

NAME: Old Sellicks Hill Road, SELLICKS HILL

CURRENT USE: Closed road
FORMER USE: Arterial road
DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION: C.1859, decommissioned in the 2010s.

LOCATION: Old Sellicks Hill Road, SELLICKS HILL
LAND DESCRIPTION: Not applicable

OWNER: City of Onkaparinga

RECOMMENDATION: Local Heritage Place



Old Sellicks Hill Road, Sellicks Hill (GGA, 2022)

NAME: Old Sellicks Hill Road, SELICKS HILL

DESCRIPTION:

Approximately three kilometres of roadway initially constructed by 1859, facilitating coach access from the Southern Vales to the Fleurieu Peninsula. Largely consisting of gravelled road from good to moderate condition, important heritage elements include the former Pedler's Creek bridge and associated slate weir, large slate culvert with various smaller unidentified slate culverts to various locations, excavated rockfaces and constructed retaining wall elements, several quarries and various areas of mid-19th century timber fencing.

It is recommended that the closed portion of Old Sellicks Hill Road, stretching approximately three kilometres south from the Victory Hotel to fire gate near Mount Terrible Road and all identified historic fabric, be included on the South Australian Heritage Register as a Local Heritage place.

A delineation of significant historic fabric is provided in the Extent of Listing.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

Old Sellicks Hill Road, Sellicks Hill is of significance as an important arterial roadway in South Australian history, linking the Southern Vales with the Fleurieu Peninsula. Constructed by 1859, the road greatly enabled the development of both regions, allowing for rapid transportation between these regions to metropolitan Adelaide. Old Sellicks Hill Road is also a significant example of First Nations cultural heritage, being initially constructed over a Kurna trail through the foothills. The road has remained a landmark feature of the Sellicks Hill district since the mid-19th century for the scenic views that the road provided for travellers. Closed in the 2010s, the road remains a popular walking trail and tourism drawcard for the district.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (As defined in Section 67(1) of the PDI Act 2016):

a) it displays historical, economic or social themes that are of importance to the local area; constructed by 1859, Old Sellicks Hill Road was an important road linking the Southern Vales with the townships of the Fleurieu Peninsula and critical to the development of both regions from the mid-19th century. Constructed over a Kurna trail over the hills, the delineation of the road also retains significant First Nations cultural heritage.

b) it represents customs or ways of life that are characteristic of the local area; Old Sellicks Hill Road being constructed by 1859 to facilitate traffic and human movement over the foothills from the Southern Vales to the Fleurieu Peninsula, a major arterial roadway facilitating the development of both regions from the mid-19th century onwards. The road also represents travel via mail coach and/or carriage over long distances between regional townships, a typical custom of the district.

c) it has played an important part in the lives of local residents; constructed by 1859, Old Sellicks Hill Road allowed for rapid movement from the Southern Vales to the Fleurieu Peninsula, playing a significant role in the development of both regions from this period. Closed by the 2010s, the closed portion of the road remains a popular walking trail for local residents.

f) it is a notable landmark in the area; constructed by 1859, Old Sellicks Hill Road has remained a major feature and landmark attraction of the Sellicks Hill district; the attractive scenic vistas permitted by the road's steep incline through the foothills being a major tourism feature of the district from the mid-19th century onwards. A major arterial road for the district for much of the 19th and 20th centuries,

the road was closed in the 2010s though it remains a popular walking trail and tourist attraction for the district.

RELEVANT HISTORIC THEMES:

Theme 8: Transportation and Human Movement

8.1 Early roads of the Southern Vales

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Old Sellicks Hill Road, Sellicks Hill was initially assessed as part of the 1985 Heritage Survey of the Fleurieu Peninsula, D. C. Willunga, undertaken by Heritage Investigations and Historical Consultants Pty. Ltd.

The 1985 Survey noted that the Road was first opened in 1859, following a fight to gain the road to open up the Fleurieu Peninsula, lead by John Norman, licensee of the hotel at Sellicks Hill. The 1985 Survey noted that the road greatly improved local transport and was renowned for both its steep incline and the breathtaking views of the gulf and plains which the road afforded travellers. The 1985 Survey recommended the Road for State Heritage listing at this time, describing the Road as representative of the tasks of exploration and settlement to break down environmental barriers. The 1985 Survey also noted that the road's construction story, its eventual construction and the dramatic impact it had on land-borne transport and communications for the region give it immense significance, in addition to the thrill of generations of holiday makers travelling on its path. The 1985 Survey noted the Road was abandoned in favour of a new road at this time.

Old Sellicks Hill Road was again assessed by McDougall & Vines' 1997 Willunga District Heritage Survey. Identified as meeting criteria a), c) & e) of the Development Act 1993, the 1997 Survey provided an extent of listing which recommended the inclusion and retention of the line of road and all elements which are indicative of its date of construction, including early timber fencing and planted Wormwood hedging.

