

The following article was written by Mr W A Bayley for the Bulletin in 1960.

Early Roads on Bulli Mountain

During the years in which the coal trade grew saw also the growth of the district, both commercially and socially, as one by one the various villages appeared with the opening of the mines, and the roads developed to link the district overland with Sydney, with which it had also been linked for over half a century by the seaway.

Bulli was brought into prominence in the 'forties' (1840s) with the opening of the mountain passes for traffic. Surveyor Burnett in 1841 found tracks from Appin to the coast being used regularly. In 1844 Captain Westmacott, who had secured land from O'Brien at Bulli, where he resided, found another route up Bulli Mountain. It began just west of his own house and followed westwards up the ridge still used for Bulli Pass, but instead of turning south and proceeding to the Elbow as the Pass does today, it turned slightly north-west and made almost straight up the mountainside, as is shown on the Wonona Parish Map to this day. The cost of clearing the road was paid for with money collected from settlers, and soon became the most favoured track used by horsemen from Wollongong to Sydney, although the "Illawarra Hill" as the Pass was called, was considered difficult. That bridle track was the forerunner of the famous Bulli Pass, the lower half of it remaining on much the same route after one hundred years.

In 1852 Deputy Surveyor-General Perry had a road built so that carriages could drive for the first time from Appin through Broughton Pass, down Mount Keira to Wollongong. At the same time road work was carried out on Bulli Mountain—probably on the road along the top to Mount Keira. Perry reported that the road down the mountain at Bulli was both difficult and dangerous. At the same time grew a demand for improved communications with settlements along the narrow plain between the mountains and the sea from Wollongong towards Bulli.