

Brown's River Road, now the Channel Highway

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Brown's River Road, now known as the Channel Highway, originally ran from a Toll House opposite the "Doctor Syntax" Hotel in Sandy Bay, Hobart, through to the settlement called Brown's River, which is now designated as Kingston. It enters the North Ward of the Kingborough Municipality at the Grange where historic Cartwright Creek, Point, and Reserve are situated. Here is an old stone horse trough and signs proclaiming the Truganini Reserve and Walking Trail to Mount Nelson Signal Station.

The road narrows and loses its footpath on the righthand side, until at Baringa Road (the Monomeath Estate) the footpath cuts out altogether. Private residences line the road in a ribbon-type development past the state schools on the left and on to the Village Shopping Centre, the Service Station and the Hotel. The road past Monomeath Estate winds on up to Bonnet Hill; houses are infrequent and the natural beauty of the bush is on either side. Soon, around the many climbing bends, the Shot Tower comes into view with "Hillgrove" house opposite. Another long climb and several bends later one passes an old stone house on the left called "Acton," reputedly the Superintendent's House when the Taronga Convict Probation Station was operating in the 1840s. A little further on, the top of the Bonnet Hill is reached. The views over the Derwent River become increasingly obvious and the areas on the eastern shore and out to the Iron Pot lighthouse impress the traveller, whether a newcomer or not, before the road descends into Kingston around still more bends.

An early map of 1826 shows a bridle path which roughly follows the modern line of the Channel Highway. By 1840 the need for an upgraded road was becoming apparent and so the Brown's River [Taronga] Probation Station was established to supply convicts to construct the road. Initially the road was constructed to suit horse or bullock-drawn vehicles so particular care was taken in building climbing and descending bends. These bends tended to be too sharp and flat for the motor vehicles that came much later.

As traffic flow increased between Hobart Town and Brown's River so did demands for a safer road and money was raised for repairs and upgrading by the imposition of a road toll which was in place from 1840 and ended in 1860. Some arguments ensued in the *Hobart Town Gazette* when the Toll House site was to be moved from near the Sandy Bay Rivulet (opposite the "Doctor Syntax" Hotel) down to below Lower Sandy Bay at Long Point Beach. The argument against the move prevailed and "Pineapple House" as it became known, remained as the Toll site. Photographs taken between 1871 and 1900 show a well-kept, graded dirt road winding its way past the Shot Tower. The road continued in use without much change until the 1920s when a steady increase in road freight and the use of motor vehicles led to its reconstruction from the "Riverview" Hotel, Lower Sandy Bay, through to Kingston.

This changed the alignment, renewed creek crossings and smoothed out sharp, deep bends which previously suited horse-drawn vehicles. The old bends allowed horses to turn their vehicles and gain breath for the next upward haul. Alterations in camber and improved drainage enabled motor vehicles to maintain a steady climb with acceptable graded curves. The roadwork carried out in 1927 produced a good, fast, gravelled surface and served its users well until the road was sealed from the boundary at the Grange to Kingston Township during April through to November 1938. It is interesting to quote Mr Munyard who was a previous resident of "Acton" from 1920-1925.

"Owens' dairy ran a 6 a.m. milk run to Hobart seven days a week, reaching Sandy Bay in half an hour" on a road surface that Mr Munyard described as "cobbled and metalled and becoming sealed from Long Point Beach". What remains for the traveller to see if he/she wishes to identify traces of past roadworks? In Taroona near the M.T.T. bus stop number 33 is a hidden ox-bow of the old road, where a sharp curve was smoothed out and the old road section remains awaiting discovery. The original convict built drain under the road near Churchill Road and another close to the Taroona side of the Shot Tower is worthy of inspection. These and the ever obvious cutting back of solid rock point to the arduous work the early road builders had without any of the modern powerful machinery available today.



Aerial view showing the many twists in the road to Kingston between Sandy Bay and Tarooma.

"ILLUSTRATED TASMANIAN MAIL," 25TH MARCH 1931.