Current research has largely substantiated and expanded the provided history above, which was very well documented in newspapers of the period. The line of Old Sellicks Hill Road was initially established as a trail used by the Kaurna people over the foothills to Encounter Bay, later acknowledged by Colonel Gawler in the early surveyal maps of the district by 1840. This path was described as 'perilous' but the most convenient over the foothills in the region and was regularly used by local travellers from 1840 onwards.

In August 1856 Mr. Delisser was sent by the Central Road Board to survey the road from Noarlunga to Yankalilla and Cape Jervis (now Old Sellicks Hill Road). An initial estimate of road construction costs was calculated by Mr Manton to greatly exceed Delisser's initial estimate. Other lines were then surveyed by Mr. Budgen and Mr. Hollin leading to a protracted argument over the possibilities and costings of the various proposals. Following a final surveyal by the Surveyor General in 1858, the path of Delisser's line was finally adopted. The new road over Sellicks Hill was opened in March 1858 to much local fanfare, as presented in the following newspaper article from the period:

The long-disputed question of the line of road from Noarlunga to Myponga and Yankalilla having been finally set at rest by the adoption of that known as Delisser's line, and the same having been lately completed, it was authoritatively opened for traffic on Tuesday last, by Mr. Thompson, Secretary of the Central Road Board, acting on behalf of the Commissioners.

Great preparations had been made for a ceremony, which the settlers on both sides of the Mount Terrible Range regard as the celebration of a grand triumph. The part of "conquering

hero" had long been assigned by common consent to Mr. John Norman, Chairman of the Aldinga District Council, whose exertions in favour of the line have been incessant; and in commemoration of their successful result the inn at which Tuesday's demonstration was to take place had been named "Norman's Victory"...

Sellick's Hill proper is left to the eastward, the road being carried round an adjacent unnamed eminence. It crosses the gullies and waterways, and leaps by means of bridges and culverts from point to point; here finding the proper gradient upon a natural level, then achieving it upon the verge of a fearful precipice, now stretching to the southward, then veering away to the eastward, anon running due north, and again making its way southward, til the same summit is attained which weary travellers have so often greeted with thanksgiving after performing the laborious and almost perilous ascent of the old track. Romantically beautiful, indeed, is this new mountain path. It discloses every kind of scenery that the ranges or the plains can boast, and affords from time to time the most unbounded prospect of the sea, with Kangaroo Island in the distance.

The entire length of the new line is two miles and one-third. The cost had been estimated by Mr. Manton, the Superintending Surveyor of the South District, at upwards of £13,000. Mr. Delisser, who had also been sent out to survey the line, made a very much lower calculation, something like one-fifth of the amount. Mr. Ashwin, the chief draftsman of the Central Road Board, was then deputed to go over the line, and decide between the two doctors who differed. His estimate was nearly in accordance with Mr. Delisser's. which the result has proved to be rather liberal than otherwise, the contract having been taken and satisfactorily executed by Messrs. Betts & Patterson for a trifle under £2,000-less than one-sixth of the original estimate, which the Surveyor had at first declared to be rather below than above the probable cost.

We speak advisedly when we say that the contract has been satisfactorily performed, for the Councillors of Aldinga and the other districts chiefly interested have watched the work closely during its progress, and they are highly pleased with it. In truth some of the stonework is of a kind which would subject the contractors to ridicule for its needless beauty, were it not that it had been insisted upon by the Surveyor. We refer particularly to a bridge or large culvert which might have been well and inexpensively built in rubblework from the stone upon the ground, but which has actually been constructed in ashlar-work, with stones drawn from a distance of nine miles. A more absurd and useless waste of money it is difficult to imagine; and yet, with all this extravagance, the cost of the entire line does not, as we have said, amount to one-sixth of the Surveyor's estimate.

(Opening of the Victory Road, Sellick's Hill, South Australian Register, Thu 17 Mar 1859, p.2.)

The new road, a prominent landmark of the sparsely populated Sellicks Hill district, was used frequently by travellers passing from the Fleurieu Peninsula through the Southern Vales to metropolitan Adelaide. While the road allowed for spectacular views, the dangers of the steep ascent were well documented, as portrayed in the following 1889 newspaper description:

The whole country, indeed, has a bare and deserted look especially when viewed from a short distance up the hill. But the peculiarities of the hill itself soon demand attention. Steep limestone slopes surround one in all directions, and in the middle, there is a tremendous scar or gully on the side of the range. The road winds round the contour of this gully from side to side, but always upwards, the steep slope and cutting being on the right hand, while on the left there is merely a fence to divide the road off from a precipitous abyss which at times seems almost unfathomable.

Sellick's Hill is, perhaps, the worst piece of hill country traversed by any of the main roads of South Australia, and great skill and attention are necessary on the part of the coach drivers who are selected for the task of conveying passengers from Noarlunga to Yankalilla.

The coach for Adelaide leaves the latter places at 3 o'clock in the morning, and in winter time, when the driver has to negotiate this part of the road in pitch darkness and in the face of the concentrated gusts of wind which blow along the gully, his duties are of a very arduous nature.

