RED BRIDGE CAMPBELL TOWN

Location: Midland Highway 1, Campbell Town
Owner: State Government.

The Marker and interpretation panel is located in Blackburn Park beside the bridge.

The Bridge
Completed in 1838, the bridge carries the Midland Highway over the Elizabeth River and has been in continuous use since then.

Captain Alexander Cheyne, Director-General of Roads and Bridges, chose the site. His plan was to cross the Elizabeth River flood plain with a causeway above flood level, site the bridge so that it could be mostly constructed in the dry, and then divert the river through the bridge into a new downstream canal, bypassing the southern loop in the original river course.

Originally thought to be designed by James Blackburn, recent research suggests that Cheyne was the designer.

Construction was carried out by convict labour, chosen where possible to include the more willing and skilled workers. At its peak the project employed 220 men, including two teams of brickmakers and a stone cutter. An estimated 1.5 million bricks were made on site and laid in the structure and training walls. The four basalt training walls are a feature of the bridge, extending both upstream and downstream from each end of the bridge.

Following concerns about the arch deflections occurring under heavy trucks, a Conservation Management Plan was prepared with the result that the arches were strengthened internally with grouted stainless steel reinforcement bars using the Cintek Archtek system.

Heritage Significance
- It is one of the oldest surviving bridges in Australia, is the oldest brick bridge, and is the oldest bridge on the National highway network.
- It resulted from Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s emphasis on road and bridge construction in the colony of Van Diemen’s Land.
- The strengthening system is entirely hidden within the structure and has no visual impact of the heritage values of the bridge.

Strengthening of the arches in 2000.

Note: Interpretation panel on next page
**Red Bridge Campbell Town**

**Completed 1838**

**Why is it important?**

The construction of Red Bridge resulted from Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur's instructions on road and bridge construction in the colony of Van Diemen's Land.

Red Bridge, crossing the Millwood Highways over the Elizabeth River, was completed in 1838 and has been in continuous use since then. It is one of the oldest brick bridges in Australia, and is the oldest brick bridge on the National Highway network.

**Who planned it?**

Captain Alexander Cumbe, Director-General of Roads and Bridges, chose the site for the bridge. His plan would cross the Elizabeth River using piers with a central bridge and a road level, designed so that it could be easily constructed in the dry, and then divert the river through the bridge into a new downstream canal, bypassing the southern end of the original river course.

There are no extant original drawings, but the designer of the bridge is believed to be renowned convict architect and engineer James Blackburn. The design shows great attention to aesthetic and architectural details.

**Who built it?**

The construction supervisor on site was Captain Frederick Forth, who later succeeded Captain-General of Roads and Bridges. The work was carried out by convict labour, chosen, where possible, to include the more willing and skilled workers. At its peak, the project employed 220 men including five teams of bricklayers and a mason cutter.

**Construction**

The distinctive and brick, which gave rise to the bridge name, were manufactured on site using clay from nearby. An estimated 1.5 million bricks were laid in the structure and the masonry works. For the bridge parapet, darker even brickwork was used for the headers to give a distinctive checkerboard pattern as an architectural feature.

**Strengthening**

Following concerns about the arch deflections occurring under heavy loads, and the accumulated loss of mortar, one arch was re-built and resurfaced in 1994. The results led to a Conservation Plan being prepared, and funding obtained for bridge strengthening and resurfacing works. These works were then carried out in 2000.

The arches were strengthened internally using the Classic Architect Executives, the early corseted design track loading. This involved the installation of grouted steel reinforcement bars in each brick arch, tangential to the curve. All the lost mortar in the arches was restored.

**View of arch showing detail of brickwork**

**Northern side of southern arch, repointing, mortar bar and relaying prior to restoration in 2000**

**Layout of Classical arches**

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*Engineering Heritage National Register listed on 9 November 2017*

*Engineering Australia Tasmanian Division*

*Red Bridge, Campbell Town*