

APPENDIX III

ENGINEERING MARKER PROGRAMME

To: The Institution of Engineers, Australia,  
Engineering Marker Sub-committee,  
11 National Circuit,  
Barton, A.C.T. 2600.

Date: March 1986

From: Engineering Heritage  
Committee, Sydney Division.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of Division or  
Committee).

AND !!

This is to nominate the following Work for Historic Engineering Marker or  
National Historic Engineering Landmark treatment (please delete whichever  
does not apply)

(Name of Work) Lennox's Lansdowne Bridge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Located at Prospect Creek, Villawood-Lansvale.

\_\_\_\_\_  
State New South Wales.

Please furnish

the address (and map grid reference if a fixed Work) AMG 9030-11-S ,

extract from street directory attached.

ref 9030 - 119480.

The Work is owned by Department for Main Roads , New South Wales.

In support of this nomination the following information is provided:

(A) For dedicating an Historic Engineering Marker.

1. Proposed wording on Marker plate

This bridge over Prospect Creek, Lansvale was built by convict labour during 1834-35 under the direction of David Lennox, Superintendent of Bridges. Spanning 33.5m, this sandstone elliptical arch is the largest surviving masonry bridge in Australia and typifies Lennox's high standard for permanent bridge

2. Justification of claims made in citation:

see attached sheet

construction in New South Wales and the Port Phillip District. Size, appearance and durability make this bridge an outstanding example of colonial engineering heritage.

(68 words)

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H.Q. I.E. AUST.  
- 8 APR 1986  
File 3/6/13

FILE

MEMO TO: Mr R. Breen

SUBJECT: National Panel on Engineering Heritage

DATE: 3 April, 1986

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NATIONAL PANEL ON ENGINEERING HERITAGE

Attached to this memorandum are documents concerning the placing of an Institution plaque on Lansdowne Bridge under the recently-established Engineering Landmarks scheme. The plaquing of the Bridge has been strongly endorsed by the Engineering Heritage Committee of Sydney Division.

As will be seen from the correspondence, the Commissioner of Main Roads, New South Wales, supports the proposal with some enthusiasm.

I would therefore be grateful if you could pass these documents on to the National Panel on Engineering Heritage in order that they may proceed to the next stage of the plaquing procedure.

It would be appreciated if all steps in the process could be taken without excessive delay as there is a time element involved.

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*A.F. Boyd*

A.F. BOYD  
SECRETARY  
SYDNEY DIVISION

Encl

cc: Mr J. Muirhead  
Dr D. Fraser

This bridge over Prospect Creek, Lansvale was 7  
built by convict labour during 1834-35 under 14  
the direction of David Lennox, Superintendent of 21  
Bridges. Spanning 33.5 m, this sandstone 26  
elliptical arch is the largest surviving 32  
masonry bridge in Australia and typifies Lennox's 39  
high standard for permanent bridge construction 45  
in ~~the State~~ of New South Wales and the Port 52  
Phillip District. Size, appearance and 57  
durability make this bridge an outstanding 63  
example of colonial engineering heritage. 68

The Lansdowne bridge is a magnificent surviving example of the work of David Lennox, Australia's first professionally competent bridge builder.

in New South Wales

Completed in 1836, it is one of a ~~small number of~~ <sup>two</sup> convict-built bridges still carrying highway traffic. ~~The~~ Lansdowne bridge is an elliptic stone arch of 33.5 m span and is the largest of any existing masonry bridge in Australia.

The main span has graceful proportions which are complemented by the curved wingwalls that contain the approach embankments. The parapets and mouldings are simple and devoid of unnecessary ornamentation.

Its size, appearance and durability, together with its designer/builder, make this structure worthy of the Institution's highest land marking award.

The significance of this bridge to Australia's engineering heritage is such that the National Panel should consider attaching both <sup>type of</sup> plaques - a National Engineering

land mark and an information plaque.

The bridge has been classified by the National Trust and appears on the Register of the National Estate.

## Header Panel: Preserving Our Heritage

Lansdowne Bridge over Prospect Creek is the second-oldest of David Lennox's stone bridges built on the Australian mainland. It will be 150 years old next year and was officially opened by the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, on 26 January 1836.

Certainly, no other bridge in Australia has experienced such active use for so long. For nearly 122 years it carried all Hume Highway traffic. Since the opening of the adjacent concrete bridge on 18 December 1957, it has carried eastbound traffic while the new bridge carries westbound traffic.

The National Trust of Australia has classified this bridge as a structure "of national importance, the preservation of which is regarded as essential".

