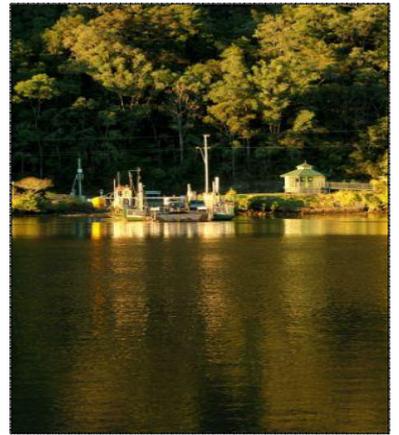


Ferry facts... All you need to know about the ferry at Wisemans!

Significance: The Wisemans Ferry punt service on the Hawkesbury River has a high level of historic, associative and aesthetic significance especially when considered as one of a group of ten extant vehicular cable ferries operating in NSW. The Wisemans Ferry punt service is a rare surviving example of one of the earliest and most prevalent forms of river crossing instituted in NSW after European settlement. Vehicular ferries were widely used due to the extensive river system throughout the state, and were typically instituted at tidal crossings that were either too turbulent or too wide to accommodate the construction of bridges.



Historical Significance:

It was not until 1810 that Wisemans Ferry was first officially settled by Europeans, at which time Giles William Moore was granted ninety acres of land at the mouth of Webbs Creek. In the following ten years, a number of other land grants were formalised along the lower Hawkesbury River. Wisemans Ferry was named for an early settler in the district, the emancipist entrepreneur Soloman Wiseman. Wiseman was an ex-convict and had been transported to Australia aboard the Alexander in 1806; he travelled with his wife and young son (a second son was born en route)



By 1811, Wiseman was involved in the coastal shipping trade from Sydney to the Hunter and Shoalhaven. He settled in the Lower Hawkesbury district in 1817 with his family, when he received a grant of 100 acres at the junction of the Hawkesbury and Macdonald Rivers. Wiseman was granted a publican's license to operate an inn known as the Sign of the Packet in 1821. Wiseman acquired substantial amounts of land along the river frontage over the 1820s, becoming the owner of 1100 acres in the vicinity of the Lower Hawkesbury by 1828. He lived with his family at his gracious home, known as Cobham Hall (now the Wisemans Ferry Inn) until his death in 1838.

Soloman Wiseman obtained a license to operate a ferry across the Hawkesbury River in 1827. This was one of the earliest vehicular ferry services across the river.



Solomon the rascal: Legend has it that Solomon Wiseman was given the contract to operate the ferry; however within this contract it stipulated that he could not charge officials to cross the river – they were to be exempt from any fare. Solomon had a problem - during this time the majority of his passengers were officials; some overseeing

convicts, others land grants but all in all just about everyone who came to cross the river were non fare paying passengers. In his ingenious and entrepreneurial ways, Solomon was not to be outdone – he devised a new payment plan – charge the horses (who were not considered officials!) instead.

Original ferry: Maps were not produced to indicate the initial crossing point for Solomon Wiseman's ferry service. However, research indicates the location of the former crossing approximately 2 kilometres south of the existing. There is now no material evidence of this crossing which is understandable in that in the earliest period of the ferry's operation dedicated ramps were absent and the river bank was reshaped as required to accommodate the movement of stock, people and vehicles boarding and alighting the vessel. In 1832, the Wisemans ferry service was purchased by the Crown for an amount of 267 pounds as a consequence of changes in the alignment of the northbound road. Thereafter, the service was contracted out (a practice that continues today).



New ferry: Over time the increasing traffic necessitated the provision of a substantial ramp and timber planking came to be used for this purpose though problems were experienced when the riverbanks were subjected to scouring.

With the new punt installed and in use from April, 1930 the immediate approaches on either side of the River were further upgraded with sandstone pavers supported in place by timber surrounding strips. The existing concrete ramps were poured in situ in 1978 to a height just above the pavers which were encased by the slab. Steel railing reinforcement was inserted to increase their load bearing capacity.





The Wisemans Ferry crossing is one of five vehicular ferry services on the Hawkesbury River, the other four of which are located at Sackville, Lower Portland, Webbs Creek and Berowra Waters.

What drives the ferry?

Similarly to most vehicular ferries currently operating in NSW, both punts on the Wisemans Ferry route are powered by diesel engines and are driven by two sets of cables lying on the bottom of the river. One of these cables pulls the ferry, while the other cable guides the ferry across the river. These cables are stayed by posts at either side of the river and are replaced every 12-15 months.



The crossing itself: The crossing is 366 metres (1,201 ft) in length and takes approximately 4 minutes. The ferry operates on demand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with no regular maintenance closure. Two ferry boats are available at this crossing, operating on separate sets of cables, and when traffic demands it both may be in use. The larger of the two boats carries up to 24 cars, whilst the smaller one carries only 8

