

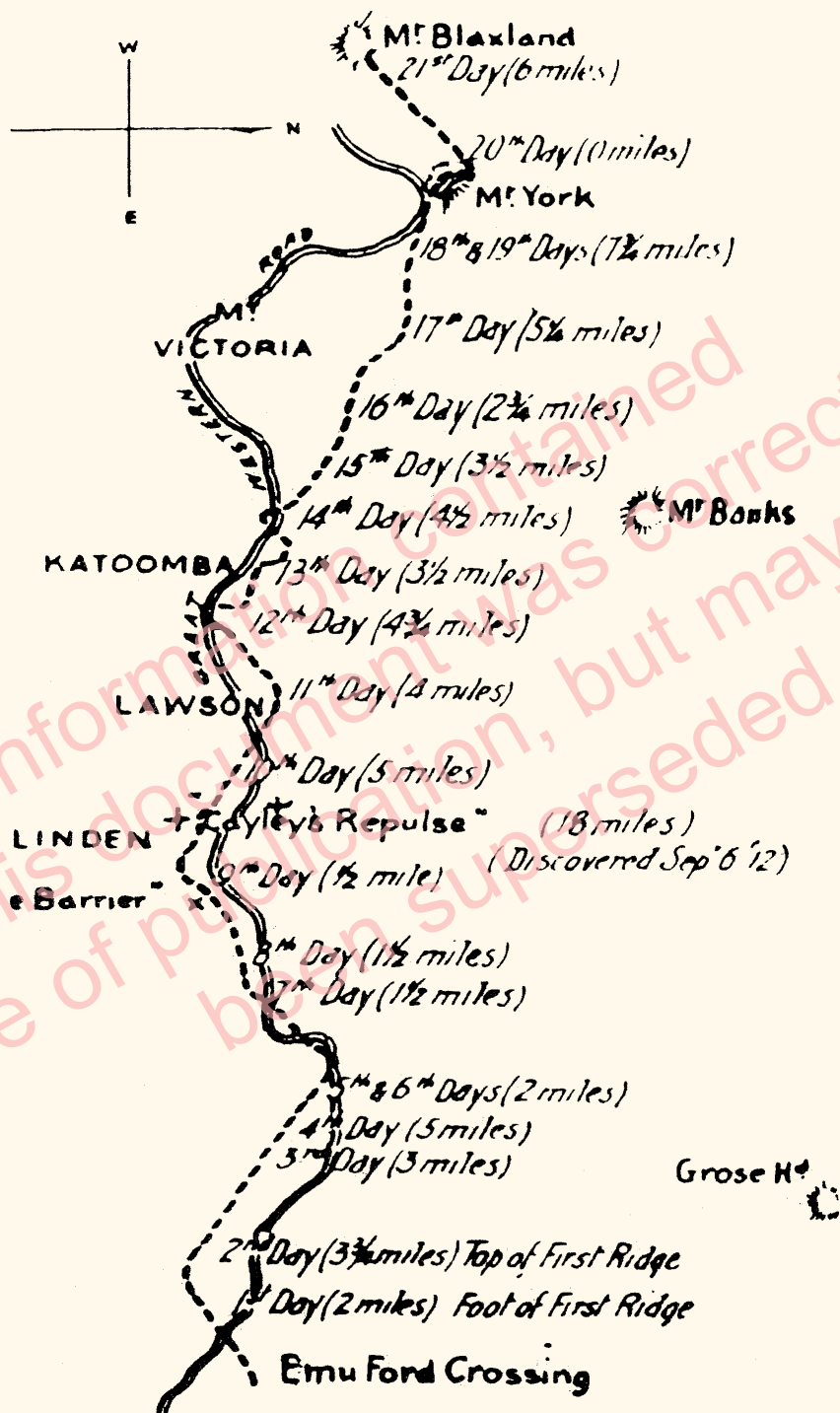


# FOOTSTEPS IN TIME

A ROAD ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS

BY JOHN YEAMAN B.E.M., M.I.D., B.E., L.G.E. F.I.E. AUST. DIP. T.P., L.G.T. & C.P.

