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NEW MOBILITY - THE MOTOR CAR

While the railway service to Busselton and the provision of a good coaching road enabled the development of the south west caves as tourist attractions at the turn of the century - all ideas of mobility have since been transformed by the motor car.

The first motor car was imported into Western Australia in 1903, only shortly after its emergence in Europe. Use of this new form of transport soon spread rapidly in the State, and in 1915 three vehicles were registered by the Augusta Roads Board. At the close of the Great War in 1918 there were over 2 500 cars and trucks in operation in Western Australia, necessitating the passing of the Traffic Act in 1919. When the Act came into operation in the following year, vehicle registrations had risen by over 33% in two years.

By 1929 there were about 28 000 cars alone in the State, providing a ratio of about 15 persons per vehicle. At that time nearly half of Western Australia's population lived in country areas and there were 30% more cars registered in country districts than in Perth. The flexibility and convenience provided by the motor car encouraged people to travel more and based on petrol consumption, it was estimated that in 1927 Western Australians motored over 320 million kilometres (fifty years later this had reached 9 580 million kilometres).

This revolution in motorised transport occurred Australia-wide and led to the State Government forming a Main Roads Board in 1926, the forerunner to the present Main Roads Department.

Even before the First World War, however, the motor car was making its impact in the district and the efforts of the Caves Board to have good road access to the district's attractions were being fulfilled. In 1912 the road between Busselton and Yallingup was reported to compare very favourably with any road in the Commonwealth for motor traffic; and World War 1 vintage road guide described this 30 kilometres or so, as probably the best section of road in the country and a delightful drive.

By this time, coupons for travel to the caves included the cost of a "motor journey" between Busselton and Yallingup, and to Margaret River if required. Scheduled services operated on all days.

A more direct route between Busselton and Augusta had been developed, but beyond Margaret River it was fairly heavy and sandy. However, it was not impassable to motor traffic and road guides published the fact that many cars had been through to Augusta. By 1928, road guides indicated that improvements had been made "from Busselton, the wonderful Caves at Yallingup, Margaret River and Augusta are within convenient visiting range". The intending traveller was further informed that the Augusta Hotel (built in 1913) now boasted a garage that was available to accommodate seven motor cars.

THE ROAD

Bussell Highway (M7) is a main road under the Department's classification system and was named in 1932 after John Garrett Bussell, approximately 100 years after his first explorations in the area. The road was completely sealed by 1952.

From 1952 - 1978 work has been progressively undertaken to widen, reconstruct and reseal the road to a high standard. There is now a 7.4 m sealed road between Busselton and Augusta. Some sections north of Busselton are a 6.8 m seal.

Work between Margaret River and Augusta was substantially completed in the ten years 1968-78, at a cost of approximately \$2.4M.

Each of the sections Bunbury to Busselton, Busselton to Margaret River, and Margaret River to Augusta, can be completed in approximately 40 minutes driving at moderate speeds.

