

# Stories from Australia's History

## Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's Crossing of the Blue Mountains

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When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it to find its meaning.

ON THE GRAPHIC PAGES, TEXT WITH THIS COLOURED BACKGROUND COMES FROM A HISTORICAL SOURCE.

GRAPHIC  
PAGES!



# Stories from Australia's history

The story of modern Australia starts on 26 January 1788. On that day, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Sydney Cove from England with the **convict** ships of the First Fleet. The new **settlement** brought disaster to Australia's **Indigenous peoples** because the newcomers took their land. This event marks the beginning of Australia as we know it today.

**T**he new town of Sydney grew quickly. By 1810, the settled lands stretched 100 kilometres west from Sydney Cove to the base of the Blue Mountains. Soon, the new settlers needed more land, but to find it they needed to cross the mountains – a barrier of steep cliffs and rocky **gorges**. Although Indigenous people had been crossing the mountains for centuries, the settlers were yet to find a way.

In 1813, landowners Gregory Blaxland, William Wentworth and William Lawson decided to try to cross the mountains in an attempt to find new **grazing land**. They found a **route** part-way through the mountains, but had to turn back before they were able to complete the crossing. Government **surveyor** George Evans was sent to follow their route and finish the job. These men opened up the inland to European settlement. Their success in finding a way over the Blue Mountains is one of the key stories in Australia's history.

Today, the Blue Mountains is a United Nations **World Heritage Site** because of its unique plant and animal life.

# Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's crossing of the Blue Mountains

On the afternoon of Monday, 31 May 1813, Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson set out from their camp in the heart of the Blue Mountains. For three weeks they had struggled through thick bush, searching for a way across the rugged mountain range. Before turning back they decided to climb one last rocky peak to see what lay ahead. At the top, they saw a magnificent view of grassy hills stretching westward. The **fertile land** would be perfect for new settlements.

**T**he three **explorers** had done what many believed was impossible. They had overcome thick forest, sheer cliffs and rough terrain to become the first Europeans to cross the most difficult part of the Blue Mountains. The route they found, and that George Evans later surveyed, opened the way to the rich farmland beyond, and allowed the settlement of Australia to grow.

This is the story of the people, the ideas and the events surrounding Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's crossing of the Blue Mountains and how it changed Australia forever.

Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson had to overcome steep cliffs and dangerous climbs in their **expedition** across the Blue Mountains.

## What does it mean?

**fertile land:** Fertile land is land that plants will grow well in, meaning the land is well-suited to growing crops and raising **livestock**.





# The big picture

In 1810 Sydney was growing quickly, and fast running out of land. The **settlement** was squeezed into a narrow strip of land along the coast and blocked in by the rugged Blue Mountains to the west. Land for growing food and grazing animals was in short supply. As more **convicts** and settlers arrived, the lack of land became a serious issue. Many believed that good farming land lay beyond the mountains, but no European had been able to cross them.

