



Bridging the Hawkesbury River Hornsby to Gosford

Heritage Drives

SELF-GUIDED TOURS



Gosford Wharf c.1910



Peats Ferry Road 1930

→ Historical overview

Sydney was settled by Europeans within the encircling Nepean-Hawkesbury River, which limited overland routes and meant that travellers had to be ferried across the river. The Hawkesbury was bridged in 1860 at North Richmond, but there was no bridge for the lower river until 1945!

In the early 1820s, merchant Solomon Wiseman took up land on a peninsula and established Wiseman's Ferry crossing, the point where the Great North Road crossed the Hawkesbury.

George Peat, Australian settler, knew the path travelled by the Guringai Aborigines and used it to mark a line-of-road from Sydney to Brisbane Water. In the early 1830s Peat established a ferry crossing at Mooney Mooney Point.

Governor Brisbane's promise that settlers at Brisbane Water would have road access to Sydney was honoured 20 years later when Governor Fitzroy approved Peats Ferry Road as the new North Road. By 1848, punts were used to ferry travellers across Hawkesbury River and Mooney Mooney Creek, as well as Narara Creek at West Gosford.

Peats Ferry crossings ceased in 1889 when the railway bridge was opened across Hawkesbury River. Peats Ferry Road north of the river was not maintained.

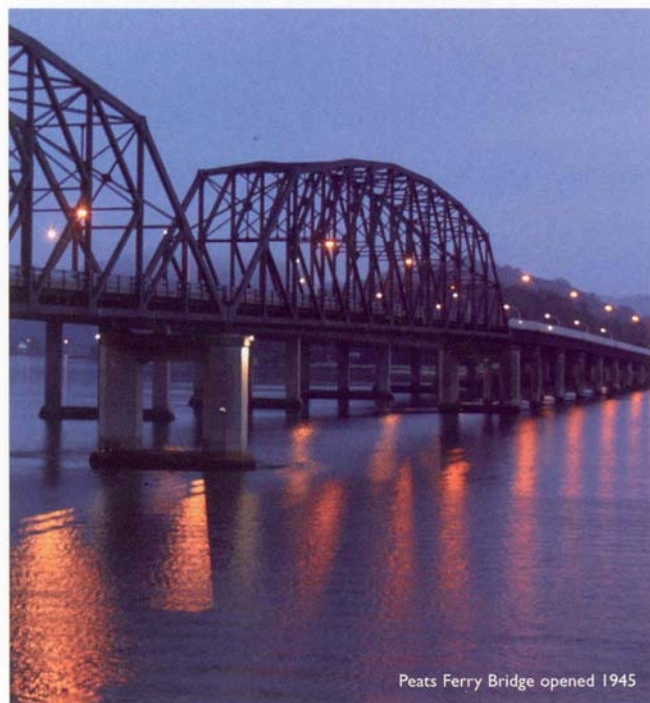
As motoring increased, traffic to Gosford crossed the Hawkesbury at Wisemans Ferry, continued up the Great North Road and down Mangrove Road to descend from Somersby to Gosford. Wiseman's Ferry Road beside the river through Spencer was not opened until 1934. This long route to cross the Hawkesbury River was as unsatisfactory as it had been 100 years before, so the Main Roads Board decided to reopen a public crossing at Peats Ferry.

Peats Ferry Road from Hornsby to Gosford was reconstructed as the Great Northern Highway. By 1930, a pair of motor vessel ferries, *Frances Peat* and *George Peat*, operated on the highway between Kangaroo Point and Mooney Mooney Point. The road from Sydney through Hornsby to the Hawkesbury became the Pacific Highway.

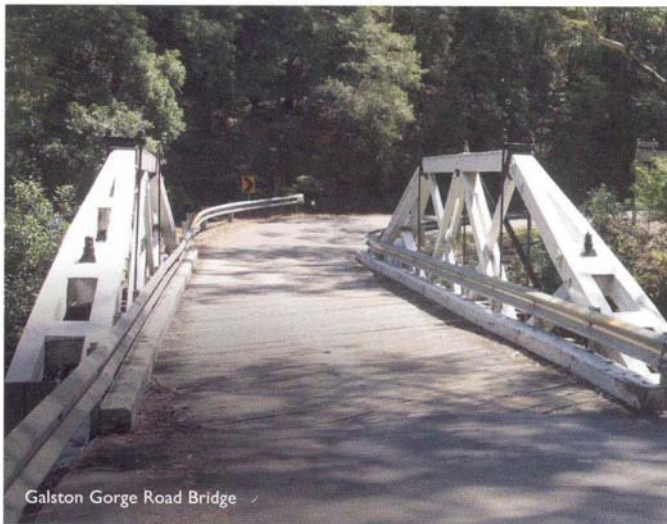
Peats Ferry Road Bridge was completed and opened in 1945. In 1965 a new motorway was opened as a tollway, starting with the climb up Peats Ridge from Mooney Mooney Point. This became the Sydney-Newcastle Freeway.

