

**NEXT** month the historic Lennox bridge at Glenbrook in the lower Blue Mountains, which spans Brookside Creek on the Mitchell's Pass Road, will have its 150th anniversary.

It is the oldest structure of its type on the Australian mainland.

By 1830, the first two roads over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst had become inadequate. The first of these had been built by William Cox between July, 1814, and January, 1815.

Towards the end of 1813, Governor Lachlan Macquarie dispatched Assistant-surveyor

George Evans to follow the route traced out by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth. Evans confirmed the success of the explorers and pushed on further westward to discover the fertile region now known as the Bathurst Plains.

On his return to Sydney, he gave Macquarie a glowing report of his journey and suggested strongly that a road be built over the range to the western plains.

The Governor acted on Evan's advice and placed the construction of a cart road under the supervision of William Cox of Clarendon, near Windsor. Six months later his road into Bathurst, a distance of 101½ miles (163.3km) was finished, by a work party of only 30 convicts and eight guards.

However, the road was in regular use for

only a few years. It was very steep and often rough, particularly up Lapstone Hill. During wet weather it was hazardous.

Around 1824 an attempt was made to bypass the difficulties of Cox's Road as it climbed the eastern escarpment which resulted in the construction of the "Zig Zag" Road. It avoided Lapstone Hill and met Cox's Road near the Pilgrim Inn at Blaxland. This road too was not satisfactory. Within a few years a better road was required.

In 1827, Major Thomas Mitchell arrived in Sydney, with his family, to take up the position of Deputy Surveyor-General.

In May, 1830, while looking around near the "Zig Zag" Road, he spotted a gully between the two existing routes which he believed would provide superior access to the top of the escarpment. He surveyed and marked out a route to meet the other two roads near the Pilgrim Inn. Work began in 1832.

Major roads and bridges throughout the colony were in general need of repairs and up-grading. For this,

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## BRIDGE SPANS 150 YEARS



Lennox Bridge, Glenbrook, as it is today.

Mitchell required the services of a qualified engineer. One day, he approached a stonemason working on a wall in front of the Legislative Council Chambers.

David Lennox was a 44-year-old fellow Scotsman from Ayr and a master mason. He was appointed Sub-inspector of Roads and later Superintendent of Bridges. Just after this appointment, Mitchell required him to begin work on a bridge to join the two parts of his new western road.

With a workforce of 20 convicts, construction began in November, 1832. The design consisted of a road bridge over a single semi-circular stone arch of 20 feet (6.1m) diameter with one side curved to follow the swing of the road. Road width was 30 feet (9.14m). Its height above the creek bed was also 30 feet (9.14m). Stone was cut from a quarry 500 yards

(450m) up stream. It was finished in July, 1833.

The new road, named Mitchell's Pass, was officially opened by Governor Bourke in 1834.

Cox's Road and the "Zig Zag" Road fell into disuse and for more than 90 years Mitchell's Pass remained the principal access road to and from the Blue Mountains and beyond.

### Abandoned

In 1926, the Main Roads Board acquired the abandoned railway line between the foot of Lapstone Hill and Blaxland for the Great Western Highway.

The pass continued to be used until 1964 — a total of 131 years — when Lennox Bridge was closed because a serious crack had opened in its foundations.

Meanwhile, the old "Zig Zag" road was repaired in the 1950s and tar-sealed for modern traffic. It is now known

as Old Bathurst Road and extends from Emu Plains Railway Station, zig-zags sharply up the escarpment and terminates at Blaxland.

Other David Lennox projects included the Lansdowne Bridge across Prospect Creek and another Lennox Bridge, this time over the Parramatta River. Between 1844 and 1853, when he retired, he worked at Port Phillip, Victoria, again as Superintendent of Bridges. One of his projects there was Melbourne's Prince's Bridge over the Yarra River. He died in 1873.

As for his first bridge, after its closure in 1964, repair and restoration work was carried out financed by Blue Mountains City Council, State and Federal Government grants and the New South Wales Heritage Council.

It was reopened to one-way traffic on December 14 last year.