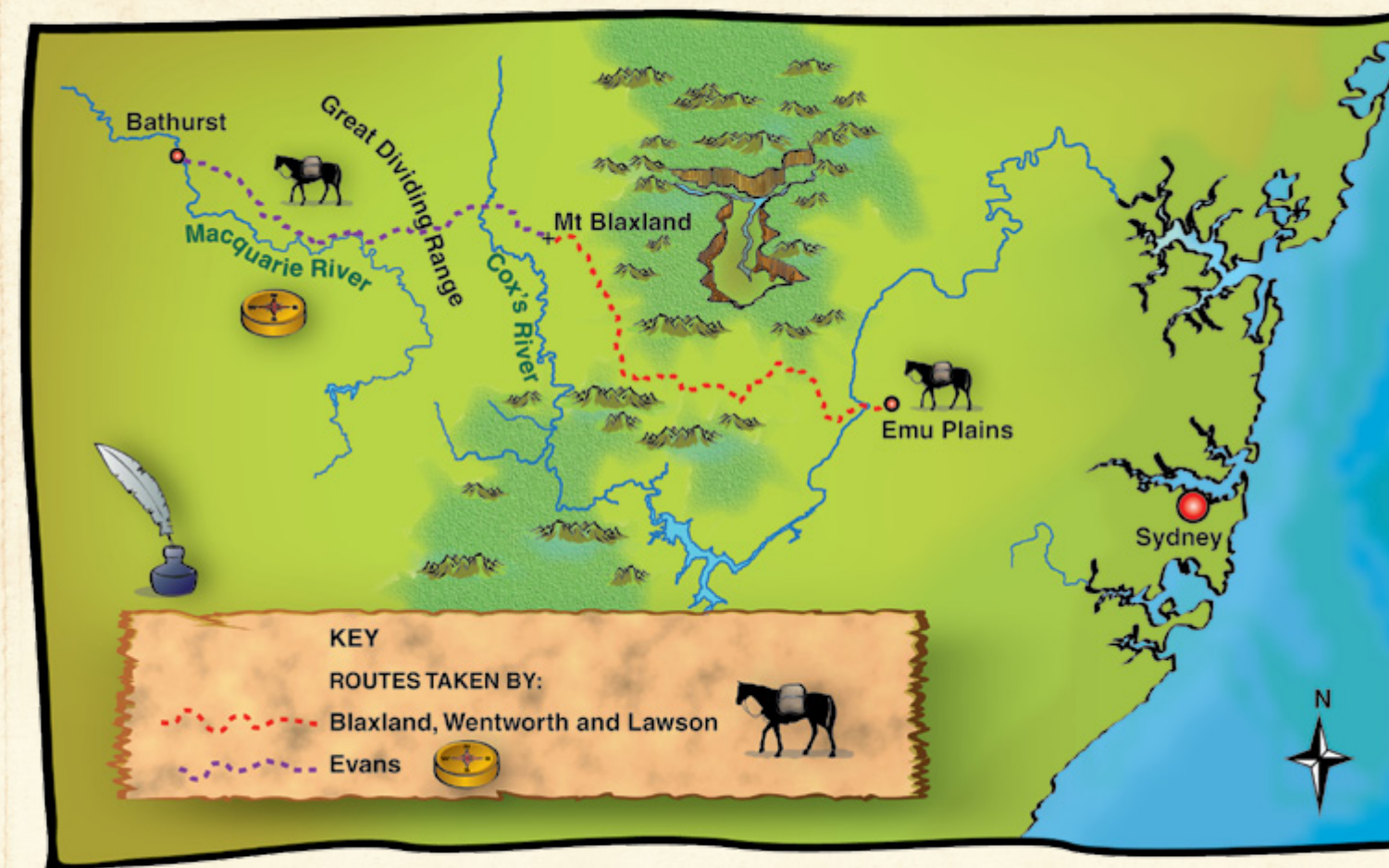
## Early crossing attempts

Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson were not the first to attempt the crossing. Before their journey, three other attempts had been made. In 1792, John Wilson, a freed convict, left the settlement to live in the bush with the **Indigenous people** of the Blue Mountains. He travelled with them up the valleys as far as Hartley. Wilson was the first European to get this far.

In October 1802, **Governor** Philip Gidley King sent **explorer** Francis Barrallier to explore the Blue Mountains. With the help of Indigenous guides, Barrallier travelled from Nattai south-west along the Wollondilly River, but could get no further.

George Caley was a plant and animal expert. In November 1804 he trekked along the northern edge of the Grose River valley to Mount Tomah, looking for new plant species. Caley overcame bushfires, sheer cliffs and towering peaks to reach Mount Banks, but he could not get any further, and had to turn back.

Sheer cliffs such as these at Echo Point led many people to believe the Blue Mountains were impossible to cross.



This map shows the Blue Mountains, around 100 kilometres west of Sydney, and the routes that Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson, and then Evans, took while trying to cross them.

## Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson

Wealthy landowners Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson had farms at the foot of the Blue Mountains. There was a drought in 1813, and they needed new, well-watered **grazing land** for their animals. When Blaxland received permission from Governor Lachlan Macquarie for an **expedition** over the mountains, he invited Wentworth and Lawson to join him. Keen to attempt an untried route, they decided to follow the high **ridges** of the mountains and avoid the valleys.

## Eyewitness words

“Before we set out, we laid down the plan ... and the course to be attempted, namely, to ascend (climb) the ridge ... taking the streams of water on the left ... as our guide; being careful not to cross any of them ...”

Gregory Blaxland, 1813



# Key people

Four people played key roles in the crossing of the Blue Mountains.

## Gregory Blaxland

**Born:** 1778 in England

**Role:** Organiser of the 1813 expedition to cross the Blue Mountains

**Age at the time of the expedition (1813):** 34

**Died:** 1853 in New South Wales

**Appearance:** Average height, brown wavy hair, round face

**Character:** Moody, difficult, always complaining, but determined and a good businessman

**Comments:** Blaxland was a wealthy free settler and landowner. He saw a great future in wool growing and wanted to find more land for his flocks. He organised the 1813 expedition but was not its leader as he later claimed to have been.



