

Submission to
LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL

Reason to protect and recognise a special piece of Lilydale history:

The historical and community asset in a 100-metre section of the upper reaches of Mountain Road, Lilydale.

Written and submitted by Rob Andrew, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The writer of this paper acknowledges the palawa, first nations people of lutruwita (Tasmania), as the traditional owners of the land addressed by this paper. In the submission's reference to 'settlement' and associated behaviours of European peoples in lutruwita, the writer intends no disrespect for palawa first peoples nor can the paper's readers ignore the privilege that has come from the dispossession and appropriation of the palawa. Their descendants, remain as always, the traditional custodians of lutruwita; respect goes to Elders past and present, acknowledging their ongoing connection to country.

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Overview:

This document is a submission to Launceston City Council seeking to extend the level of protection currently given to a small section of Mountain Road, Lilydale. The document argues that the small stretch of public road warrants recognition by the Council for its unique characteristics and its importance to Lilydale's history. In keeping, it should be given signage to briefly explain that recognition. The current protection provided by a Non Maintenance Area sign helps guide Council itself in preventing degradation of the road section. However, such a sign is not designed to inform the hundreds of visitors and walkers who traverse the section every year about how the road came to be and what is so special about its 100-plus years of community access.

INTRODUCTION

Heritage in 100 metres of broken stone

The focus of interest for the submission is a 100-metre section of Mountain Road, Lilydale, in the north-east of Tasmania. In 2021, Launceston City Council responded to a request to help protect the short length of cobbled road from the risk of being covered by gravel from maintenance crews or by damage from developers' machines.



The start of the short, preserved section of Mountain Road

Council works and maintenance officers listened to a case put to protect the road section and reasoned to act swiftly in raising a protective Non Maintenance Area signpost to guide and inform Council roadworks teams.

The following explanation expands on the argument made verbally at that time. The document goes into finer detail for Council works personnel, councillors and the community more broadly. It presents a case for further protection and preservation of such a rugged little piece of 100+ years-old engineering, using relevant print and oral history, engineering and transport logistics, pioneer industriousness and some outright good fortune. The following few pages of Background give a brief sequence to how, over the course of some decades, this one small part of Mountain Road has faced many threats from time and development, and how its existence as an unspoiled piece of pioneer engineering is due to the interest and protective instincts of its Council and its residents.

BACKGROUND

Shedding light on the growing role of the road and its curious naming

Mountain Road began as an access track to timber and water sourced above the settlement of then Upper Pipers River, now known as Lilydale. From its beginnings, it was known variously as Mt Arthur track, Lisle track, and in some early Council minutes as the road to Mt Arthur. The narrow track ran from the lower alluvial slopes to the dolerite scree shoulders of Mount Arthur. Well over 150 years ago, the walking and bridle path expanded from 1878 with the boom of the Lisle goldfields (first known as The Mount Arthur Goldfield,¹) located to Lilydale's north-east. It expanded quite rapidly to accommodate foot, horse, bullock and wagon traffic and was cleared and widened enough for a team and dray*. Even so, in 1920 the Falls Track and Mt Arthur Rd were both called "tracks" in Council meeting minutes of works requests. The road's upper reaches, beyond the 2km from Lilydale's Main Road, remained a solid stone-surfaced for bullock- and horse-drawn traffic into the 1930s, when it also accommodated motor transport.

In this state, it has survived one and a half centuries of assaults from an annual 36" (900mm) of rainfall, the incursion of vigorous native forest growth and every manner of hoof and traffic and even, on occasion, log sleds. Timber getters over time were motivated and equipped to maintain it, as were regular Lisle-goers and comers. But above the 800m mark, well beyond our well-cobbled section, it was difficult to fight flooding and regrowth. The track from there upwards became re-routed in many places by huge and impassable fallen trees or wash-aways. Even today, Google's sky-eye shows 20m to 30m of deviation in places against the Land Department's LIST maps.

¹ R. S. Bottrill (1994) Mineral Resources Tasmania REPORT 1994/01, p.2

*From Roman times, a 'road' was defined by the width of two horses side by side, yoked to a carriage.

As the track up Mt Arthur developed in the 1880s into the main connection from Lilydale through to the Lisle diggings, its name was established as Mount Arthur Road. From where the Mount Arthur track connected to the Panama ridge track, it divided; to the north down to the Lisle; and easterly around the mountain's north face down to Patersonia. This east-bound road is still formally Mt Arthur Rd on road maps and addresses. In 1880, Doaks Rd only extended to the McGowans Creek crossing at ground level. It eventually extended to its apex (where the Lisle Track connects to it) and continued as Mt Arthur Rd down to Patersonia.

The naming of the road is mentioned early, to explain to readers some of the justified confusion long experienced by Mount Arthur residents. As municipal records became more formal in the 1900s, the road's residents' addresses were listed as at 'Mt Arthur Road'. For at least the first half of the 20th century, and certainly in the time period of construction of this submission's focus cobbled section, the road was mapped as Mt Arthur Rd. (Land Titles Office). A Shell Road map of 1964 shows it as a continuous rural road running through to Patersonia. However, after the decommissioning of the PMG tower in the early 1972, the road's name and signage was changed to *Mountain Road*. So entrenched was the old road name, however, that even into the 1980s mail posted to residents of the road (myself included), was addressed to Mt Arthur Rd. Curiously, and perhaps explaining some of the local and mapping confusion, Placenames Tasmania, formerly the Nomenclature Board, has no record of the road's name change – and at last inquiry in 2022, nor could Launceston City Council offer an explanation.

A conduit to development and prosperity

From at least the 1880s, Mt Arthur Rd afforded access to timber and gold, the water catchment, some housing, fruits and potatoes, stock feed for the timber hauling beasts and to high-ground, deep-forest hiking recreation for local and town-based naturalists. The Bardenhagen family, through industrious early immigrants Ludwig and Luder, built a lucrative but essential business using the track/road to transport wagons of supplies much needed in the Lisle digs. It was the quickest route for miners and associates to Lilydale — a pub, a general store and a real bath — and beyond that to Launceston. In those days, the route was faster even than travelling out and back through Patersonia or via St Leonards.