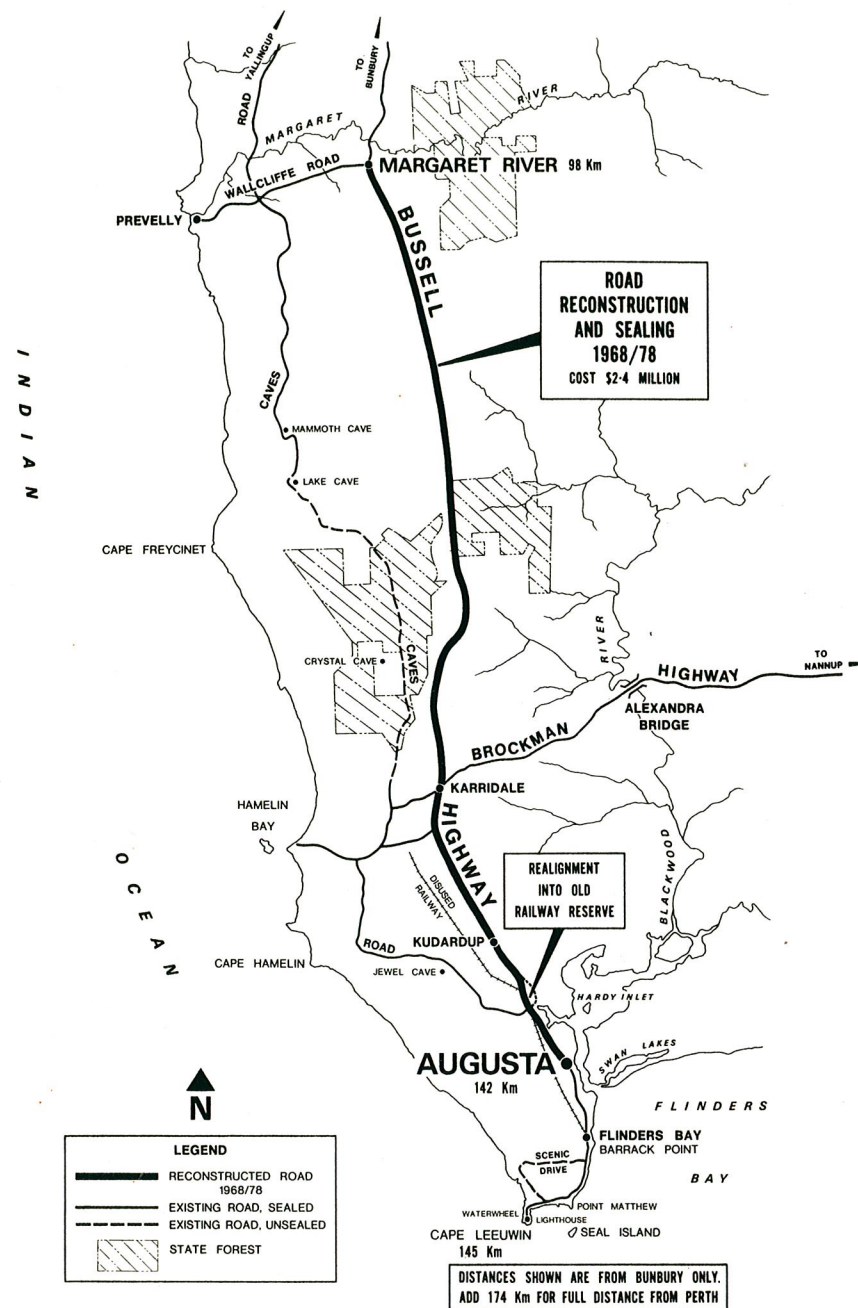
The road traverses expanding residential development in Bunbury through the mineral sands mining area in the vicinity of Capel, thereafter into the picturesque Tuart Forest area near Ludlow. Further along you come to the resort development fringing Geographe Bay at Busselton and on through the attractive rural landscape, dairy, and beef grazing area down to Augusta.



ROADS ARE FOR PEOPLE

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RECONSTRUCTION OF BUSSELL HIGHWAY MARGARET RIVER - AUGUSTA



BUSSELTON TO AUGUSTA

INTRODUCTION

Travel overland between Perth and Augusta, one of the State's oldest settlements, was developed initially by the early pioneers walking and riding via the outlying settlements at Mandurah and Pinjarra, Australind, Bunbury and Busselton. At this time the main factors that influenced the location of early tracks were the location of river crossings and settlers' homesteads between these towns. Some towns, like Pinjarra and Mandurah grew up at river crossings.

Near the coast, many of the rivers were forded where they shalowed, sometimes the early settlers actually travelled along coastal beaches during their journeys. Frequently trips were delayed in order to fall in with amiable company along the way, and signs of a settler's homestead were also eagerly sought as simple hospitality was usually forthcoming.

Some of the early routes still serve as local roads, although today's major roads follow more appropriate alignments.

Commencing at the turn of this century, a combination of factors led to the breaking of Augusta's isolation from the State's other growing towns.

The first of these was the sudden rush of population into the State attracted by the booming goldfields. Almost overnight there were large populations in the goldfields, inland agricultural areas and Perth, creating a large demand for coastal holiday recreation during the hot summer. Initially the developing railway system provided speedy and comfortable transport from Perth and inland centres to traditional summer coastal resorts at Fremantle, Albany, Bunbury and Busselton.

A second phase occurred shortly after when Western Australians readily took to the motor car as a convenient means of commercial and recreation transport. This occurred simultaneously with the Government's introduction of the Group Settlement Scheme in the 1920's. The Group Settlement Scheme extended agricultural development in south west coastal areas and the flexibility of motor transport made these areas more accessible beyond the railway system.

1829 — 1979

EARLY DAYS

Cape Leeuwin, on the "Leeuwin Way" tourist trail, was named by the Dutch in 1622 and was once suggested as the site for a Dutch colony. However, little interest was shown in settling the western shores of Australia until after the Napoleonic Wars.