# MAP



# FOREWORD

The three linked events of 1813–1814 – i.e. the Blue Mountains Crossing of May – June 1813 by Blaxland; Lawson and Wentworth: the journey to beyond Bathurst in November, 1813 to January, 1814 by George William Evans: the building of Cox's Road to Bathurst, July 1814 – February 1815 – can be seen as the significant events which ensured that the troubled and expensive penal colony at Port Jackson would survive – and not only survive, but that it would begin a forward march towards the Australia we know today.

Surgeon Peter Cunningham, R.N., in his book, *Two Years in New South Wales* (written 1826, first published 1827) wrote:

*“The discovery of the transalpine country of Bathurst took place just in time to secure the colony against the long train of evils which was pressing upon it...; this discovery was then hailed, and is still looked upon, as the most beneficial to the public ever made since the foundation of the colony: as soon as permission could be obtained, the superabundant population and superabundant flocks and herds poured like a torrent over the dividing barrier ridge, inundating the fine plains and downs beyond its western base.*

*The quantity of sheep and cattle in this territory is now immense, the greater proportion of the wool exported from the colony being furnished therefrom”.*

Aware that the discovery of the route over the Blue Mountains, Evans' discovery of the boundless grazing lands beyond and the building of Cox's Road to Bathurst represented the key links in Australia's story of development from penal colony to an advanced nation of free citizens Mr Yeaman set out to find support for the idea that Evans' survey line – from the River Lett at the base of Mount York east to Emu Ford on the Nepean River at Penrith – should be marked to serve as a permanent record of these first steps towards a future never dreamed of when the First Fleeters landed at Sydney Cove in January 1788.

In the following paper, read before the Mount Victoria and District Historical Society, 26th February 1983, Mr Yeaman provides a detailed picture of those who forged the link between the, then, modest settlement at Port Jackson and the vast resources of the inland of the continent.

S. Williams

# FOOTSTEPS IN TIME

George William Evans, then Deputy-Surveyor of Lands, had been instructed by Governor Macquarie – “to proceed in the Attempt of Effecting a Passage over the great Range of Mountains called here ‘The Blue Mountains’, and to discover what Description of Country lay to the Westward of them.”

The first 25 years of the Colony’s life had kept the Surveyor General busy with the allocation of land within the Cumberland Plain, and in the construction of roads to the small settled outdistricts these being largely contained on the Western fringe by the Hawkesbury and Nepean Rivers.

The responsibilities of the Surveyor General were stated in a Report by Governor King, dated 12th August 1806, as:

*“The nature of his Office is designated by its name. He surveys all grants and leases, and makes roads under the Governor’s authority, and by his warrants.”*

The Western Road from Sydney, across the Blue mountains to Bathurst is Australia’s most historic road. In those early days of 1813–15, it was probably the construction of this road over the Blue Mountains that was a major factor in saving the small settlement around Port Jackson from being abandoned. 1812 had been what was recorded as a ‘drought year’.

A road of a sort was formed as far as Parramatta in 1788, and at least to Prospect in June 1789.

Captain Tench having then discovered the Nepean River, and the means of access to the area around Richmond in 1794, and by 1802 Barallier had opened access to land around Picton.

These roads were little more than bush tracks, and their improvement was restrained by the amount of local activity, and the fact that only hand tools were available. If a tree, or some other obstruction represented a problem, they did not tackle it, simply went around it.



