

EVANDALE TO LAUNCESTON WATER SUPPLY SCHEME

Location: In Evandale and en route to Launceston.

Owner: Property owners where relics are located.

The plaque is located at the collar of Shaft No. 2 in the front garden of 24 High Street, Evandale. Inspection is permitted.

The scheme

The water was to come from the South Esk River through a 1.5 km long tunnel under Evandale, emerging on the northern side.

From that point an open channel 22 km long would carry the water to Windmill Hill in Launceston, providing irrigation for farms and power for flour mills along the way.

Ten shafts up to 24 m deep were sunk along the tunnel line, but tunnelling was limited to about 30 m at the outlet end. Some lengths of canal were also excavated and can be seen today.

Alexander Cheyne (1785-1858)

Cheyne joined the Royal Engineers in 1806, served in the Peninsula Wars and retired in 1817 with the rank of Captain. He became a director of the Glasgow to Edinburgh Union Canal.

He arrived in Hobart Town in 1835. He held a number of government appointments including roads and bridges and Public Works, and also acted privately.



Shaft collar & plaques

HISTORIC ENGINEERING MARKER

Evandale to Launceston Water Supply Scheme

In March 1836 Lieutenant Governor Arthur of Van Diemens Land turned the first sod. Engineer Alexander Cheyne and convict engineer James Blackburn directed the work. Work ceased early in 1838 after public outrage over a proposed water rate, and road construction was given precedence. If completed the scheme could have supplied the current water needs of Launceston. This shaft and other surviving works demonstrate the skills of early colonial engineers and their convict labour forces.

Dedicated by The Institution of Engineers, Australia and Evandale History Society 2002

Cheyne fell out of favour with the colonial Secretary in 1841, disagreements arising from contracts to build the Bridgewater Bridge, and was dismissed. He won on appeal and was reinstated but never recovered. He was elected an alderman of the City of Hobart shortly before he died.

NOTE about photo at left:

When this 24 m deep shaft was cleaned out, no sign of tunnelling was found.

The left hand plaque, provided by the Evandale History Society, includes a map of the canal route to Launceston.