Steep climbs across the Hawkesbury River and Mooney Mooney Creek impeded road transport north of Sydney. In 1968 road levelling was complete from Berowra to Calga, with a new Hawkesbury motorway bridge opening in 1973. A road was built from Calga along Peats Ridge to link up with the old Mangrove Road from Wisemans Ferry to Somersby.

The high level Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge was opened in December 1986. The toll was lifted in December 1988.



Peats Ferry Bridge opened 1945



Galston Gorge Road Bridge

➔ Heritage tour

This guided tour is from Hornsby to Gosford, based on the 1930s Pacific Highway and the 1960s Peats Ridge Road expressway bypass. The highway replaced the 1840s Peats Ferry Road.

Your tour begins at **Pearces Corner**

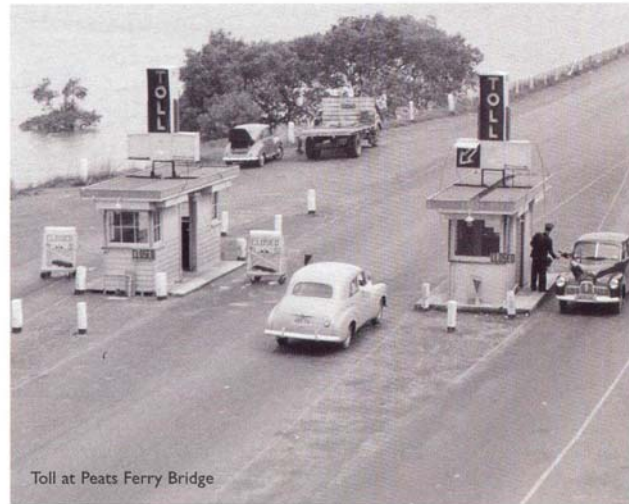
The 1930s Pacific Highway began at **Pearces Corner (1)**, where Pennant Hills Road and the present highway intersect. The highway leads to **Hornsby township (2)**, developed as a railway junction and originally named Jacks Island.

The **Galston Gorge Road Bridge (3)** is a McDonald timber truss bridge built in 1893, the last year that bridges of this type were built. This bridge is heritage listed and spans 20 metres. It is the smallest of its type and only four others remain in NSW.

The Pacific Highway continues along Govett Range, surveyed by William Govett in 1829. The dome of Mt Banks in the Blue Mountains can be seen from Mt Ku-ring-gai Railway Station.

Mt Ku-ring-gai Highway Bridge (4) was built over the railway by Government Railways in 1928. This jack-arch bridge was built from steel provided by Dorman Long Co., the company which also provided steel for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

In Berowra, Tourist Drive 11 leads to Berowra Water and a **heritage vehicular ferry (5)**. Past Berowra are the 1968 **motorway toll plaza (6)** and heavy vehicle checking station, now a rest stop and fire spotting tower.



Toll at Peats Ferry Bridge

At **Cowan village** is the heritage railway platform and **Cowan Roadway Bridge (7)**, built over the main northern railway by Government Railways in 1908. This Monier arch bridge replaced the level crossing on the 1848 Peats Ferry Road. French gardener, Joseph Monier, developed reinforced concrete which was adapted by Germany for bridges. Only 30 bridges of this type remain in NSW.

As the Pacific Highway descends off **Govett Range (8)**, the original Peats Ferry Road continues inside Muogamarra Nature Reserve. The 1848 stone walls of this historic road can be viewed on Reserve open days in spring.

At river level, **Brooklyn's Rest Park reserve (9)** was the works site for Peats Ferry Bridge. Commuter ferries travel between **Brooklyn (10)** and Dangar Island, the works site for the first railway bridge over the Hawkesbury and the birthplace of Federation. On 1 May 1889 Sir Henry Parkes gave the first Federation speech here, commissioning the bridge to unite the colonies' transport ways.

In the 1830s, **Kangaroo Point (11)** was the southern landing of George Peat's ferry. Peats Ferry Bridge replaced Aboriginal canoes and vehicular ferries. There are commemorative plaques south of the bridge. Peats Ferry Bridge was built over the Hawkesbury River by the Department of Main Roads in 1945. It had the second deepest piers in the world at the time.

Across Peats Ferry Bridge is **Deerubbin Reserve (12)**, where wooden piles remain from ferries' northern docks. On the hill above was Peat's stone house Fairview, where a dirt trail leads to the **heritage grave (12)** of Peat's daughter Frances.

Past Brisbane Water National Park are **Calga (13)** and **Mooney Mooney Creek (14)**. Along the creek are views of heritage **Mooney Mooney Highway Bridge (14)**. In 1930, this Warren steel truss bridge was built by the Main Roads Board. The **Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge (14)** can also be seen here. In 1986 twin bridges over Mooney Mooney Creek were built with concrete box girders supported on concrete box columns. These have a deck height 75 metres above water - 16 metres higher than the Sydney Harbour Bridge!

