

Lennox Bridge Restored



After the discovery of a way across the Blue Mountains, access from the Nepean River in the early 1800's involved the ascent of Lapstone Hill by an uncertain zig-zag roadway. However, under Major Mitchell in the 1830's, this difficult length of the Great Western Road was considerably improved by his new passes which provided better grades.

When Mitchell was constructing his pass from Emu Plains, he found that a bridge would have to be built at the head of the gully across Lapstone Creek. At that time, Mitchell was concerned that existing timber bridges were prone to being carried away by floods. Fortunately, he came across David Lennox, a Scots emigrant, cutting the coping stone of the dwarf wall in front of the Legislative Council. Grasping the opportunity, he recruited him to build stone bridges.

Thus, the circumstances arose by which Lennox came to design for Mitchell's Pass the first scientifically constructed bridge in Australia, and the first stone bridge of any magnitude on the mainland. It consisted of a semi-circular stone arch of 10 feet radius, carrying a roadway 30 feet wide above the creek, and forming with its arches a general horseshoe plan. He was responsible for its design as well as its construction. The bridge is built of stone quarried about 500 yards further up the gully, and was completed in 1833.

Lennox Bridge suffered more damage in the 1950's than in any other period of its history from the passage of fast modern traffic and heavy vehicles. Stones started to crumble, abutments cracked and the bridge was eventually closed to traffic.

Restoration works commenced in the mid-1970's when the Blue Mountains City Council undertook work to reinforce the old stone structure against modern traffic loads. The Department's involvement at this stage was in the form of engineering design and supervision.

More recently, work has been undertaken on the restoration of the fractured sandstone structural facing of the bridge, including the pinning and complete replacement of some stone to match the original. The delicate task of reproducing the original tooling, of blending the new work with the old, required a patient and meticulous approach.

The work was recently completed, and Lennox Bridge now stands as a reminder of some of the earliest of Australian engineering history.

The engineering and architectural documentation for the project were prepared by the Department, while the architectural supervision of the restoration work was carried out by the Government Architect at no charge to the Council.

Another gem of history—restored, yet fully functional for traffic.