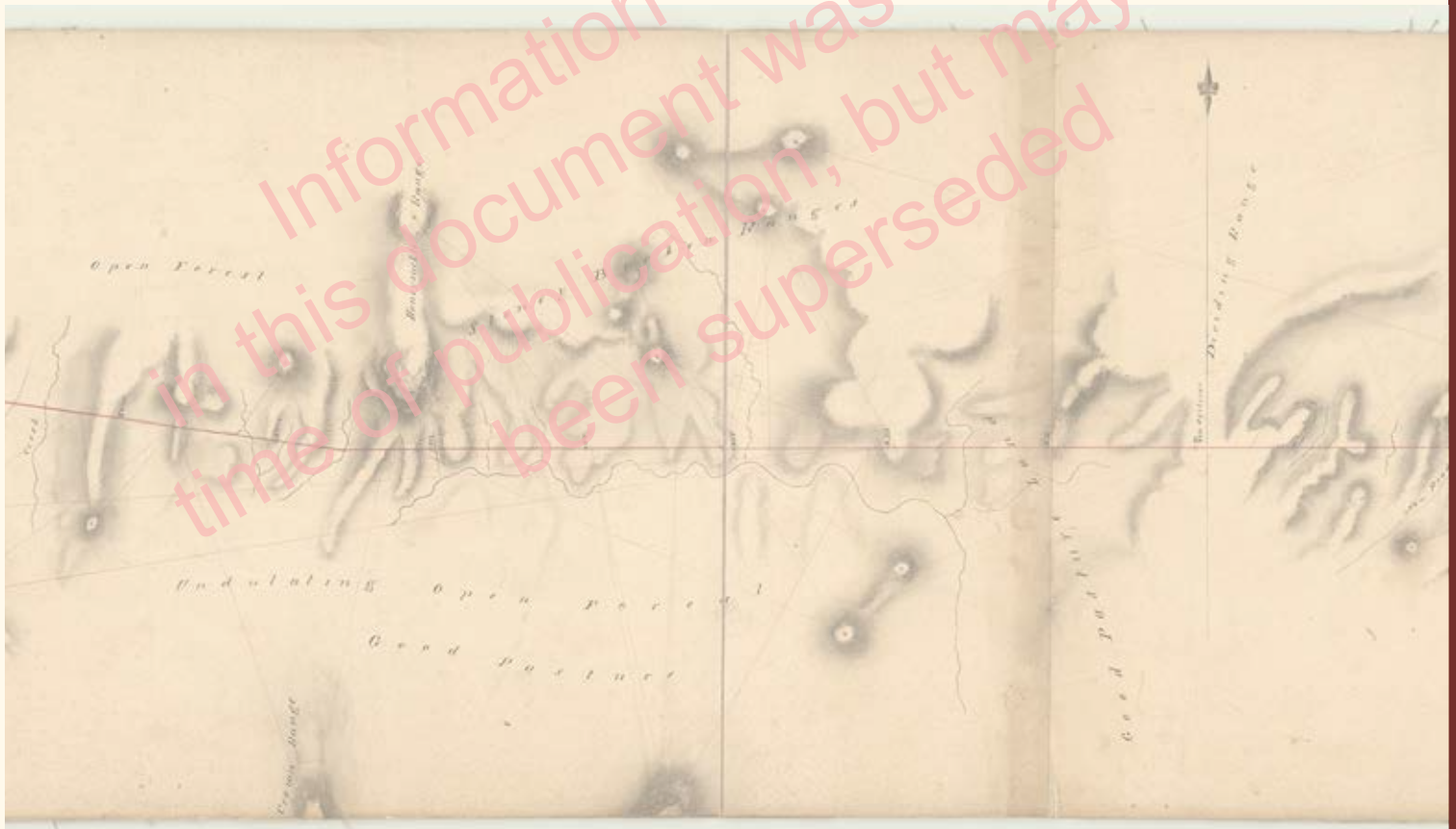
The Surveyor General had been trained to think in straight lines, and his thoughts on road construction were probably based on his knowledge of the old Roman Roads, so his road lines had to be as long as directionally possible. He also had to define a width for his road reserve, and this was usually 1 chain (1 chain = 100 links = 22 yards = 66 feet = 20 metres), so even though the formed road meandered to avoid minor obstacles the road reserve was a series of uniform straight strips.