At some point *prior* to the advent of rubber-tired vehicles, which arrived in Lilydale in the 1920s, Mt Arthur Road became surfaced with coarse blue-stone cobbling material (actually, dolerite basalt) and effectively drained. We can date later development of the lower slopes of road to a gravelled surface as no more recent than 1926; The North Eastern Advertiser of Lilydale did not get its first motor lorry until then. The stretch of cobbled dolerite road we are discussing escaped development for many decades. Today it looks much as it did in the early-to-mid 1900s, virtually unchanged since then, according to an early councillor, Mervyn Kelp, once-owner of the land embracing the special section. This preservation has happened

by an amalgam of good luck and some good management. Without that, the gravel introduced to the rest of the road in the interests of motor traffic might have hidden the cobble from sight and, conceivably, from memory for ever.

Its most major Mt Arthur Rd upgrade came in 1949 as it became the service road to the immensely important (but now-decommissioned) PMG communications relay station³. Since before it was even a road, the wagon track provided access to a handful of domestic properties at the foot of the mountain and one or two peppered along the climb to the radio relay station. Early settlers, like the Whiting, Gibbins and Johnston families ran small farms and orchards on the lower slopes. Then, in 1950, the highest altitude home on the then Mt Arthur Road was built by beekeeper H.E. 'Honey' Lawrence. Prior to that, the only structures above 500m were lumber pre-milling lean-tos and a shanty way station for water and grog pit-stops halfway to Lisle.

Honey Lawrence's block encompassed a section of road that has remained in its current state since 1919. It is the only remaining intact section of a solidly formed road beyond the old PMG station. As visitors (and residents) reach 363 Mountain Road, following the road to the renowned Mt Arthur walking track, drivers can't miss that section. Your bouncing tyres reach a cobbled surface — your car tells you to slow up — 15 metres back, you spotted a yellow and black road sign saying Non Maintenance Area but you have no idea why the sign is there and what's with the totally-changed road surface you've encountered.

By the 1960s, Lawrence's 50-acre block encompassing the 100m section of interest had come into the ownership of Mervyn Kelp. Merv's father Frederick had several blocks higher on the mountain and, with H. Johnston, he harvested much timber from them, all channelled down the mountain by bullock and horse. Merv had worked with his father and had much experience on the mountain. As mentioned, he was also a long-term Councillor for the Lilydale Council, which eventually merged with Launceston City Council. Then, in 1974, the author of this submission bought the property from Merv. By then the home that Lawrence shared with his wife had disappeared, leaving just a few foundation stones.

The Mount Arthur Rd running through and beyond the block was in the same state then as it as it had been in the living memory of Merv and his brother Ron Kelp. Their father had seen the road reach to his old growth timber stands which, in part, became the site of the Launceston Grammar School Hut (for outdoor programs). But by 1974 the ageing Kelps no longer needed the 50-acre Lawrence block to grow tick beans and keep the bush run fenced for the working bullocks of their family's timber trade. The land was offered for sale and I was lucky enough to secure that initial 50 acres with Honey Lawrence's name on the original title. It was accessed by a rugged yet very reliable road that was from the outset a source of great curiosity to us newcomers; beyond our home-to-be, the picturesque Mr Arthur Rd

³ Tassell, M. (2000) *Rural Launceston Heritage Study*.

was slowly consumed by deep forest, a road shrunken to a track to nowhere. Soon after taking possession of Merv's patch of mostly tall temperate wet sclerophyll rainforest, we named it *Sunshower*.

At that time, in 1974, the road extended in a less-defined form a further 500m, into massive, stately Regnans gums and an understorey of dogwood and tree fern, trailing well beyond the start of the Mt Arthur walking track. It eventually narrowed to a horse trail, still linked to Doaks Road, to run a more easterly path over the mountain's shoulders. One day I was sorting out 363's water lines and boundaries with Merv and Ron. We were in the paddock that sits alongside the cobbled road. I wondered aloud to them how such a picturesque road had been built? In response to my question about the road's making, Merv eyeballed me and spoke in a real tone of pride. He said returned soldiers from World War I had been employed in making the upper sections of the road with bluestone pieces (dolerite). Most impressively, this road, as Merv stressed was hand-made – it had been hand-knapped – broken down with lightweight stone-splitting hammers to the size of cobbles. That rock had come directly from beside the 'track' they were defining, rebuilding and surfacing.

Merv didn't elaborate much as we got back to our business. However, small discoveries over the years kept Merv's account in my mind. Beside the road at '363' (*Sunshower*) and further up at Ludwig Bardenhagen's wagon pit-stop, there were several huge Jerusalem pines growing and that piqued my curiosity. I had read that many returned servicemen had brought back seeds from trees in the Holy Lands, Turkey and North Africa. More important than learning about the possible origin tree in which my four kids had a massive rope swing, I discovered that, like most of the population of greater Lilydale, I had no knowledge that for so many returned soldiers of WW1, injured between 1914 and 1918, their war-caused disabilities brought great difficulty regaining paid work, especially in rural areas. Nor did I know then that returned servicemen's labour – including the cobbled road – was testament to such meaningful contributions in post-war communities. Imagine building a hand-built road with injured limbs and post-traumatic broken spirits. I later researched that Lilydale Council of the time and the Commonwealth Government in Canberra knew the importance of such work.⁴ They acted in a socially responsible political frame, minding servicemen's need to find productive purpose back in their communities. Looking at the road now, one can only wonder. But until you've heard more about it, and looked deeper, a person won't have a clue about Mountain Road's history, its construction or meaning. A later part (Section 2) of this submission addresses the Council's contribution in this effort. First though, a brief explanation of Council's role (and some serendipity) in the management and safekeeping of the unique piece of road.

⁴ Examiner (Launceston) 13 Oct, 1917 p. 2. (and in continuous Lilydale Council Minutes from 1917 through 1919), National Archives, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart.

More recent threats facing the last remaining cobbled section

In 2021, with a fresh wave of land sales higher on Mountain Road and associated private road improvements with heavy traffic unfamiliar with the road's history, a fresh deposition was made to the Council's Works Department. It sought to strengthen preservation of the section. The Works Department reviewed and acknowledged the road section's potential significance and unique attributes. Council works documents were flagged to suspend any works on the history-laden section. As mentioned early in this submission, Council's response to 2021's renewed request was to erect a Non Maintenance Area sign. This is signal to roadworks and maintenance crews that the section is not to be surfaced or modified without specific notice from Council. For two years, this has proven effective, though small encroachments of surface gravel have covered some cobbling at each end and steel tracked graders and dozers have loosened some cobbles.



