawed native trees and slashed bushland up on eastern crest of Pulpit Hill above the highway.

Enquiries by the editor have confirmed that this was in fact the work of Integral Energy as part of its annual tree trimming programme. Integral Energy's Tree Management Officer, Mal Fletcher, on 7-Sep-07 confirmed by phone that the destruction of bushland below and around the electricity 'distribution' lines was carried out by Integral Energy contractor (Asplundh). Mal justified this being done as a safety measure to prevent trees from falling on to the lines and the lines then falling on to the highway and potentially killing someone. Given the high winds on Pulpit Hill, Mal explained that more than the usual 4 metre corridor was cleared. Mal advised that he will personally inspect the site and make sure the area is left 'aesthetically pleasing'. Further information may be obtained from Mal by phoning Integral Energy on 131 081 and selecting the Head Office enquiries option.

Under LEP1991 the affected site is zoned 'Environmental Protection'.

The Pulpit Post errata:

Summer 2006 issue 3, p.2:

"28 Pulpit Hill Road, Katoomba NSW 2780
DP 751657
The 'Area' should read:
"306.2 hectares comprising six lots."

[Many thanks to Rod Streeter, local surveyor, for this correction].

Summer 2006 Issue 3 at p.4:

Should read:

"According to a past resident, in the post-war years this vacant block on the corner Saywell Road was cleared by Stan & Joyce Lutteral, who built and lived in a two roomed bush timber shack on the site. A few years later, the Lutterals sold the land to Percival (Perc) Baldry who operated a piggery there up until around 1957."

[Many thanks to Ron Fletcher, past resident of the 'Springvale' property along Explorers Road, for this correction].

Postscript: *The editor apologises for not publishing this issue in colour. It is anticipated that future issues will be published in colour.*

Feedback and information on Pulpit Hill is always welcome.