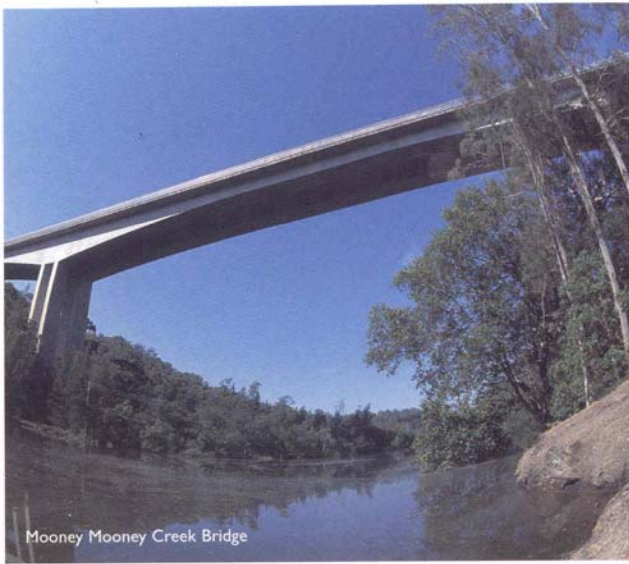
Past **Girrakool (15)** take Wisemans Ferry and Gindurra Roads then Debenham Road to the **Devils Elbow (16)**, where a drystone wall supports the road inside the hairpin bend.

Henry Kendall Cottage (17) in West Gosford is actually Peter Fagan's 1840 Red Cow Inn. Fagan's family befriended pioneer poet Kendall, who stayed here during a despairing period. A museum, owned and maintained by the Brisbane Water Historical Society Inc., now displays a range of historical items including the plaque from the *Frances Peat*.

Near **Gosford township (18)** is the historic Gosford Wharf. Past the wharf is the main street, Mann Street, which has numerous historic buildings and interpretive plaques.

Drivers returning to Sydney have a choice of two routes. One is to drive back up the Pacific Highway to view **Kariong Hill Lookout (19)** and **Staples Lookout (20)**. Nearby is the public Aboriginal art site, **Bulgandry (21)**.





Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge



Somersby expressway bridge



The Henry Kendall Cottage and Historical Museum

Alternately the original motor car route from Gosford to Sydney can be taken by following the Narara Valley Drive and turning west into Mangrove Road to join Dog Trap Road. The **concrete beam bridge (22)** which took Peats Ridge Road expressway across old Mangrove Road can be inspected by taking this route.

Turn left to **Somersby (23)** and at the Old Somersby Interchange, Peats Ridge Road expressway is on the right. The three expressway prestressed concrete bridges, at the Somersby and Mangrove interchange and at the crossing of Wisemans Ferry Road, were built in 1962-63.

Peats Ridge (24) was once home to the famous 1965 OAK milkbar. Every week, 35 staff served over 7000 'Oakshakes' to thirsty truckies, travelling families and passengers from 150 different buses. The milkbar closed in 1986 when Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge opened, marking the end of an era.

Peats Ridge Road leads back to **Calga (13)**, where the tour ends by rejoining the F3 Freeway or Pacific Highway and returning to Hornsby.

*Text: Dr Geoff Fard on behalf of the RAHS.
Peats Ferry Road photograph courtesy of Hornsby Council Library.
Gosford Wharf photograph courtesy of Gosford Council Library.*

Self-guided tour

The Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW (RTA), Engineers Australia (EA) and the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) have developed this self-guided heritage tour. It supports the National Trust Heritage Festival for 2005 with the theme 'Community and heritage - celebrating 60 years'.

The tour features the history of the 'Bridging of the Hawkesbury River' indicating heritage landmarks and road developments, and visits key historic river crossings between Hornsby and Gosford. On Sunday 17 April 2005 the RTA, Engineers Australia, Hornsby Shire Council and Gosford City Council plaqued Peats Ferry Bridge as a Historic Engineering Marker in recognition of 60 years of service.

*Roads and bridges noted in this guide are used for traffic.
You should only view them from safe locations.*



For further enquiries:



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www.rta.nsw.gov.au



Roads and Traffic Authority

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Bridging the Hawkesbury Homsby to Gosford

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ① Pearce's corner | ⑬ Calga |
| ② Homsby township | ⑭ Mooney Mooney Creek |
| ③ Galston Gorge Road Bridge | ⑮ Girrakool |
| ④ Mt Ku-ring-gai Highway Bridge | ⑯ Devils Elbow |
| ⑤ Heritage vehicular ferry | ⑰ Henry Kendall Cottage |
| ⑥ Motorway toll plaza | ⑱ Gosford township |
| ⑦ Cowan Roadway Bridge | ⑲ Kanong Hill Lookout |
| ⑧ Govett Range | ⑳ Staples Lookout |
| ⑨ Rest Park Reserve | ㉑ Bulgandry |
| ⑩ Brooklyn | ㉒ Concrete beam bridge |
| ⑪ Kangaroo Point | ㉓ Somersby |
| ⑫ Deerubbun Reserve | ㉔ Peats Ridge |

 Tour Route	 Urban zone
 Side Trips	 National Park
 Sydney - Newcastle F3 Freeway	