When one thinks of the Parramatta Road of today, this General Order of 30th June 1806 does indicate what the overall condition of the Colony's main road then was:

*"In consequence of the bad state of the roads leading from Sydney to Parramatta, and the danger of horses being lamed in the deep ruts near Sydney, it is hereby directed that all public and private carts and waggons passing that road (not otherwise loaded), do take a load of brick bats from the brick fields (Editor's note: Brickfield Hill), and drop these in the places appointed by the Overseer of the Roads, provided that it does not lie out of the way of the place to which the cart or waggon is going.*

*This order is to be enforced by John King, Overseer of the Brickmakers. He is to report those that do not choose to obey this necessary Regulation, for improving that part of the road, and preserving their own horses."*

One wonders what the reaction of present day transport drivers would be, if faced with such an instruction. I have not found this order cancelled, but there are no longer brick works at Brickfield Hill.



Trace of road from Collets Inn below Mount York towards Bathurst – Source: State Records Crown Plan SR\_1\_R651



The Blue Mountains – Mount York.

## THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

The **Explorers**, Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson took from 11th May to the 6th June 1813 (27 days) to cross the Blue Mountains. Surveyor G.W. Evans then surveyed the route to Bathurst from 20th November 1813 to the 8th January 1814 (52 days). **The Survey** by G. W. Evans to Bathurst and back was completed between 19th November 1813 and 8th January 1814 (52 days), although the section from the Riverlett to Emu Ford only took 9 days (30th December 1813 to 8th January 1814).

The **Construction Works** by Cox had started at Emu Ford on 19th July 1814 and finished at Bathurst, a distance of 101.5 miles on 14th January 1815 (180 days). **Governor Macquarie** spent from 25th April to the 4th May 1815 to reach Bathurst (10 days).

The method of making the early roads was somewhat primitive and alignment was marked out by blazing the trees along a route which presented the least difficulties. A track, usually about 12 feet (say 3.7 metres) was cleared and grubbed along this line, the pavement section hand graded, bridges and small culverts were made where necessary, but no attempt was made to add broken stone or material other than that occurring naturally to improve the surface. In many cases stumps were not grubbed but simply cut of a few inches below the finished surface.

In making the road to Bathurst, Cox's party consisted of 30 men: his personal servant and a Military Guard of 8 men. These seem to have been Superintendent W. Lewis; Guide drawn from Evan's party – J. Tighe; Storekeeper T. Gorman; Doctor; Constable; Overseer of Tools – probably the blacksmith; and 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 6 privates of the Royal Veteran Corps.

It is possible that when Lieutenant Hobby joined the party as an Officer, he would be accompanied by a man – but nowhere is such a servant mentioned. When equipment was issued at Emu, it is definitely stated that the issue was '30 blankets' – although in other places the reference is to 28 employees. There were 2 natives: 'Joe' from Mulgoa and 'Coley' from Richmond, joined with the party on 27th August. Other natives had been with them on 8th August.

# G.W. EVANS

George William Evans was born at Warwick, England – 5th January 1780. He is believed to have been indentured to an Engineer and Architect named Smee, but his indentures were cancelled and he then studied Land Surveying. Evans left England for Capetown at the age of 18 years. Here in 1801, he was employed in the Naval Store-keeper's Department. He was at this time reportedly interested in music, painting, literature and exploration. He travelled to NSW on the *H.M.S. Buffalo* arriving at Port Jackson on the 16th October 1802, and was first employed as the Storekeeper-in-Charge of the Receipt and Issue of Grain at Parramatta.

At the time of Evans arrival in Sydney, the Surveyor-General Charles Grimes was in poor health, and away on six months' sick leave. So on 10th August 1803, Evans was appointed Acting Surveyor-General by Governor King. He was first engaged in 'Administration' and in the minor exploration of the Nepean and Hawkesbury River system.

After the return of the explorers Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson, Governor Macquarie instructed Evans, then Deputy Surveyor of Lands – "To proceed in the Attempt of Effecting a Passage over the Great Range of Mountains, called here the Blue Mountains, and to discover what Description of Country lay to the Westward of them." (General Order 12th February 1814).

Evans' party consisted of six individuals: Richard Lewis and James Burns, both Free Men; and three convicts, James Cooghan, John Grover and John Tygh (sic Tighe). Their names were recorded for posterity by Arthur J. Hand, as street names when he sub-divided the Lapstone Estate.

