

FLASHBACK

Past of the pass

Bulli Pass was originally known as Westmacott's Pass, a route discovered in 1836 by Captain Robert Westmacott.

In 1857, the tender of Thomas Heywood for £13 10 shillings a mile was accepted for improvement of the pass.

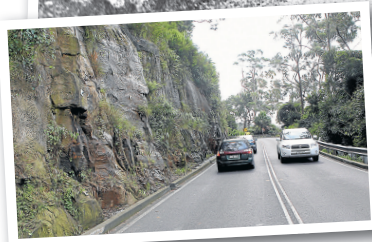
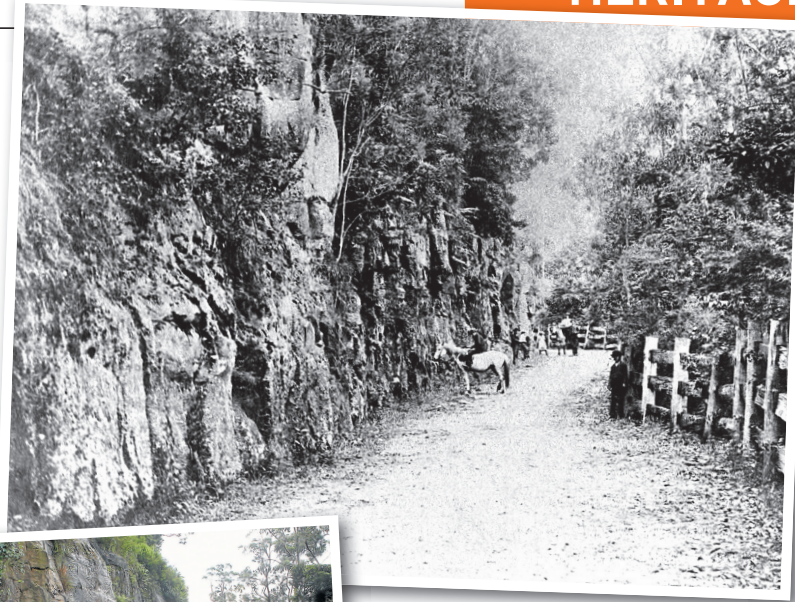
Seven years later, in 1864, a deputation waited on the Minister for Lands with a request that the route be made available for general traffic.

Within four years *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that some

improvements had been made. The route had been open for some time for use by horsemen and was now traversable by carriage.

Although, one early traveller described the route as "so steep as to compel us in some places to stop ourselves against the trees".

Reportedly, the first vehicle driven to the top of Bulli Pass and back was on June 20, 1868.



Bulli Pass circa 1890 and the slightly wider version that exists today.

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A long history of attacks

Sharks have long struck fear into the hearts of Australian beachgoers, writes MICHELLE HOCTOR.

SINCE EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT, A CALL of "shark" has struck fear in the hearts of beachgoers like no other.

Although, in the early years, various laws and a fear of ocean bathing ensured that mentions were largely restricted to encounters by fishermen.

One of the earliest reports in the *Illawarra Mercury* was in February 1871 when Mr Perkins captured a 3.3m-long shark while fishing off Wollongong Harbour.

"After the monster had been seen about the boat for some time, a powerful shark line upon which was a suitable hook with some bait was thrown out," the report said.

"The shark was immediately taken by it and, after some desperate struggling, was harpooned in the back. When the monster had been rendered powerless, he was towed into the harbour by Mr Perkins and his assistant."

As colonials became more adventurous and swimming restrictions were relaxed, reports of shark attacks gained momentum.

In February 1876, a caution was issued following the "frightful death" of Peter Rooney, who was attacked by a shark at Emerald Hill Beach, Victoria.

The 18-year-old shoemaker had reached a depth of about 1.5m when he called out "for God's sake, save me".

Bystander George Pritchard said he heard Rooney splashing and saw the fins of a fish



GENEALOGY SEARCH TIP

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A shark caught by a fisherman at Shellharbour in 1900. Picture: SHELLHARBOUR CITY LIBRARY.

near him, followed by a call of "shark," and he went to his rescue.

"When witness got near him, the deceased dropped his head and closed his eyes, but immediately seemed to come to a little, and held out his hand, which witness seized," it was reported.

"Witness then saw the shark, which made a bound at the deceased and missed him ... Witness managed to get the

deceased out before he was bitten again."

Rooney died soon afterwards from severe wounds to his leg.

The first fatal attack recorded in the Illawarra was on June 6, 1923, when Joe Rigby, 50, of Corrimal, was taken by a shark while fishing with three mates at Bellambi.

According to lone survivor Jack Butler, their fishing boat was hit by a "shuddering bump" and began taking on water.

"After a while, Joe and myself tried to swim to shore ... Hardly had I gone five yards when my foot got tangled in a fishing line and I called out to Joe that I would have to go back.

"He replied, 'Goodbye, Jack. If I get to shore I will send help as soon as possible'. I returned to the boat and when Joe had gone perhaps 100 yards we heard a cry and saw him no more." ■

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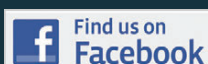
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