Following his examination in 1827 of part of this coast between Cape Naturaliste and the Swan River, Captain Stirling RN was assigned to establish the Swan River Colony and returned with the first settlers 150 years ago in 1829. Within two years, most of the river frontage land along the Swan and Canning Rivers had been taken. As American, French and other whaling ships were active along the coast at this time, information was available on places where other settlement might be possible. Stirling, then Lt Governor of the Colony, was able to interest a small party of settlers to take up land at Cape Leeuwin in 1830. They arrived in May of that year. The town was proclaimed and named Augusta after Princess Augusta, daughter of King George III.

Among the original Augustans were the Molloy, Turner and Bussell families. Some were people of means who brought with them servants and labourers. Eventually the difficulties of isolation and clearing the boundless tracts of jarrah, marri and karri forest by axe soon forced most of them to abandon Augusta for better conditions at Geographe Bay and elsewhere in the colony.

During this early period there were several notable overland journeys made both by settlers and officials. John Garrett Bussell explored the country to the north of Augusta on a number of occasions, as well as making journeys to Perth. One excursion took eight days of walking before reaching Port Leschenault (Bunbury), while keeping close to the coast. Provisions ran out on the sixth day by the time he reached the location of present day Busselton.

In 1831 while exploring the south coast in an open boat, a party in the charge of Lt Preston RN came to grief near the mouth of the Warren River. It took five days of walking along the coast to reach Augusta. After a brief spell in the town, the party continued on to Perth, first taking a day to row up the Blackwood River to near present-day Alexandra Bridge, and then walking overland for three days to the Vasse River and a further five days to the point where Mandurah now stands.

This route, following the Blackwood as far as the McLeod Creek and fairly directly through the Vasse, was favoured for some time and has become known as the Old Augusta Road; the name is still shown on Department of Lands and Surveys maps in the vicinity of Alexandra Bridge.

The principal exodus from Augusta to the Vasse began in 1835 and in the following year the army surveyor, Lt Bunbury, commented in his journal that the military post at this new settlement had never yet been visited by land. Later in the year he travelled to the Vasse from Pinjarra, proceeding "partly by compass and partly by information derived from the natives", who guided him to fords over various rivers and finally to the settlement.



Sand mat fill over clay sub-base.



New construction prior to white lining.

Between Port Leschenault and the Vasse, Lt Bunbury took a route closer to the coast than that now followed by the Bussell Highway. In doing so he had to struggle through extensive swamp land (now largely drained) behind the coastal dunes. This journey from Pinjarra took him four days, however he later recorded that he did it in three with ease. The rivers were frequently crossed where they entered estuaries or forded at shallow points. The Abba River could be crossed by a fallen tree and the Capel River near the Mallocup Bridge.

The Turner family outstayed the original settlers of Augusta. On the valuation of the capital brought to the colony, James Woodward Turner was entitled to about 9 000 ha as his grant of land from the Crown. Instructions were given that this should be selected from the land in the vicinity of Cape Leeuwin and along the Blackwood River to about where the Warner Glen Bridge now stands. In 1850 he eventually moved to Perth with his family and worked his Augusta property through a tenant until his death in 1863.

As the settlement at the Vasse developed, Augusta became neglected. The town's greatest drawback was the isolation of distance and the lack of transport. This prevented necessary supplies from being readily obtained and the profitable disposal of goods. Clearing of the forest had also presented great difficulties and it wasn't until commercial activity was shown later in the century that general interest in the district revived.

M C (Maurice Coleman) Davies bought Turner's land at Augusta in 1883 and also acquired timber concessions from other land in the district needed to develop a timber export business based at old Karridale. However, even during the era of the M C Davies timber empire, the problems of isolation were still evident. While his company's operations directly supported about 800 people, the thriving settlement became a colony within a colony, issuing its own currency and having its own infrastructure of towns, ports and railways.

BREAKING THE ISOLATION

It wasn't until the discovery of numerous beautiful caves in the district, at the turn of the century, that the outdoor recreation potential of the area was fully realised and developed. In his report on the Margaret River Caves in 1900, C Erskine May, then Chief Inspector of Lands, recognised the recreational qualities of this small corner of the State, with its "mild and bracing climate, fresh with the breezes from the ocean, its scenery and other attractions".