Evans made a significant decision, by determining to carry out the second part of his instructions first, i.e. by surveying beyond the Explorers' terminal point, which he did by starting at the foot of Mount York. Here he marked a tree on the 25th November 1813, and measured westward to his later selected objective at the Macquarie River, reaching there on 9th December 1813.



George William Evans – Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Returning to his Marked Tree at the River Lett, which is described in his Survey Field Book (see AONSW Ref. Reel 2623) — *“About 10 chains from the River Lett, and the mouth of a drain about 4 chains left.”* (Page 18), he then started on 31 December 1813, the survey of the Explorers’ track, which he completed to Emu Ford on 8 January 1814, having spent 9 days in surveying these 48.5 miles.”

The track, brushed of scrub, marked the Explorer’s footsteps and this was the line that Evans had followed – so his footsteps were there too. On 3rd January 1814 he recorded the natives had fired the bush – probably our first recorded deliberately lit bushfire – and this may have helped him straighten out a few minor sections.

The survey would appear to have been carried out with a circumferenter, an advanced form of the magnetic compass and a Gunther’s chain and it can be accepted that this would be accurate to at least half a degree in angle and at least 1 in 1000 in the measurement of length. Based on this the points established by the modern methods would be within 100 to 150 feet (30 to 45 metres) overall, so individual spots would be much more closely defined.

Mitchell’s Ridge Lookout – Mount Victoria





There appears to be no record of the actual survey equipment that George Evans took with him on this assignment, but the following is what he took to his next job in Tasmania in February 1815.

The next phase in the opening of the 'Route to the West' was the construction of a road from Emu Ford to Bathurst, a distance measured on its completion (the 14th January 1815) at 101.5 miles (162 km).

Macquarie had instructed that the road was to follow Evans' survey, where possible, but Cox did have discretionary power to vary this – if an improvement was obvious.

The road was to be made – *“at least 12 feet (3.7 metres) wide, so as to permit two carts or other wheeled carriages to pass each other with ease; the timber in the forest ground to be cut down and cleared away 20 feet (6.1 metres), and grubbed up to 12 feet (3.7 metres) wide. Grubbing up the stumps, and filling up the holes, so that a four wheeled carriage or cart may pass without difficulty or danger. In brush ground, it is to be cut 20 feet (6.1 metres) wide, and grubbed up to 12 feet (3.7 metres) wide.”*

Macquarie conceived this to be sufficient width for the road at that time, but included in the instructions – *“but where it can, with ease, I should prefer the road to be made 16 feet (4.9 metres).”*





*Governor Lachlan Macquarie – Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW*

Cox's team consisted of 30 men, 8 soldiers, and 2 natives, who joined the party on 27th August, at the 9 mile peg. These 30 men comprised workers in the following categories:

Chief Superintendent – R. Lewis

Guide – J. Tighe

Storekeeper – T. Gorman

Quarryman – R. Fowler

Blacksmith – J. Richards

Shoemaker – W. Herdman

Carpenters, drivers of bullock carts, together with 24 labourers, and a mention of a Doctor and a Constable.

There was also a Military Guard party consisting of 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal with 6 Privates from the Royal Veteran Company.

The original Sergeant, Bounds, died on the 25th August 1814, at the First Depot (now Blaxland), and he was replaced by Sergeant Minehan.

It is difficult to determine what the status of the individual members of the gang were, as later on they were listed as Free Men, Convicts and Labourers. In Cox's award recommendations three (3) men: Appledore, Dwyer and Fowler were to receive Free Pardons, one Roddocks was to be granted a Ticket-of-Leave, and all the others Emancipation, and this seems to have been all those who were called Labourers. It is possible that at the time they were recruited for the work, they may have been classified as holding Conditional pardons, or were holding Ticket-of-Leave, but were unlikely to be Free by Servitude.