Such care was exactly what the historically significant and physically unique piece of road needed at the time. Yet a key point being made in this document is that Council's action operates at the moment in a vacuum, culturally and in terms of informative interpretation of the road's values to the community and visitors. It can't be stated too often that this thoroughfare is ever-open to public access; it's constantly used. It is resilient and remarkable but the engineering and heritage in its making and its preservation remain hidden in plain sight.

Heritage, Legacy and Rarity: the road's elements of historical and cultural value

The next pages of the submission argue that these values in the cobbled, hand-formed section of Mountain Road warrant two responses:

- *Council's ongoing protection; and*
- *Council's practical acknowledgment of the road's unique history and meaning for Lilydale and NE Tasmania.*

While there is currently a welcome level of protection afforded by Council to the section of Mountain Road, Council's rationale for protection and its signage remains cryptic. The road itself is a quirky mystery to the community at large, beyond the small and diminishing number of local residents sketchily aware of the road's history, and that is largely through family storytelling. *Protection is tentative, but recognition is something more: it informs that*

protection. The road section is truly a lucky survivor to have found itself preserved and, for now, safeguarded by Council, but it is an obscure protection prone to be missed or worse, lost.

What makes the stretch of road so special?

It should be remembered that this submission is about just 100 metres of Mountain Road. Because the section is emblematic of most of the broader road's history, those connections have been included as an important part of the account. Three significant reasons will each be argued in support of the road section's preservation and active acknowledgment:

1. *The extensive local and North East heritage represented in the road's development.*
2. *The legacy in courageous manual labour carried out by returned servicemen in need of meaningful work, funded through the special efforts of the Council and the Commonwealth.*
3. *The road section is a rare, arguably unique, example of a solid and successful public-access rural road, hand-built from materials found on site.*

1. Local and North East heritage represented in the road's development



The Heritage Lilydale website's welcome page has a great shot by Katherine Hawes showing a ridge rising on the northern shoulder of Mt Arthur. That ridge fairly closely marks the path of Mt Arthur Road, once the Lisle Track and now known as Mountain Road. It's an appropriate shot to reflect the legacy given by the mountain in particular to Lilydale, but

also to Launceston and the north of the state. Scenically too, the mountain is a well-known landmark for Lilydale, visible to a large swathe of Tasmania.

Throughout its emergence from a track to its current state, Mountain Road has offered much to the history of local settlement and industry in the Lilydale district. We know from studies by Marita Bardenhagen (1987 and 1992) and several records from the Tankerville Road Trust of the 19th century and Lilydale Council following on, that the mountain track gave service and income to many breadwinners and families in harsh times, especially in the



PHOTO: (Spurling & Sons)
Mt Arthur from similar angle, early 1900s. Dead spars in township area are all ringbarked.

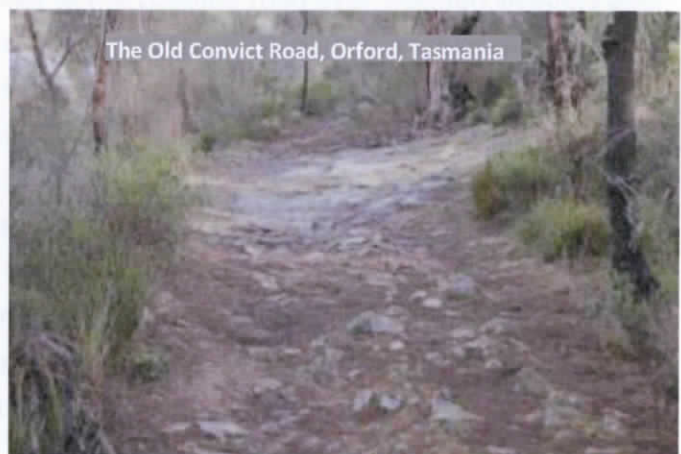
period 1870 to 1930 – timber for housing and trade, and access to wealth and markets on the Lisle goldfields and to townships on the north-eastern slopes of Mount Arthur. The mountain provided water and timber to grow the young township *and* any number of buildings and utilities in Launceston – wharves, levees and straight timber for the early water and sewerage pipes around town.

Mount Arthur's wagon-friendly road was key at the time to accessing key resources. Its lower slopes on the north faces provided long sunshine to farmers and orchardists, graziers and cash croppers. Importantly, the road gave critical thoroughfare to the wealth and trade opportunities of the Lisle Goldfields, the second biggest producer of gold in the state in its time and a magnet to work and settlement of the North East. Even then, the road provided access for hardy picnickers and walkers from Launceston and nearby districts seeking the mountain's summit (now the closest 'Abel' peak to Launceston). It led to a number of homes from the earliest days of the community's development and was extended on and up as a bridle track in the 1880s for pack horses carrying Lilydale produce and hardware to the Lisle Goldfields between Patersonia and the Golconda Valley. A local monograph from 1964 by Bill Wilson (once Secretary of Lilydale Council) records that on just one day in 1979, 26 pack horses from Lilydale were unloaded at Lisle. For farming families like the Sulzbergers and the entrepreneurial Bardenhagens, it was the most direct route to the goods-hungry clientele – for thirsty local prospectors it was a cheaper and shorter route to and from Lilydale's taverns than the seven-mile walk plus train trips in and out of Launceston.

At some point around the period of the early 1900s to the World War 1 period, it became partly surfaced in the local dolerite basalt. It was known that horses hauling steel-tired wagons and drays did well on bluestone but not on soft material⁵. From the mid-1920s, as motor lorries (trucks) became more common, the press for more 'fines' on roads of all grades became an increasing demand and something of a standard. Prior to that, the level of road building was like that practised by the Romans, (many such roads in Britain are still standing and passing traffic is ably served the horse- and bullock-drawn vehicles.)