The Department of Main Roads has always recognised the historic importance of Lansdowne Bridge and, in designing the adjacent bridge, it sought advice from Professor Leslie Wilkinson on making the new arch similar in shape and size and thereby match the design by Lennox.

In the mid-1960's restoration of weathered stonework on Lansdowne Bridge and an overall silicone preservative treatment were undertaken for the Department by skilled local stonemasons. These repairs were made in accordance with recommendations by the architectural authority and historian Mr. Morton Herman, who had been specially engaged by the Department as consultant.

Now, new bridgeworks associated with the nearby intersection improvements will allow this attractive architectural asset to be preserved, free from the danger of damage by busy Highway traffic which it has carried so efficiently for almost a century and a half.

The new proposals ensure that Lansdowne Bridge will regain some of the more leisurely pedestrian use which it experienced in its youth. There is no doubt, that as the community is given the opportunity to take a closer look at this impressive example of early bridge building design and workmanship, it will become a popular and renowned part of our State's precious heritage.

The Gala Opening of Lansdowne Bridge  
in 1836

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On Tuesday 26 January 1836, Governor Bourke attended by the principal civil and military officers of the colony, rode out to the site. About 1,000 spectators were present when the Governor declared the bridge open at 1.30 p.m.

The procession over the new bridge included four "tandems" driven by Australian-born sons of representative pioneer families. Then followed

- \* a number of laden wool teams,
- \* a small herd of fat oxen,
- \* some fine horses of colonial breed,
- \* some pure Saxon sheep,
- \* an angora goat from Mr. Riley's Raby Estate,
- \* casks of wine from Sir John Jamison's vineyard at Regentville,
- \* cases of preserved hams borne on trucks,
- \* a dray laden with ox hides,
- \* a cart with two emus,
- \* exhibits of grain, oil, fruits, and honey, and
- \* a donkey cart laden with samples of produce.

The bands of The 4th and 5th Regiments provided the music and an "elegant cold collation" was supplied by Mr. Cummings in a marquee pitched in an adjoining field.

The convicts were given extra rations and the Governor directed Lennox to submit the names of any prisoners whose conduct had "rendered them worthy of receiving some indulgence". The festivities closed with a Grand Ball at Government House, Parramatta.

The Governor wrote, with obvious pride, that the

*"bridge had been constructed by convict labour at the small expense to the Colony of £1,000. Such a structure in England would have cost £7,000. The fete went off uncommonly well; there were exhibited a gallant show of well dressed dames and gentlemen, of equipages and horses, quite surprising in such a place."*

## The Building of Lansdowne Bridge

In 1832, £1,083 5s. 3d. was voted to build a stone bridge over Prospect Creek, to replace an insecure timber structure - known as "Bowler's Bridge" after the local innkeeper.

A design by David Lennox for a single arch span was approved and in May 1833 he moved to the nearby Greyhound Inn to commence preparatory work. Lennox was also working at this time on building bridges at Lapstone Hill (completed in July 1833) and Berrima (completed in June 1836).

Lennox obtained the services of a gang of prisoners out of irons, including James Randall who set most of the bridge at Lapstone. Suitable stone was located beside the Georges River about 11 km downstream and from there it had to be conveyed to the site by punt. This involved working the convicts whenever the tide was favourable and, as it often meant night work, Lennox secured for them an extra allowance of wheaten flour.

In July 1833, some of the convicts at the quarry broke into a nearby private still, returned drunk, and threatened to kill the overseer and burn the camp. Soon arrested, they were sentenced to the chain gangs again or received from 25 to 50 lashes.

On New Year's Day, 1834, Governor Bourke visited the site to lay the foundation stone. He named the bridge after Lord Lansdowne, then "the President of His Majesty's Council" in London. Coins and a brass inscription plate placed under the foundation stone were immediately stolen, although the plate was later recovered.

In June 1834, Lennox applied for up to 20 extra men, as he was ready to erect the centring to support the arch. He understandably felt overworked and underpaid (receiving only £120 per annum) and he wrote to the Surveyor-General a number of times, appealing for more skilled labour and more money.

He noted "*If such a bridge as this was to be erected in...England there would be from fifty to one hundred mechanics employed at it...Here everything is to be done by the men on the spot, and four mechanics are all that can with great difficulty be procured...I am compelled to act in the capacity of engineer, contractor, inspector, and overseer*".

Lennox never got many extra men but he eventually received a raise in salary and a "forage" allowance. In return, New South Wales received a beautiful and functional bridge and David Lennox left to posterity a fine memorial to his indisputable talents for bridge design and construction.