William Cox – Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

**William Cox** (1764–1817), in charge, was a farmer from Clarendon, near Windsor, where he had settled after resigning from the NSW Corps. Cox had already done a great deal of road making throughout the County of Cumberland, when in July 1814, Macquarie made him Superintendent of the Works for a New Road over the Blue Mountains.

## THE DESIGNATED FREE MEN

**Richard Lewis** was Cox's right hand man and was classified as the Chief Superintendent and left in charge at those times that Cox had to return to Clarendon.

**James Burns** was originally the Superintendent of the Forward or Clearing gang of fellers and fire makers, and presumably third in line of command. He was discharged on the 2nd August 1814, as he refused to accept orders relayed to him through Richard Lewis. Both Lewis and Burns had been members of Evans' survey party.

**Lieutenant Hobby** was sent by Macquarie to replace Burns, arriving on the evening of 5th August with the camp moving to the '9 mile' soon after his arrival. He joined the Forward Party with R. Lewis and J. Tighe in marking the line ahead. This became his responsibility.

**John Tighe** had been a member of Evans' party where he was recorded as a prisoner. Cox listed him as a 'Free Person', and as a Free Person he received a grant of 100 acres for his services as a Guide.

**Samuel Ayres** who was Mr Cox's personal servant.

The balance of the construction group are shown broken up into two groups:

**Convicts** 13 in number, these included what could be called the skilled artisans; and

**Labourers** 24, who were included in the 1814 muster as being 'at the mountains'. These labourers must have been originally convicts but now had some measure of freedom. They had been selected by Cox on account of their physique being "*well inclined hardy men, who had been some years in the Colony, and accustomed to Field labour.*"

As these are men whom, by their personal labour made this first road to the West, and who viewed our present towns and villages in their pristine state, I think that it is only fitting that their names should become better known amongst our communities.

## LISTED AS CONVICTS

CARPENTER Thomas	Sawyer
COOKE Thomas	Sawyer
CRYER Henry	Bullock Driver (Govern. cart)
DYWER James	Leader of fire makers
DYE William	Rough Carpenter
FOWLER Robert (Samual)	Quarryman (Mason)
FREEMAN Samuel (William)	Rough Carpenter
GORMAN Thomas	Storekeeper
HANLEY (Henley) John Robert	Bullock Driver (Govern. cart)
HERDMAN William	Shoemaker
RICHARDS James	Blacksmith
WATERS Samuel	Bullock Driver (Govern. cart)
WATSON James	Leader of road workers

Earlier I have mentioned a reference to there being a 'doctor' and a 'constable' in the party so perhaps either Dye or Freeman fulfilled the responsibilities of the 'medical attendant'.

## CLASSIFIED AS LABOURERS

ADAMS Thomas	KEEN George	PARKER Stephen
ALLAN John	KELLY James	RAMSAY William
APPLEDORE William	KENDALL Thomas	RODDOCKS (Roddicks) Thomas
CROOK (Cook) Samuel	LAWRENCE William	ROSS John
DAVIS Samuel	MANNING John	SMITH Matt
FINCH John	McCARTHY James	SULLIVAN Harry
HARRAGHAN (Henringham) Patrick	MERRIAN (Merman) Patrick	TINDALL John
HOCKEY (Huckey) Stephen	MORTON (Martin) Henry	WATKINS Thomas

In Bigge's report, pages 5483-6, only 22 labourers are listed: the names of Keen, Kelly, Kendall and Ramsay not appearing but Shelley is added (see Appendix). A few extra names appear on the 1814 muster as being 'at the mountains' (Reel 1252 Archives) but they are difficult to decipher.

The carters apart from those mentioned in the convict list above who operated the supply line from Port Jackson are hard to differentiate but they appear to have been the six who were discharged on the 19th November 1814, after completion of the Pass of Mount Victoria, viz. Bryan M. Crowley, J. Hoddrigoddy, P. Stanley, S. Toone, J. Whitney. Other drivers mentioned in Cox's diary were Angus, French, Frost and Myers.