(McLaren Vale to Willunga and Sellick's Hill, Evening Journal, Sat 9 Feb 1889, p.7)

By the 1920s, local citizens were requesting the construction of a new road that allowed for easier access from metropolitan Adelaide to the Fleurieu Peninsula. A new bitumen road was completed in 1929, bypassing the treacherous original coach route. Old Sellicks Hill Road was closed to local traffic by 2010 but remains a popular walking trail and tourism spot for the local district.

EXTENT OF LISTING:

The form and materials of all surviving identified heritage elements to the closed portion of Old Sellicks Road (stretching for approximately three kilometres south from the Victory Hotel to the fire gate near Mount Terrible Road). Identified heritage elements include masonry fabric associated with Pedler's Creek Bridge and the nearby slate weir, a large masonry slate culvert located approximately 1.5 kilometres south of the Victory Hotel, excavated rockfaces with constructed retaining wall elements, former quarries and various areas of mid-19th century timber fencing.

While a number of previously unidentified slate culverts have been documented along the road and could also be of significance, further investigation is required to understand the extent of these elements which do not currently present as significant heritage elements in comparison with the above identified examples.

All surviving mid-19th century timber fabric is included in the listing, though it is acknowledged that a majority of this timberwork is currently in deteriorated condition. It is recommended that all early timberwork should be retained and conserved where possible.

Now a closed road, the current delineation of the identified three-kilometre portion of Old Sellicks Road is included in the listing. No alterations to the road's current delineation should be undertaken. It is noted that the road's gravelled surface is in varied condition from good to moderately poor. It is recommended that a regular maintenance schedule should be established to monitor the deterioration of the road surface into the future. Bituminisation of this portion of the road would detract from its heritage significance and is not recommended.

All later additions and alterations, including later wire fencing, cattle grids and gates located along the road are not included in the listing. Various large stones are now located to the northern end of the road to prevent vehicle access; these are not included in the listing.

It is recommended that interpretive signage should be installed along the closed three-kilometre portion of Old Sellicks Hill Road to provide historical information regarding the road's history for visitors to the site, allowing for an understanding of the road's significance and history.

REFERENCES:

Heritage Investigations and Historical Consultants Pty Ltd, 1985, Heritage Survey of the Fleurieu Peninsula, District Council of Willunga, Item Ref. No. 78.

McDougall & Vines, 1997, Willunga District Heritage Survey, p.209.

Opening of the Victory Road, Sellick's Hill, South Australian Register, Thu 17 Mar 1859, p.2.

MacLaren Vale to Willunga and Sellick's Hill, Evening Journal, Sat 9 Feb 1889, p.7.

New Sellicks Hill Road, The Advertiser, Sat 23 Nov 1929, p.17.

SITE MAPPING:

Site of Old Sellicks Hill Road, SELICKS HILL, red line illustrates path of closed road commencing near the Victory Hotel to the north to the termination of the closed portion of the road to the south-east, a distance of approximately three kilometres. Sites A & B (indicated by black boxes above) show locations of significant built heritage elements relating to the Road's history, shown in site mapping diagrams below (Planning SA SAPPa)



Enhancement of Site A showing significant heritage fabric; (1) Pedler's Creek Bridge; (2) approximate site of Pedler's Creek slate weir (Planning SA SAPPa)



Enhancement of Site B showing significant heritage fabric; (3) Slate culvert underneath Old Sellicks Hill Road, approximately 1.5 kilometres south of the Victory Hotel (Planning SA SAPPa)

HISTORICAL IMAGES:



Stage coach descending Old Sellicks Hill Road in c.1909 (SLSA B 26196)



Coach crossing Pedlar's Creek Bridge in c.1905 (SLSA B 19178)

OTHER IMAGES:



Northern entrance to Old Sellicks Hill Road near Victory Hotel, looking south-east (GGA, 2022)



Masonry fabric and steel girders of Pedler's Creek Bridge, Old Sellicks Hill Road, looking east (GGA, 2022)



Masonry fabric of old slate weir immediately north-west of Pedler's Creek Bridge, looking south (GGA, 2022)



Masonry fabric associated with early culvert under corner of Old Sellicks Hill Road, some later concrete fabric (GGA, 2022)



Constructed retaining wall element to Old Sellicks Hill Road, possibly dating to the initial 1850s construction period (GGA, 2022)



Examples of typical early timber fencing to Old Sellicks Hill Road, now in various states of decay (GGA, 2022).



Slate culvert running beneath Old Sellicks Hill Road (GGA, 2022).



Mid-19th century quarry site located immediately west of Old Sellicks Hill Road, near Pedler's Creek Bridge (GGA, 2022).



Excavations to Old Sellicks Hill Road, gouged hole in stone possibly relates to dynamite insertion (GGA, 2022).



Typical excavated stone to Old Sellicks Hill Road, one of many such examples lining the original c.1859 roadway (GGA, 2022).



Attractive scenic vista from southern portion of Old Sellicks Hill Road, looking north-west (GGA, 2022).