

# Big Gorge Bridge

The decision on the route for the new road south and thus the location and orientation of Big Gorge Bridge was not without controversy. Government Surveyor Hargraves' initial assessment examined both a Big Gorge route and a new route via Little Gorge. The Big Gorge only required one bridge, 400m of side cutting and then a 'somewhat formidable hill to be encountered', the other route required a bridge over the river at the entrance to the Big Gorge then followed a level path across the foot of the hills along the coast to the entrance of the Little Gorge where extensive side cutting and another bridge would be required. He recommended the Little Gorge route.



Little Gorge, 1871 (Illustrated Australian News)

The Central Roads Board accepted his recommendation and employed private surveyor Mr Alfred Delisser to proceed with the detailed survey of roads between Normanville and Cape Jervis. Delisser recommended to the Board that an alternate route through the 'Great Gorge' should be adopted as it would be cheaper and could be constructed in stages, involved building fewer bridges and obviated the need to resume any land as it was already Government road.

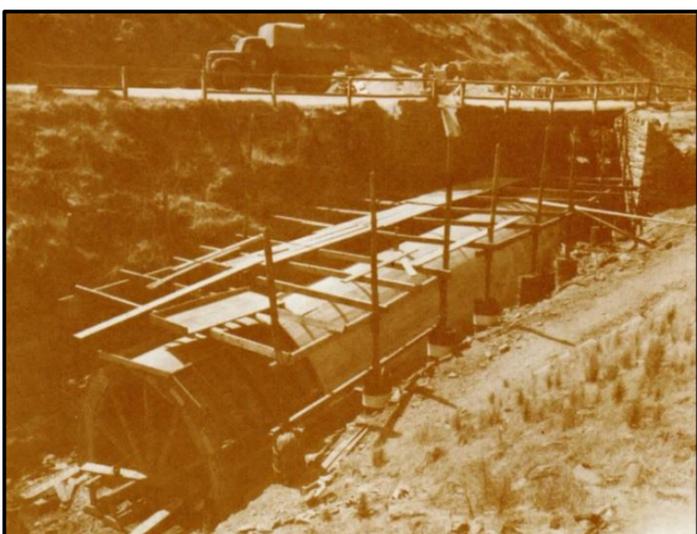
The Board advised the local council of the change of route, with council replying to the Board that they still believed the initial route to be best and keeping the road close to the hills will avoid sandy soil to reduce

costs. Council believed the original recommended route would "*..make an excellent road requiring no further outlay for years. The line by the Great Gorge will cost much more, and can never be made a good road.*"

This difference in opinion remained unresolved for a number of months until the board was again pressed by local residents at which time the Board dispatched their own Surveyor for the Southern District Mr J. Manton. By making alterations to both suggested routes he was able to reduce the overall costs by increasing the gradient from 1:18 to 1:14. Additionally, a ford could be constructed at the River Yankalilla instead of a bridge.

Monies were allocated and contractors engaged for work on the road and the bridge through the Little Gorge. Works were completed by May 1859, to an '*exceedingly well done standard particularly the bridgework*'. Monies were still left from the allocated budget to which the Board called tenders for a bridge over the River Yankalilla. Messrs Collinson and Hornal were again awarded the contract for a bridge comprising of a timber superstructure carried on stone abutments.

It was reported to the Board on 17 May 1860 that the bridge had been completed 42 days late due to "*the foundation on one side had to be sunk deeper than what was shown on the drawings, which caused a considerable amount of extra labour in keeping down the water, etc. The extra work done is 65 cubic yards of excavation and 59 cubic yards of masonry.*"



Little Gorge Bridge upgrade, 1957  
(Note original stone abutment bridge)



Little Gorge and road, now lined with the memorial Norfolk Pines