

## THE PASS OF SABUGAL

Between Heathcote and Engadine the present Princes Highway, keeping alongside the railway, diverges from Mitchell's Road, which bears away to the north-west. A little further on, the road through the Engadine shopping centre which was, until very recently, Princes Highway, also parts company with Mitchell's road. This "Old Princes Highway" follows the line marked out by Surveyor Parkinson in 1865, when he planned the road crossing George's River at Tom Uqly's Point.

Woronora Road continues the line of Mitchell's Road to the Pass of Sabugal, where it crossed the Woronora River by a natural ford just above the head of tidewater, where about 1825 one John Lucas had established a water-mill; though what he expected to grind in that wild and barren region defies imagination. From the ford of the Woronora Mitchell's Road climbed the heights of the Menai side and dropped again to a ferry over George's River at Lugarno. Mitchell had marked this down as a practicable site for a bridge, and directed that the ferry landings should be placed so as not to impede its construction, but after a hundred and thirty years the punt is still there — almost the last to survive around Sydney — and the bridge is still unbuilt.

Mitchell's name for his crossing of the Woronora has given some trouble to historians. The usually meticulous James Jervis, or his printer, misread it as Salengal, and Cridland explained that Sabugal was a town on the east coast of Portugal (which, as you all know, is as famous for its scenery and its commercial importance as the coast of Switzerland). Sabugal is indeed a town near the eastern frontier of Portugal (which is not quite the same thing). It was the scene in 1811 of a hard-fought action, which Wellington considered "one of the most glorious that British troops were ever engaged in", in which the Light Division, heavily outnumbered, first withstood the attack of a French army corps, then stormed the enemy position on a steep and rocky ridge above the River Coa. It is a fair guess that the landscape here reminded Mitchell, a Peninsular veteran, of that far-off battlefield.

Mitchell, by the way, had a weakness for commemorating his Peninsular experiences on the map of Australia — Mount Arapiles, the Pyrenees, Vittoria, were other examples. Had he lived today, one can see him as president or patron of his local R.S.L. sub-branch, heading the Anzac Day March. He believed, too, that Diggers should stick together, as he proved by his explosive and successful intervention to extract compensation from Charles Throsby Smith for "an old soldier named Harris" whose cottage lay across the proposed line of Harbour Street. But that is another story, which is told at more length in Alexander Stewart's recollections.

For Mitchell's Pass of Sabugal, massive excavation and building-up were needed on both sides of the Woronora; a mighty task for men equipped only with black powder, pickaxes and sledge-hammers. Much of this too little-known feat of early engineering (comparable with Mitchell's other masterpieces at Lapstone and Victoria Pass) can still be seen, and on this practically derelict road it is not hard to visualise the convict gangs at work, the redcoats on guard, and Sir Thomas riding out from Sydney to see that his orders were being carried out and the work faithfully done to build, as he believed, a great highway for posterity.

**ENGADINE :**

Charles McAllister, a wealthy retired Torres Strait pearler, bought up a large area of land hereabouts in 1890, built a home on the Old Illawarra Road, and after a world tour, "named his property 'Engadine Estate' because its hills and valleys bore a resemblance to the Engadine he had visited in Switzerland" (he must have had a powerful imagination). He afterwards subdivided some of his property (which became the nucleus of a township) and was one of the original Shire Councillors. When in 1920 a railway station was established (after local landowners had contributed almost the total cost", his widow, as the largest landowner and the highest contributor, was given the privilege of naming it.

Another resident of Engadine was Shire President in the early 1920's. Taking his office and himself somewhat seriously, he used to fly a flag on a pole in front of his home to indicate when he was in residence and would be graciously pleased to interview ratepayers and receive deputations. If George V was King in London, the Councillor was King in Engadine, and there could never have been a bigger fish in a smaller pond; for in 1921 Engadine consisted of sixteen houses with a population of forty-nine. Many of us can remember when it was not much bigger.