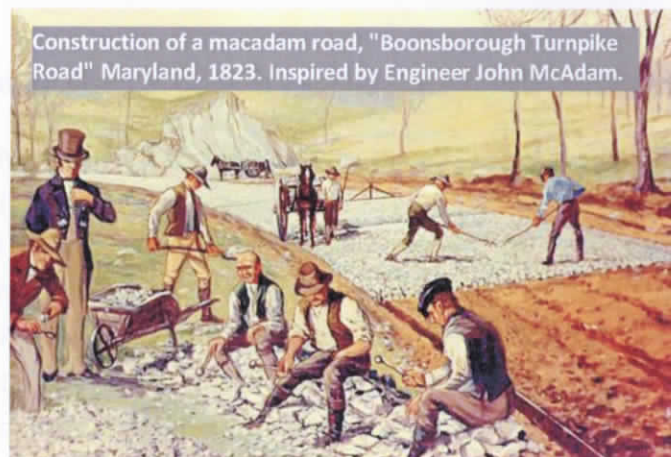
Early Colonial roads across all penal settlements were built by convicts. These beginnings help us understand both the importance and vagaries of road construction prior to machinery and organised regional governance:

Macquarie can be considered as the father of road planning in Australia. Soon after he arrived in Sydney, and concerned by the haphazard development, he was busy having streets widened, wrongly placed buildings removed, sign posts erected, houses numbered and traffic rules introduced. ... Macquarie set another precedent in 1812, when he turned to road-making to *alleviate unemployment created by a depression in the economy*.⁶



After the transportation of convicts ceased, immigration was important in skill-filling, as we see nowadays. But road building has also carried a social casting that has taken over a century to shake:

The first engineering input into road making in Australia came with the introduction of McAdam's method of pavement construction into Australia in 1822, ... Nevertheless, the more expensive Telford method continued to be used in inappropriate circumstances in Australia for at least another half century (Fig. 22). *This was due in part to the fact that road construction remained a publicly despised operation for recalcitrant convicts (my italics)* and that many of the army engineers who had been sent to Australia had had only a smattering of engineering training in road construction and usually even less experience. They would have missed the subtle but greater efficacy of the cheaper macadam.



⁵ Badger, I. (1977) *Australian Horse Drawn Vehicles*

^{6 & 7} Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, p 348

Bardenhagen's study, *Lilydale: Conflict and Unity 1914-1918*, shows that a major rationale for increased railway links in the North East was the poor state of the district's early roads: "Council records show that the general condition, maintenance and construction of the roads were inadequate, thus highlighting the importance of the rail link for the community even up to the war. These roads were of gravel, constructed by manual labourers using horse and cart."⁸ By 1928 the Council was reporting to the State Secretary for Public works about "the lengths of macadamised, gravelled and formed roads in the municipality."⁹ The Macadam system used progressively graded whinstones¹⁰ (broken down rocks beginning at building-stone-sized, down to fist-sized and sometimes finer.) Prior to gravelling, the macadamised road was the standard and preferred road surface for steel-tyred horse or bullock wagons.¹¹ Over the years, land-owners on Mt Arthur Road have found *bell-wheels*, both small and large, that used to lower logs to the cobbled road over wooden sleepers and rails by the strength of bullocks; wood-spoked, *steel-tyred dray wheels* once drawn by bullock teams and horses; *log shoes*, massive shield-shaped discs 3 ½ feet high that guided giant stringy-barks along snig tracks; *winch shackles* big enough to pull tons of wagon out of a bog; many *springs from wagons* unable to last the distance as well as 70-year-old rubber truck tyres from 1940s and '50s timber-carting lorries.

Mt Arthur Road must have been well formed at its base, as from Depression times onward it serviced increased residency, construction and maintenance access for telecommunications towers, visits of many hundreds of mountain walkers per year, and more recently, short-stay tourist accommodation. With the coming of water, steam and diesel power, it furnished logs to many sawmills around the foothills of the mountain. Until the 1990s, the road continued to carry large machines and vehicles transporting large amounts of logs and split or billeted timber destined for mills around Lilydale and for world markets.¹²

Roads, the unsung big ticket item and their place in Council's social and financial business

Australian transport history holds mainly records of the vehicles produced in the interests of industry and recreation – scarcely a mention of *construction* of the *roads* upon which they travelled, especially before great tarred highways became politically noteworthy. Ironically, the earliest Lilydale Municipal Council minutes (in full copperplate script from 1907 to 1926), show that the clear majority of Council meetings were devoted to road construction and maintenance. High stakes were in maintaining access to the properties and worksites of pioneers, privateering settlers, prospectors, visitors, through-traffic to the North East, and for new community members such as soldier settlers.

⁸ M. Bardenhagen, 1987

⁹ Lilydale Council Minutes, 1928

¹⁰ Badger, I. (1977) *Australian Horse Drawn Vehicles*, Rigby, Melbourne

¹¹ Ruhen, O., *Bullock Teams – the Birth of a Nation*, 1980

¹² *North Eastern Advertiser*, Tue 20 Dec, 1949, p3 LILYDALE

In almost every instance, roadworks account for the lion's share of monthly and overall expenditures. Council's works outlays for 1917 show the large proportion of roads in overall allocations:

PUBLIC WORKS SCHEDULE: The schedule attached to the annual Statement delivered by the Minister of Lands and Works yesterday provides the following votes:-

Roads generally	£45,675	
Conditional votes, £ for £	2,500*	(Road allocations dependent on 1-for 1 funding from the [project] sponsors.)
Bridges	4,200	
Renewals of bridges	9,000	
Jetties	2,150	
Miscellaneous	19,635	
Buildings	23,372	
Railways and tramways	14,074	
Railways (existing lines)	1,000	
Hydro-Electric Department ..	23,500	
	<u>£150,747</u>	¹³

Though European settlement in the Lilydale area started in earnest in the 1860s, it was 60 years before Council got its first motorised lorry to ferry waste to the tip. "After the formation of the Tankerville Road Trust at Lilydale in 1872, settlers were more able to improve the roads themselves using the portion of the land purchase money required to be set aside by the government for this purpose."¹⁴

What was achieved by man and stock, and the district's wheelwrights, to get people and produce about was monumental. Yet you won't find a monument to that transporting work. Roads get built for purposes, not for legers. Mt Arthur Rd/Mountain Road has heritage but a patchily maintained history; histories that are often obscured, piecemeal, sometimes lost – much work put in on the ground by manual labourers went unattributed and unrecorded, even roads' origins and namings.

The Timber-getting and Sawmilling Industry – private business of public interest

In 1949 the North East Advertiser ran a small historical review of Lilydale focusing on the timber industry that seems to have circulated through a number of provincial bulletins.

