The Ghost of Ghost Creek, Wollongong

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Abstract
Every town has its tales of ghosts. Campbelltown has the famous Fishers Ghost and Wollongong is no exception, even to the point of having a ghost Creek, located at the Western end of Crown Street, near its junction with the Mt Keira Road and the expressway. Unfortunately much of the creek and its associated wooden and stone bridge dating from the 1830's is buried beneath the major roadworks in that area. The adjacent photo is all that is left to remind us of what the original Ghost Creek and bridge looked like. But why Ghost Creek? The answer takes us back to 1836 when that part of Wollongong was known as the Crossroads.

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THE GHOST OF GHOST CREEK, WOLLONGONG

Michael Organ, Illawarra Historical Society

Ghost Creek Bridge, Wollongong, circa 1890s. Source: Illawarra Historical Society.

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Unfortunately much of the creek and its associated wooden and stone bridge dating from the 1830's is buried beneath the major roadworks in that area. The adjacent photo is all that is left to remind us of what the original Ghost Creek and bridge looked like.

But why Ghost Creek? The answer takes us back to 1836 when that part of Wollongong was known as the Crossroads.

A detachment of the 28th Regiment was stationed there guarding a number of convicts, some of whom were engaged in excavating Belmore Basin. Others were
working on the roads in chain gangs. One of their favourite songs when working was "Britain never shall be slaves".

There was also a stockade at the Cross Roads, Lieutenant Otway being in charge. The prisoners located there were engaged in sawing cedar logs and road making. At Charcoal Creek (now Unanderra) was located another Stockade, where the prisoners were erecting a bridge across the Creek and road making.

All the soldiers were allowed a quantity of "Old Jamaica rum". The soldiers wives were allowed half the quantity supplied to the husbands, and each of their children one—forth. Needless to say the husbands invariably drank the lot.

One memorable night the Lieutenant in charge of the Stockade at the Cross Roads, whilst under the influence of liquor, rushed the sentry and tried to disarm him. The sentry - being the better man put him in the guard room. Rather than submit to court martial, with the probable result his sword being broken over his head, and dismissed from service, the Lieutenant shot himself.

This occurred on the evening of 10 April 1836 and was the origin of the ghost at what became known as "Ghost Bridge". After the death of the Lieutenant several persons averred that they had met him in bodily form at or near the bridge, but then he instantly vanished. In those days numbers of the local residents would not travel down the hill after nightfall, for fear they would meet the ghost.

On one occasion three gentlemen that had been attending a meeting at Wollongong were returning to their homes south of Wollongong late at night on horseback. When they reached the "Ghost Bridge" neither whip nor spur would induce their horses to cross the bridge. The fears of the horses were soon transmitted to their riders. I have heard an old resident that had seen them both going and coming, say that their journey back was made at a much faster pace than the outward one, being somewhat after the nature of the famous John Gilpin ride. They spent the night at Wollongong, returning home in the early morning.

Another local resident remembers while sitting on his balcony one night with the local Minister"...we distinctly heard a horse galloping up the road. The sound started at the bridge, and continued up to the top of the hill, where it would cease, only to at once recommence at the bridge. This would be repeated several times. The Minister in question told us.