There were three other Labourers who were on the work but were not mentioned in the aware list and these were:

**W. Lonain** a tree feller who was hurt when a tree fell on him on the 22nd July 1814.

**Lowe** who was on the sick list 3rd October at the '28 Mile' Weatherboard.

**Randall T.** who was evacuated to Windsor hospital on 26th September.



Cox's Road Mount York - remains of original tree rail stock fence

The **Military** consisted of 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 6 Privates from the Royal Veteran Company. The names of the non-commissioned officers are known, being Sergeant Minehan (who replaced Sergeant Bounds), and Corporal Harris. There were Privates Ashford and Carrol, and four other privates whose names have not been determined but could be traced through the 22 October 1814 muster.

There were also 2 natives with the party, who joined them on 27th August from Richmond – ‘Joe’ from Mulgoa, and ‘Coley’ from Richmond, who were probably used to supplement the fresh meat supply by hunting kangaroo.

From the preceding, it can be appreciated that there is so much history contained in “this first line of road away from the Cumberland Plain”. Although there have been variations to the original route, particularly in the first ten miles which came in through the Lapstone Estate, much of the change after passing the 20 Mile Hollow or Bull’s Camp has been of a minor nature, largely brought about by the construction of the Railway Line in 1867-68.

While re-construction has brought about improvement in grade and alignment to the original route, one feels that those sections of the road that have been by-passed by modern day engineering should be preserved for future generations as a sample of what was done with hand tools, using manual labour without the back-up logistical resources of food, communication, and medicine, while facing the inclemency of winter weather, with its storms frost and snow, etc.



*Pavillion commemorating the crossing of the Blue Mountains – Mt York.*

It must be remembered that these men, conscripted as they were, were offered a reward of simply an improvement in status in life – there seems to have been no monetary payment for their day's work other than the provision of foodstuff, which consisted basically of salt pork, flour, biscuits, tea and sugar, to which Cox added from his own resources fresh beef, cabbage and corn. There were special issues of a gill of spirits from government stores as compensation for a particular effort or extremely harsh conditions.

The Labourers provided their own bedding, but were issued a 'suit of slops' – trousers and a smock – a pair of shoes and a blanket on the 18th July. Further shoes were issued on 12th September and 27th November with a second pair of trousers on 26th November.

As a special gesture, Cox gave each man a new shirt for Christmas.

There were no further issues of blankets, although the diary frequently mentions that their blankets were wet and very uncomfortable, as they were sleeping under whatever shelter they could find, and it seems that tents were not provided for them.



*The First Road Over The Blue Mountains Memorial - Mt York*

# FOOTSTEPS IN TIME PROJECT

The re-marking the survey line established by Evans which Cox followed closely, was originally conceived as part of the 1988 Bicentennial Celebrations. Evans' Field Book relative to this survey is stored in the State Archives (Book No. 96 AONSW Ref. Reel 2623) and despite its age and poor condition, it is possible to extract the details from it.

While it would be effective to mark all of the survey points established by this original survey, there are about 500 of them. It was decided to initially limit the number of points to 12, perhaps the most important – watering points.

1. Starting point at river crossing.
2. First Depot at Blaxland; 5-6 miles from the Nepean River.
3. The Valley, a valley to the right of the road at 9.5 miles.
4. Springwood, to right of the track or road.
5. 20 Mile Hollow to right of road.
6. Wentworth Falls, a running stream.
7. Leura, water to the right.
8. Katoomba, water to the left.
9. Blackheath, near Golf Links; large plain with water, 41 mile.
10. Mountain Victoria, water on a low flat.
11. The point where track reached the top at Mount York.
12. At the bottom of the Mountain; the point where the Eastern section of survey started, 49.5 miles.

It is not possible to provide what could be a continuous 'walking track' along the 'Explorers Track' as so much of it is contained within the confines of the present Great Western Highway.

In the 1913 edition, republishing Blaxland's diary we read under the date, 10th February 1823, this comment:

"The road, which has since been made, deviates but a few roads in some places from the line cleared of the small trees and brushes by us. Nor does it appear likely that any other line will ever be discovered than at the difficult and narrow passes that we were fortunate to discover; by improving which a good carriage road has now been made across the mountains."