It is considered that the foot hills on the Underwood and Lilydale sides of Mount Arthur contain some of the finest beds of milling timber in the State... Many years ago, Mr Fred Kelp of Lilydale and Mr C. Johnston had a sawmill on the side of the road leading to Mt Arthur, and they received 5/- per 100 super feet of timber delivered in Launceston. Messrs J. B. White Pty. Ltd. are still saw milling on the slopes of Mt. Arthur, and in 1950 Messrs Franklin Bros, intend to bring a large quantity of timber down the Mt. Arthur Road to their sawmill.¹⁵

¹³Examiner (Launceston) Sat 13 Oct 1917, p.2

¹⁴Tassell, M. (2000) Rural Launceston Heritage Study. p.17

¹⁵North Eastern Advertiser, Tue 20 Dec, 1949, p3 LILYDALE

Two parties stood most to benefit from the development of a serviceable road from the slopes of Mt Arthur down to the township and transport opportunities to broader Launceston and beyond: The Bardenhagen family, who ran the general store that serviced the Lisle goldfields and who owned the wagons that ferried Lilydale's farm produce to those miners; and Frederick Kelp and his family, who were most vigorous in working the hardwood forests directly surrounding Mount Arthur Rd and the Mt Arthur track at its upper reaches. Road taxes were paid to Council for private cartage, by produce weight, such as for farm produce, and for timber by measure of super-feet. This was quite lucrative for council and was diligently monitored.

Such clients had vested interests in the roads' quality and the Bardenhagens and Kelps, among many, had high stakes in it. Secondary beneficiaries of road improvements were the residents peppered along Mountain Road, though few were living as far up as the Lawrences. The Council was responsible for maintaining and retaining ratepayers and citizens, and further promoting the area's settlement and commercial opportunities. For most of its history, nevertheless, the land above the 1km mark of the road was considered unsuitable for agriculture and settlement. Men of importance, such as W. Sommerville, W. McGowan and the Johnstons, owned properties for development purposes (mainly timber) along the Mountain Rd. They had municipal influence and an interest in supporting the opening and upgrading of access from Lilydale and district to and from the goldfields. Lilydale was then the closest large town (by foot and hoof) to the Lisle Valley, the miners from which spent big on supplies and R&R using Lilydale's accommodation and licensed premises.

From the 1870s the track from Main Road up wards and over the ridge towards McGowan's Creek was extended as a bridle track for pack horses carrying Lilydale goods and farm produce to the Lisle goldfields between Patersonia and the Golconda Valley. Members of farming families like the Sulzbergers and the entrepreneurial Bardenhagens used it as the most direct route to the goldfields. It also gave them and locals-cum-prospectors a cheaper and shorter route to and from Lilydale than the seven-mile walk and two train trips to the Lisle via Launceston. For most of its history until the 1890s, the track continued to carry much of the split timber destined for settlements of the East Tamar and Lilydale areas and, with the coming of water, steam and diesel power, it furnished logs for several sawmills around the foothills of the mountain.

In oral history terms, Merv Kelp had stated with some pride that returned servicemen had hand-knapped (split down) dolerite rock pieces for the Mountain Road surface. He and brother Ron had nothing to gain from fabricating such information. By 1974, Merv in particular had much clerical and municipal experience and kudos. The question remains, *If what was shared was true, who were the workers and how was the roadwork funded; how did the whole project come about?* The community and quite a few in the locality, even some associated with Council such as the previously-mentioned W. Sommerville and W.

McGowan, stood to benefit in the short and long terms. Even the influential political and land-owning Archer family had skin in the game – in 1902, Frank Archer who was founder of 'Landfall' and MHA for the electorate including Lilydale and Lisle, was walking the Mt Arthur Road from Lilydale to Lisle when he "died suddenly in office while bushwalking between Lilydale and Lisle in May 1902". Frank had also been Chairman of the Dorset Road Trust for 21 years.¹⁶ and, as the Empire's war came to present serious consequences, whole communities were forced into the reconstruction of lives and lifestyles. Roads were largely public thoroughfares to goods and livelihoods, and always central to municipal missions. They became more vital to community prosperity and development over time.

How then, *did* it come about that the bridle trail (horse track) past Lawrence's residence became a road? What traffic would it support? When was it done? Who funded it, sourced its material and put in the labour? Many other questions warrant answering. Who, for instance, stood to benefit in the short and long terms? Many of these questions are only half answered by Council minutes. Newspaper reports of Council works are summaries at best. Much is left to circumstantial logic by the limited level of reporting of actual financial accounts sub-contracted work. The best sources have been the literal Council ledgers and Minutes held at the National Archives in Hobart.

Merv Kelp had stated with some pride that returned servicemen had hand-knapped (split down) bluestone pieces for the Mountain Road section's surface. Was that true? Merv and his brother Ron had no reason to fabricate anything; nothing to gain from pointing out the hand-built characteristics, the story behind that work. If what Merv and Ron had described was true, who were the men who built the road? It wasn't even clear at the time which war they were talking about: World War I or World War II. How was the roadwork funded and how had that funding been obtained?

2. The road as a testimony to its makers: The Commonwealth's Repatriation Grant for employment of Returned Soldiers

The least understood element of the road's heritage is its legacy to sacrifices made abroad and at home by communities in war efforts. It remains especially valuable for some unique attributes around its construction. The story behind the road's most significant works is remarkable and largely untold. Much of it is buried in early 20th century Council minutes, in pen-and-ink legered copperplate hand-written records and in newspaper articles, which are not easy for the public to unearth.

Towards the latter stages of World War I, the Commonwealth and all levels of government took seriously the country's obligation to repatriate increasing numbers of servicemen whose lives had been dislocated and sometimes damaged and traumatised. It wasn't

¹⁶ *The North Western Advocate and The Emu Bay Times*. 29 May 1902. "Mr F. Archer's Death". p.4.
Retrieved 30 July 2023 – via Trove

just servicemen who stood to benefit from the work offered. Broader vested interests, even private enterprises, were willing to promote public works to help returnees.