"The district possesses almost every desideratum for a perfect holiday to please diverse tastes. There is a trip by land and sea when a steamer is provided, as it would be once excursionists knew what they would enjoy in escaping the summer heats in this salubrious latitude. They could go by way of Busselton, see the caves in a leisurely excursion down to Cape Leeuwin, thence driving or riding to the banks of the Blackwood River, at Augusta, to fish and shoot over Hardy's Inlet or stream, or sail to Flinders Bay and follow the caves up to Boodidup Brook, to bask by the

waters of the brook that is fed from a silver spring gushing from the side of Witchcliffe Cave. There is the Leeuwin Lighthouse to reach as a picnicking place from Augusta, with a broad, smooth beach for the children to paddle in, and a splendid cruising ground for the yachts of their elders. And when the caves are reached, there would always be the finding of something new to whet the zest of the explorer and dispel the slightest sense of fatigue in rambling in and out of the huge and sparkling grottos, each in a new garniture of cunning device and dazzling radiance"

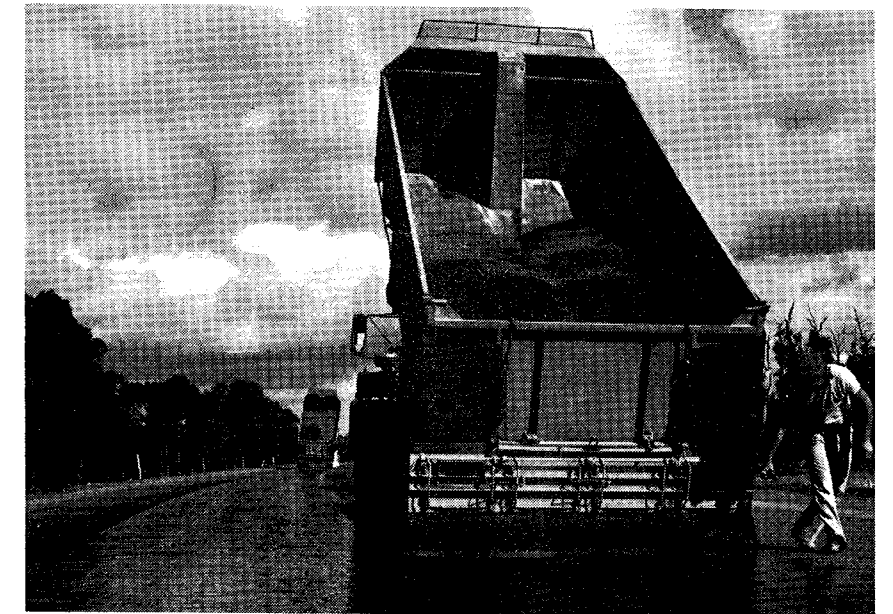
He saw the development of the caves as contemporary resort attractions with the provision of a "sanitorium" on the Margaret River as a national opportunity "of fostering health and recreation . . . to the goldfields especially, the Margaret River should be the Blue Mountains of NSW, the Derwent of Tasmania or the Lakes of New Zealand when they are making a holiday".

In his report on the caves in 1900, May stated that the route to the "Wallcliffe" Homestead, near present day Prevelly at the mouth of the Margaret River, was little more than a track eight kilometres beyond Busselton that wound in and out of an avenue of peppermints or giant karri and jarrah. An adventurous English-woman, May Vivienne, writing on her travels around parts of Western Australia at the time, described her journey to old Karridale from the railhead at Busselton by a "four-in-hand mail coach". The journey was nearly all through bushland, the scenery and countryside "satisfying eye and soul", with the wafting "pungent scent of the gracefully pretty peppermints growing in shady thickets" and passing through magnificent forests of karri - "without doubt it is the handsomest tree in the colony".

Of interest in her accounts, is reflection on Erskine May's vision of the district attracting goldfield visitors . . . "already this season, although there are few facilities for visiting the caves or for enjoying the fishing and shooting at Hardy's Inlet in the cool climate by the seaside, about 70 goldfields visitors have equipped themselves at special expense, for the tour which I understand was highly beneficial, interesting and enjoyable".

Prompt action was taken by the Government regarding Erskine May's Report. Many of the cave areas were reserved and, through a now defunct Caves Board, about a dozen caves (here and at Yanchep) were opened to visitors during the next decade. Caves House was built at Yallingup and the Board provided camp sites at other localities for overnight stays.

By this time the railway had reached Busselton from Perth, and the town was only hours away from the thriving capital of the gold rush era by a comfortable and reliable service. Facilities at Caves House included coaching stables, and visitors were taken from Busselton to the resort by coach and buggies. To overcome the problem of public apprehension of undisclosed costs for a holiday at Yallingup, all-inclusive cost coupons were issued which included the rail fare and accommodation charges. However, the key to implementing Erskine May's scheme was the provision of good road access from the railhead at Busselton, Caves Road, and its provision was one of the first tasks tackled by the former Caves Board.



Sealing near Karridale.