# APPENDIX

## EXTRACT FROM COX'S MEMORANDUM ON ROADMAKERS (CIRCA 1821-?)

In July 1814, a party of men (convicts) commenced making a road from the corner of Woodruffe's Farm, opposite Emu Plains on the Nepean River, across the mountains and from thence to Bathurst, under my direction, distant by computation, one hundred miles which was completed in February 1815 when I returned.

In April 1815, His Excellency Governor Macquarie went over the Mountains on the new Road to Bathurst and after his return the following month, the persons who had been employed in the undertaking received the following Rewards for their labour.

### FREE PERSONS

---

Thomas Hobby Esq.	<i>Assistant on the Expedition</i> 500 acres of land and six cows
x Richard Lewis	<i>Chief Supervisor</i> 200 acres, one horse, four cows
x John Tighe	<i>Guide</i> 100 acres, two cows and five pounds
Samuel Ayres	<i>Servant to Mr Cox</i> Two cows

The persons to whose names this x mark is affixed had before been over the Mountains with Mr Evans, the Deputy Surveyor General.

### CONVICTS

---

James Watson	Leader of the Road Makers	James Dwyer	Leader of the Fire-making Gang
Thomas Gorman	Charge of the Stores	x William Dye	Rough Carpenter
Samuel Freeman	Rough Carpenter	x Thomas Cooke	Sawyer
Thomas Carpenter	Sawyer	Robert Fowler	Quarryman
James Richards	Blacksmith	William Herdman	Shoemaker
Samuel Waters	Bullock Driver with two Government carts	John Hanley	Bullock Driver with two Government carts
Henry Cryer	Bullock Driver with two Government carts		

Notation on Righthand margin – Mr W. Martin at "Emu Ford" on Mr Woodruffe's Farm received a cow for his service in assisting to get the provisions across the River, and attending the Government Boat.

## LABOURERS

---

Samuel Crook	Patrick Merrian	John Allan
Thomas Adams	John Finch	Stephen Packer
Thomas Ruddocks	John Manning	John Tindall
James Shelley	Matt Smith	Harry Sullivan
John Ross	William Lawrence	Thomas Kendall
Samuel Davis	Henry Morton	Thomas Watkins
John McCarty	William Appledore	Patrick Hanraghan
Stephen Hockey		

These men were selected as being accustomed to field labour and supposed to be the best calculated to undergo the fatigue of hard work and sleeping on the ground.

## THE REWARDS TO THESE CONVICTS WAS AS FOLLOWS (VIZ)

---

Robert Fowler	<i>Free Pardon</i>	Since Dead
William Appledore	<i>Free Pardon</i>	Since Drowned
James Dwyer	<i>Free Pardon</i>	Still in Colony
Thomas Ruddocks		Ticket of Leave



Entrance to Glow Worm Tunnel – Lithgow

## TO ALL THE OTHER PERSONS EMANCIPATIONS

The following Convicts each found a horse and cart of their own, and worked on the Mountains with them, in carrying the provisions, tools, etc., from the Nepean River forward to the Roadmakers.

x John Crowley

x John Toom

x Thomas Cross

x Patrick Harrogaddy

x Samuel Whitney

x Samuel Staley

Thomas Frost

These persons severally received Emancipations.

The persons to whom this x mark is affixed held Tickets of Leave prior to their being on this Service.

The following convicts each found a Horse and Cart between two of them, which were employed between the months of February and May 1815, in conveying Maize, etc., to the different Stations which I appointed for the Governor's retinue to stop at, on the Mountains and Road to Bathurst, and assisting the party at the time His Excellency went.

x William Clarke

William Tindall

James Coddington

x Harry Buttsworth

x William Durham

Samuel Gilbert

George Humphreys

x Thomas Street

These persons severally received their Emancipations and those to whose names this x mark is affixed held Tickets of Leave prior to being employed for Government on this Service.

ML B.T. Box 25 BIGGE'S REPORT, Pp. 5483-5486