In September 1918, Launceston's Daily Telegraph reported that Lilydale Council organised an elected executive committee of Councillors to manage a local branch of the Repatriation Board. Its primary purpose was to distribute a Commonwealth Special Grant of £406. The Council chose to allocate all the monies to roadworks, perhaps reckoning that access equated to both improved commercial and settlement opportunities.¹⁷

Reporting again on Lilydale Council minutes, the Examiner of May 14, 1919, describes allocated sums and the work planned for returned WW1 soldiers in the district:



Above and below, returned servicemen working on hand build road: Great Ocean Road History Centre, Lorne Vic.



With reference to the special Commonwealth grant of £406 for the employment of returned soldiers. The amount was allotted as follows:-Dorset ward, £100; Turner's Marsh, £100; and Tankerville ward, £206. It was reported that so far only three returned men had applied for work under this grant. So it was resolved that the authorities be written to stating that the council could give light work on the roads to a limited number of returned soldiers, and that applications could be made to the following councillors:-- G. E. Archer, "Landfall"; A. D. Rice, Lebrina; T. G. Windsor, Karoola; G. Sulzberger, Tunnel.¹⁸

A sub-committee (advisory) was also appointed, including several with direct interests in Mount Arthur Road, including L. Bardenhagen, (shop owner supplying the Lisle goldfields via

¹⁸ Examiner, May 14, 1919 p.3 'LILYDALE COUNCIL'

¹⁷ & ¹⁹ Daily Telegraph Monday 16 September 1918, p.2 'REPATRIATION LILYDALE'.

Mt Arthur Rd) and T. Whiting, a long-term councillor and Mt Arthur Road resident. More than half the 'AIF Grant' was allocated to the Tankerville ward, within which the Mountain Road was located. The Council wrote to various authorities and advertised positions in newspapers stating: "that Council could give light work on the roads to a limited number of returned soldiers, and that applications could be made."¹⁹ Applications were to be fielded by councillors elected to the sub-committee.

Municipal diplomacy was active from the first days of Lilydale Council. Roads were one of the areas in which both private and public interests overlap – one reason roadworks took up a large part of the council outlays – so road works became an obvious choice of work for AIF grant monies. It was, in that day, mostly manual work and would seem suitable for unskilled returned servicemen. Moreover, most smaller scale rural roads projects were requested by farmers, timber getters and new home builders. All the district's residents and landowners could recognise the social and economic benefits of easier transport movement. In scale, these rural roads were appropriate for the modest sums being granted to each sub-district or parish. Feelers went out to the community more broadly. Allocations of works funds were more popular than those sought for private interests, such as those of individual farmers or timber-millers.

Two of the first three applicants were W.J. Simmonds and J. Wallace. They are shown in several subsequent monthly Council minutes as receiving payments in various council ward road tasks around greater Lilydale. William Simmonds of Karoola was a 32-year-old recruit who had developed lung problems during his war service after being gassed. Considered only fit for light duties, he still fronted for work on the roads. The work got going in winter and continued to early summer, when the Commonwealth ordered all monies to be expended. He was one of a number of ex-servicemen engaged in the AIF Grant, as it came to be known and was referred to in Council minutes. In a time of scarce and irregular employment, over a dozen men gained work under the AIF Grant.

The AIF Grant's road work history sits well with Merv Kelp's account. Significantly, few of the funds were allocated to main roads, and with Doaks Road not at that time connected to the Lisle Track, it would make sense that allocations were made for access along what was then called Mount Arthur Rd, a well-used timber conduit and at its top end a horse track connected to the North-East gold fields and Patersonia.

Among others, the following property owners served by Mount Arthur Road had the public access towards their homes, farms and timber coupes improved through requests to Council or as intergovernmental initiatives: T. Whiting, F. Kelp, H. Lawrence, J.H Johnston and J. Hudson, Vic Dolbey and J.B. White. Notably, too, William McGowan, who was then rising through the ranks of Launceston bureaucrats and eventually became Launceston's Superintendent of Public Reserves, owned several tracts of land serviced by the upper reaches of Mount Arthur road.

The unique section of serendipitously preserved construction is, in itself, a site of remembrance without fanfare, statues or anything to mark or explain its meaning and place in Lilydale's history. Though a thoroughfare of significant historical value, the road is a largely forgotten window into the road's history – a remarkable construction; rare, intact and openly accessible. It is worthy of being recognised by those who come upon it, for its cultural value and understood for engineered characteristics.

3. A Museum Piece Below our Noses: a special road that's a 'keeper'

The 100-metre piece of the original track is doubly important to the history of the region because it is one of the last intact examples of pre-motorised transport infrastructure and of pioneer labour – one that reveals the incredible endeavours of settlers and the developers in Lilydale and the broader 'Upper Piper' area. Ultimately, the section is an extremely rare public road example of 19th century-style road building: hand made with local, at-hand material and, given that dolerite basalt is one of the hardest minerals used on roads anywhere, – metal, as it has become known – has lasted exceptionally well. Even so, as a public thoroughfare, in its un-interpreted, locally obscure state, it remains vulnerable to such man-made threats as heavy earth-movers' steel tracks. Mountain Road has a rich heritage but a poorly maintained history.

The engineering of the early wet-ground tracks used progressively broken and graded stone, fist sized and sometimes finer. Road-building history shows such surfaces were made to suit horseshoes, bullock hooves and the steel-tyred wagons they drew²⁰, not to mention handling the rigours of logs



Roadworks in Tasmania's depression times – Old Beach Road - broken stone surface. National Archives, State

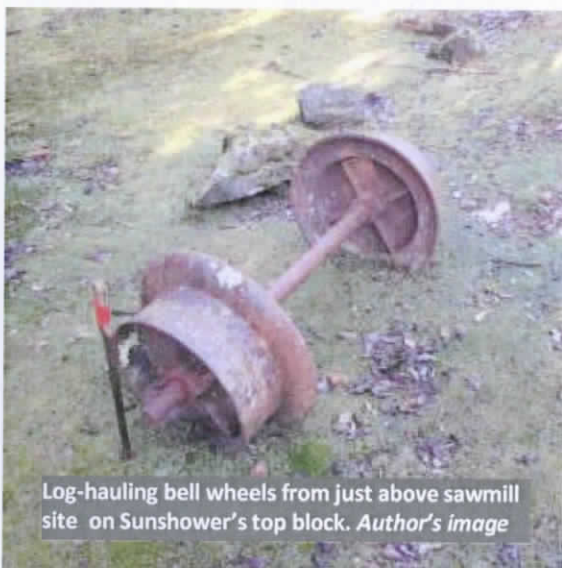
being dragged along them some distance to waiting long-haul drays. As mentioned, the Council's first rubber-tyred motor lorry was bought in 1926 and that, by 1928, the minutes show the Council was responding to the State Secretary for Public works about "the lengths of: macadamised, gravelled and formed roads in the municipality."