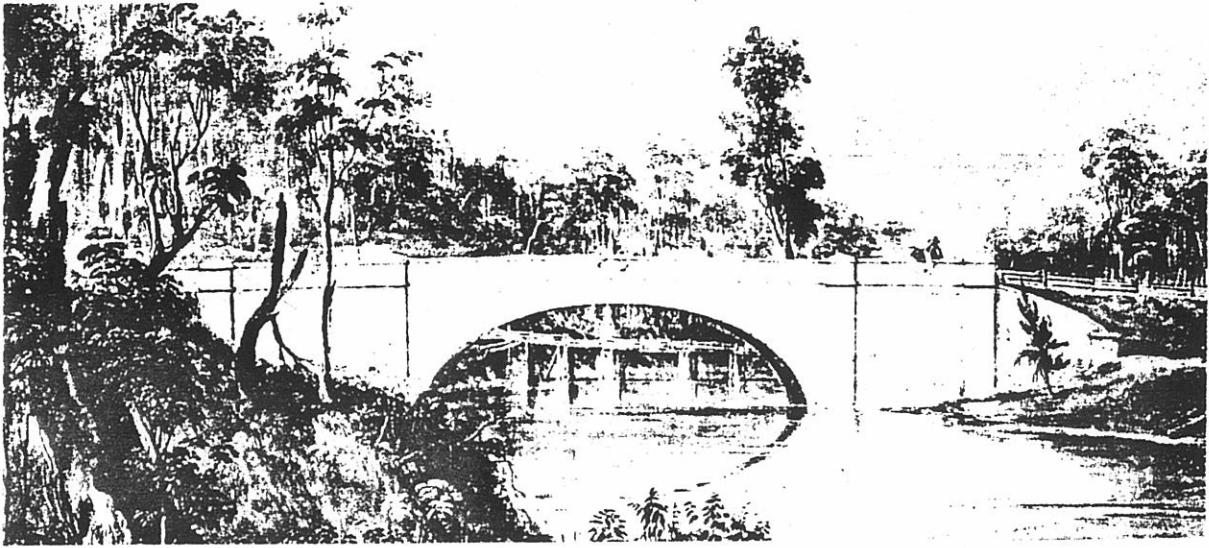
Lansdowne Bridge also stands as a reminder of a small group of reluctant but skilful convict labourers, whose anonymous work has survived the years with remarkable endurance.