²⁰ *Ruhen, O., Bullock Teams – the Birth of a Nation, 1980*

Even the advent of motor lorries in timber getting did not mean these hardy surfaces were covered; the logs still needed hauling and they had to traverse the road to their holding paddocks downhill. It's no co-incidence that our preserved cobbled section at 363 Mountain Rd exactly borders the old site of the largest holding and feed paddocks for the valuable beasts of burden. Over the years land owners around the road have found many items of that time, half buried in the paddock and adjoining bush run or hidden for a century by bush regrowth, man ferns and deep forest litter: wood-spoked, *steel-tired dray wheels* once drawn by the bullocks teams and horses; *bell-wheels*, both small and large, that used to convey logs to the cobbled road over wooden rails and sleepers by the strength of yoked bullocks;



Anthropologist Frances Andrew revealing a bullock dray wheel found among tree ferns beside Mountain Road at Sunshower



Log-hauling bell wheels from just above sawmill site on Sunshower's top block. Author's image

log shoes, massive shield-shaped discs 3 ½ feet high that guided giant stringy-barks along snig tracks; *winch shackles* big enough to pull tons of wagon out of a bog; many *springs from wagons* unable to last the distance, as well as 70-year-old rubber truck tyres from 1940s and '50s timber-carting lorries.

Several aspects to the road's construction are characteristic and, in their survival, unique. They tell a story of engineering, ingenuity, courage and resilience – of the makers and the road itself. Similar to nearly all roads of the 19th and

early 20th centuries, it was hand-made but, unlike those many other roads, this was wholly made of local materials. Most importantly, it remains today just as it was shortly after 1918, at the conclusion of World War I, not covered by layers of shale and gravel, not extensively drained, culverted and graded. Built without introduced materials, without the benefits of Council machinery or improvement, it's a thoroughfare that has remarkably weathered the rigours of time.

For most of its history, the lower stretches of Mount Arthur Road were, in truth, a muddy track, only gravelled from the 1920s up to the Lawrence's block (now 363 Mountain Rd.) From the Lawrence property adjoining the Commonwealth Communications Station, (the PMG Relay Station) some 3.63 kilometres above Main Road, the mountain's primary thoroughfare had never been gravelled or shaled. Our section remains so to this day.

The remaining 100-metre stretch, from the boundary of *Sunshower*, is a firm track of rounded dolerite cobbles, made from 4" (100mm) chunks of the same dolerite as found in the paddock beside it. The rocks would have been more jagged when initially broken down by knapp hammer and laid but years of traffic have rounded them down to a safe state for modern tyres. The unsealed road's width is around 4½ yds (4 metres) and, discounting drain easements, the same as the majority of Mountain Road below it. The section's charm rests in the fact that it remains much as it was when it carried turn-of-the-century bullock-drawn wagons, drays and lorries – much of that traffic from Bardenhagen's store. Since the 1930s, it has shouldered a mix of bullock- and horse-drawn vehicles, as well as motorised flat trays – carrying millions of super-feet of hardwood, commercial honey, tick bean and potato produce going down, with settlers' scantling, radio relay towers and buses of Grammar School campers headed uphill. And that is not to mention the traffic of countless feet and vehicles of bushwalkers attracted over the past century to the easiest big view of the North East within reach of Launceston – a well-built, resilient stretch, despite not being frequently table-drained, as is the rest of Mountain Road. Its edges remain even more solid than parts of the more newly surfaced road above and below it and it drains effectively, helping preserve its form and nature.

To summarise the historical values of road itself, both social and physical, the following 'arguments' are offered:

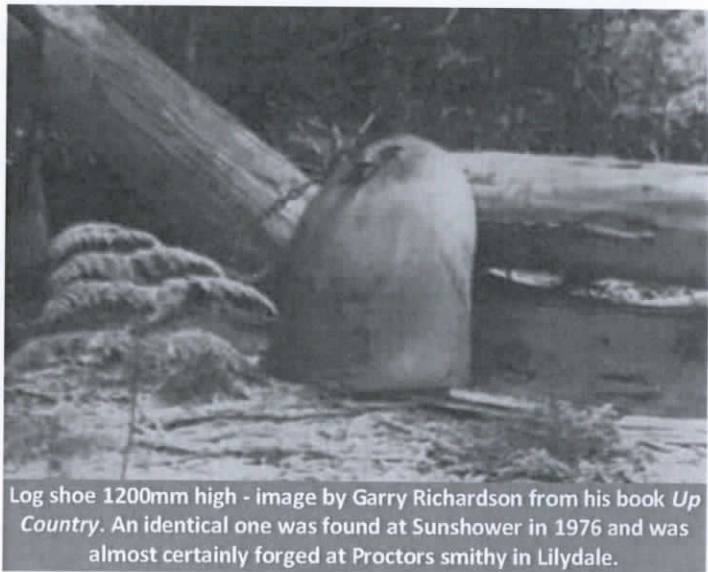
Accessibility: The particular piece of old road does have a notably rougher ride than the gravelled part of Mountain Road. That said, this inconvenience is small in relation to the historical uniqueness it presents to users and visitors. Railways, by comparison, have a reasonable history of conservation and 'paid' trips back in time, private enterprises, ticketed. Roads don't have the same nostalgic panache but have been no less contributory to our growth and development. The preserved section of Mountain Road is rare for its continuous public accessibility; it's not locked away behind gates and Keep Out signs. It is also true that wagon carriageways like this are extremely rare across Australia. Almost all "heritage roads" (as even in Tasmania) are highways, given heritage status for their colonial path and iconic landmark surroundings rather than for the road itself as an intact artefact. However, visitors and locals can appreciate the nature of the Mountain Road section as a picturesque, still-existing relic of a time before motor trucks, gravelling and graders. Like the early railways, this early-days road was wholly a product of human toil, in a genre of ingenuity seen today only in remote, inhospitable conditions or times of disaster recovery, (though nowadays most likely supported by helicopters.)