# THE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS AUSTRALIA — SYDNEY DIVISION

## ENGINEERING HERITAGE COMMITTEE



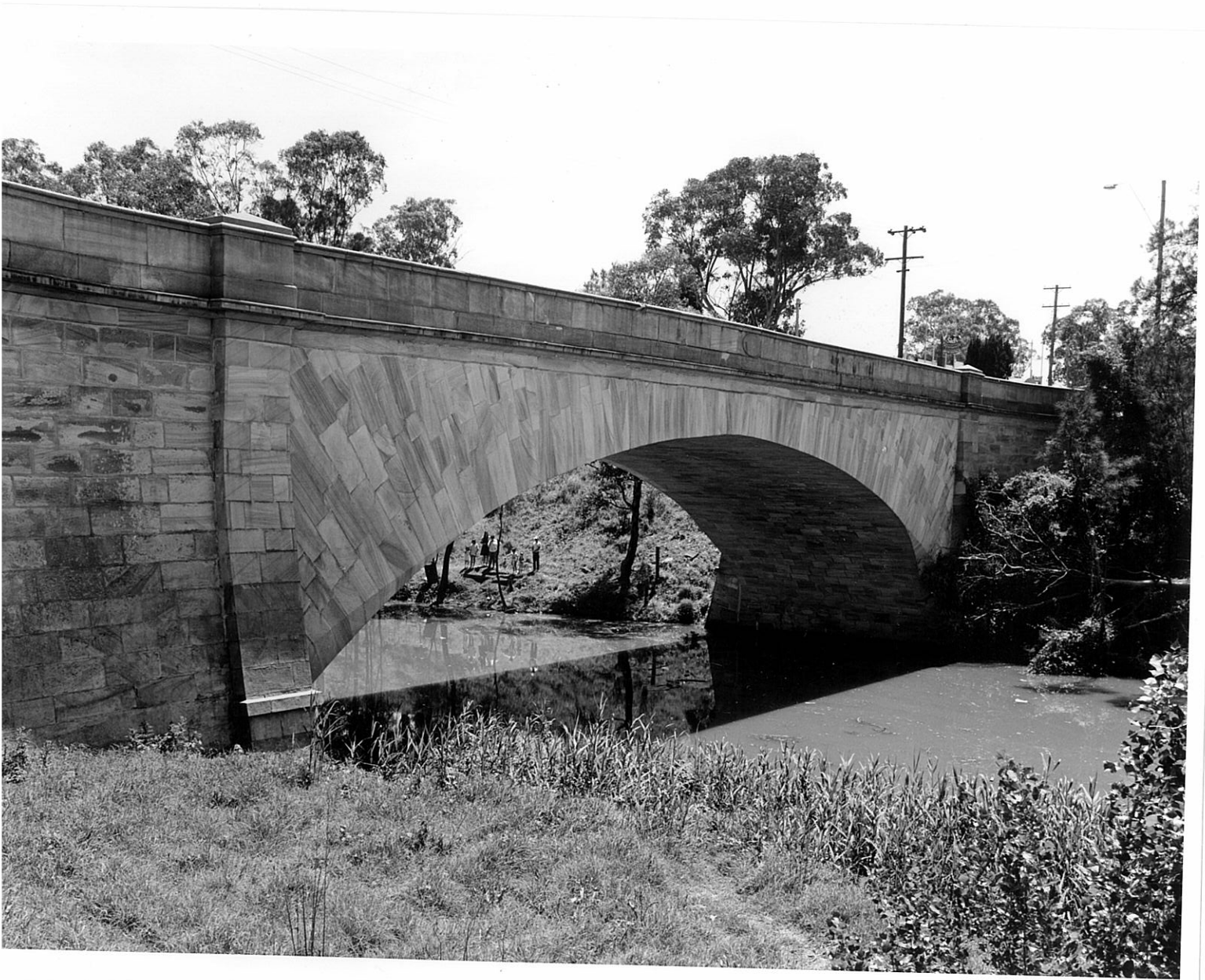
As part of its Engineering Landmark programme, the Institution of Engineers, Australia, in conjunction with the Department of Main Roads, New South Wales, has arranged for plaques to be unveiled at Lansdowne Bridge, Prospect Creek, at 11.00am on Sunday, 2nd November, 1986.

This is the sesquicentennial year of the completion of the Bridge which is one of the more notable works carried out under the direction of David Lennox and is a very worthy item to receive the first Engineering Landmark in New South Wales.

The ceremony will take place in Bridge Reserve, off the southern end of Quest Avenue, Carramar. Quest Avenue may be reached either by taking the Sydney-bound carriageway of the Hume Highway over the Bridge and turning first left or by an approach through Carramar.

Members of the nobility, gentry, clergy and general public are cordially invited to attend.



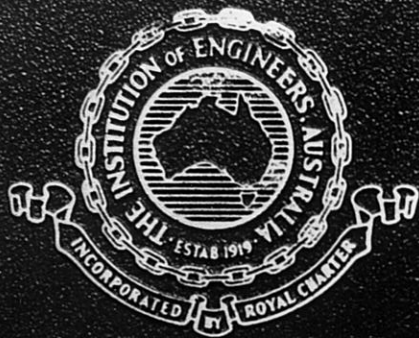


Lennox's 1836 Lansdowne Bridge  
NEL on 2 November 1986



Landmarking Lennox's 1836 Lansdowne Bridge  
2nd November 1986

to R :- Ald Donovan, Deputy Mayor, Fairfield City Council  
Mr. Owen MLA Bass Hill ; Jos Wiggins, Chairman Syd Div, IE Aust  
Bruce Loder, Commissioner for Main Roads  
Don Fraser, Engineering Heritage Committee



## **LENNOX'S LANSDOWNE BRIDGE**

**THIS BRIDGE OVER PROSPECT CREEK WAS BUILT BY CONVICTS DURING 1834-35 UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DAVID LENNOX, SUPERINTENDENT OF BRIDGES. THE SANDSTONE ELLIPTICAL ARCH HAS THE LARGEST SPAN, 33.5m, OF ANY SURVIVING MASONRY BRIDGE IN AUSTRALIA AND TYPIFIES LENNOX'S HIGH STANDARD FOR PERMANENT BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES. SIZE, APPEARANCE AND DURABILITY MAKE THE BRIDGE AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF COLONIAL ENGINEERING HERITAGE.**

**DEDICATED BY  
THE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS, AUSTRALIA AND  
THE DEPARTMENT OF MAIN ROADS, NSW, 1986.**

3800

Landmarking Lennox's 1836 Lonsdowne Bridge  
2 November 1986

Information plaque to accompany the NEL plaque