Visibility of its character and making: To stop and look at the road, to walk along it, we see a small but well-preserved piece of infrastructure, something that very tangibly speaks to local history. It's an unspoiled product of its time, outlasting the age of beasts of burden and the drays they hauled, surpassing for over a century the job its makers had in mind; a road bordered by the same paddocks and bush-runs that fed and spelled the animals

working the mountain and its forests. The cobbled stretch connected the lower, drier reaches of Mt Arthur Road to the muddy, slippery old horse-and-bullock snig tracks. Its rough but tightly laid surface would have helped greatly in facilitating motor lorry traffic of the late 1920s and 1930s onward. These vehicles carried even more logs and rough-sawn billets to yards and mills in Lilydale and 'town' and boosted the district's economy enormously.

The combination of hand-hewn dolerite rocks on a base amalgam of dolerite scree and stable, clay-rich soil was well-drained by spoon drains and the sloping downhill paddocks below the road. All these elements have proven by the test of time to make for a remarkably resilient piece of engineering – a working piece of history.

Local and regional historical significance: We have talked earlier in the submission about the place the Mt Arthur Road had in Lilydale's history and beyond. Yet the design and shape of the road as it is now found has a very practical story, only a small part of which can be explained in a short document like this. The real first-line stakeholders in the road builders' minds were drivers of wagons and drays. The road builders, men of their time, grown in country life and skills, knew what the traffic on their road would want: a road to handle the vehicles running on steel tyres forged locally in Lilydale by the Proctors and Turners, local iconic wheelwrights, well-known to the road builders and any person who used a horse or cart in Lilydale. What's there for us to marvel at is a road made for steel-clad 5" (125mm) wide wheels of horse-or-bullock-drawn drays. The foundry, forge and workshop are dismantled and somewhat forgotten relics set away and gathering dust in the backs of sheds these days. But the road is still doing its thing well into the 21st century. It has even hosted electric vehicles.



Log shoe 1200mm high - image by Garry Richardson from his book *Up Country*. An identical one was found at Sunshower in 1976 and was almost certainly forged at Proctors smithy in Lilydale.

Civic pride and a commemorative legacy: A visible example of civic responsibility shown by Council in its early stance to work in concert with many local government responses across Australia as World War I drew to an end. The AIF grant was an act of unashamed positive discrimination. There was national and local consensus and effort in the initiative country-wide toward post-war repatriation projects. To fulfil the particular goals set out by Lilydale's chapter in the story, the road was built from raw locally found materials and by the sweat of real people. They were seeking to find income and purpose amid their past and present dire straits. In this road, a number Lilydale & District families can identify a physical legacy as

important as any statue or memorial to the sacrifices of war. Hindsight is a curious wisdom: the community has reason to be grateful that the road has escaped development and that its preservation is largely attributable to the good sense of the Council's Works Department staff.

Where to now?

A conclusion and a request for recognition

I am hoping this account provides the Council with a richer explanation of how and why it came to be helping to preserve this particular section of Mountain Road, which is worthy of ongoing protection and preservation. The Council's timely action in flagging it as a Non Maintenance Area has contributed greatly to its literal continued existence. Even so, this paper has a further purpose in asking Council to acknowledge and now *recognise* the road section for what it represents. It does not need to compete with King's Bridge or Cataract Gorge for state or national heritage status. However, some similarly small unsung pieces of local North East Tasmanian history have been accorded raised levels of informal listing, such as the 1887 Railway Tunnel and the 1900s St Mary's Slaughterhouse. The many hundreds of people who yearly explore Mt Arthur cross over the unmissable cobbled road section in their recreation or touring. They have no sense of why it is so different to the rest of the road they have traversed nor how durable its history and construction have made it. How could any traveller know the answer? The section is so unique that when one first reaches it, the sudden impression is that it is a private road. One can easily ask, 'is this a road I'm allowed to drive on? The historical section of the road's unique charm lies much in it being a public road. It is no accident that the road has been so durable and that it has actually been valued by the Council as worthy of some protection, even of conservation.

Summary

This submission asks that Council acknowledge and recognise the road for its local heritage value and, further, that it signifies the importance of the history to visitors and the broader community, the same community that has benefited from the labour of men left unemployed from serving their country at war. There is no better time than the present to interpret the section's history and mark its value to Lilydale and the North East's history. One method might be, for instance, to attach a metal information board to the existing Non Maintenance Area signpost. Alternatively, it could be housed upon a purpose built cairn built from the same dolerite material as the road surface.

The recognition needed is no more formal, really, than acknowledgement by the body responsible for the road, Launceston City Council. It is hoped that Council's recognition will be both expressed and practical. Associated with the recognition should be a discussion within relevant Council areas, and involved residents, around strategies to sensitively and

practically manage the section into the future. Signage of explanation and recognition is an area where the author, volunteers and community groups are willing to help Council in providing modest, durable interpretive signage.

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Daily Telegraph (Launceston) May 1919 p 3 LILYDALE COUNCIL. Reference to the special Commonwealth grant of £406

Examiner (Launceston) 13 Oct 1917 p2 PUBLIC WORKS SCHEDULE

North Eastern Advertiser, Fri 10 Aug, 1928, p3 LILYDALE COUNCIL

*Mc Gowan request for scrubbing of blackberries on road leading to his property on Mt Arthur

*roads macadamised etc request from Sec of Public Works

North Eastern Advertiser, Tue 20 Dec, 1949, p3 LILYDALE

*“...the Postal Department is also arranging to construct a land line from the [Lilydale] Post Office to the Wireless Station on the slopes of Mount Arthur.”

*“...many years ago Mr. Fred Kelp and Mr C Johnston had a sawmill on the side of Mt Arthur road...”

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Note, all other references to and excerpts from Lilydale Council Minutes relate to records accessed by the author from the archives held at the State Library and repositories in Hobart, Tasmania.

Roadworks in Tasmania's depression *Libraries Tas Online Collection*



Road up Mt Wellington
hand built from 1890s to
1937 *Libraries Tas Online*
Collection NS4023-1-52



1930s High ground road building – hand built
Central Highlands Tasmania *Libraries Tas Online*
Collection NS4023-1-52



Old convict Road, Orford, Tasmania.
Now a walking trail only.

*Showing haphazard placement of
rocks characteristic of uninformed
engineering.*