## William Charles Wentworth

**Born:** 1790 in Norfolk Island

**Role:** Youngest member of the 1813 expedition

**Age at the time of the expedition:** 22

**Died:** 1872 in England

**Appearance:** A big man, thick-set, red-haired, cross-eyed, rugged and untidy-looking

**Character:** Clever, educated, loud-voiced and with strong opinions, but also a poet and writer

**Comments:** W. C. Wentworth was a convict's son, proud, forceful and afraid of nothing. He joined the 1813 expedition for an adventure. Wentworth later became a famous politician.



## William Lawson

**Born:** 1774 in England

**Role:** Surveyor on the 1813 expedition

**Age at the time of the expedition:** 39

**Died:** 1850 in New South Wales

**Appearance:** Short, stocky, round face, blue eyes, fair hair

**Character:** Steady, quiet, reliable

**Comments:** Lieutenant Lawson was a surveyor in England before he came to New South Wales as a soldier. He had already discussed crossing the Blue Mountains with Wentworth and was keen to join Blaxland on the expedition. Lawson's skills as a surveyor made the expedition a success.

## George Evans

**Born:** 1780 in England

**Role:** Surveyor and leader of the expedition to complete the route found by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson in 1813

**Age in 1813:** 33

**Died:** 1852 in Tasmania

**Appearance:** Stocky, brown hair, brown eyes, high forehead

**Character:** Steady, clever, a skilled surveyor

**Comments:** Governor Macquarie appointed Evans to follow and survey the 1813 route discovered by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson. Evans' job was to continue on over the mountains of the Great Dividing Range to the plains beyond. He was the first European to actually cross the Blue Mountains.





# A mountain barrier

The Blue Mountains were a mystery to the people of Sydney. No one had been able to cross them, though many had tried. Then, in 1813, Gregory Blaxland came up with an idea.

Early 1813

Blaxland's farm

I WANT TO BE THE FIRST TO FIND A WAY ACROSS THESE MOUNTAINS.

BUT HOW?

WHAT ABOUT TAKING CALEY'S ROUTE?

NO, WENTWORTH, IT'S TOO STEEP.

Blaxland had another idea ...

WE SHOULD TAKE THE SOUTHERN RIDGE, HERE ...

NO ONE'S TRIED THAT BEFORE.

HMM ... THAT COULD WORK.

I KNOW A KANGAROO SHOOTER WHO CAN GUIDE US UP THE FIRST RIDGE.

EXCELLENT!

The three men planned the route.

ARE YOU WITH ME, LAWSON? WENTWORTH?

YES!

WE SHOULD KEEP TO THE HIGH GROUND.

YES - WE'LL FOLLOW THE RIDGES WHETHER THEY HEAD WEST OR NOT.

YOU'RE COMING WITH US.

4 p.m.  
11 May 1813

The party set out.

They prepared for the journey ...

That evening

The party camped at the foot of the Blue Mountains.

The next morning, they climbed up the first ridge.

By 1 p.m. they'd reached the top.

They trekked for five kilometres. The ground was very rough ...

A LAGOON!

MY HORSE!

... and water was scarce.

CAREFUL, WENTWORTH!

I'VE FOUND SOME WATER!

The men camped by the gully.

The local Indigenous people kept out of sight.



**13 May 1813** The explorers found a large forest ...

GOOD CATTLE COUNTRY.

YES, WENTWORTH.

THIS WAY.

... but after 3 kilometres ...

WE CAN'T GET THROUGH THIS BUSH.

WE'LL HAVE TO CHANGE COURSE.

They tried other directions, but ...

TURN BACK!

Getting through the forest was their only hope.

Next morning, they thought out a new plan. Leaving two men to mind the camp they set out on foot.

They marked their track by making cuts on the trees ...

SLASH

HACK

... and returned to camp at nightfall.

**15 May** The men alternated days of rest with days of work.

WE'VE CUT THROUGH 11 KILOMETRES.

LET'S GET BACK TO CAMP.

But then the way became even more difficult ...

IT'S A SHEER CLIFF!

The plan worked. The horses got through the path the men had cut.

**19 May**

IF WE MOVE THESE ROCKS, WE MIGHT FIND A WAY UP.

IT MIGHT WORK.

They opened a path up the cliff.

At the top ...

YOU CAN SEE BACK TO SYDNEY.

WHAT'S THAT?

SOME EXPLORER'S MARK.

[We have] penetrated (gone) as far as any European [has] been before.

Blaxland was excited to see the marker.

**22 May** The men moved on.

WE MUST GO THAT WAY, BUT LOOK!

IT'S A SHEER DROP.

WE CAN'T GET DOWN HERE.

That night ...

WE'LL HAVE TO HEAD NORTH, BLAXLAND.

THAT'S THE WRONG DIRECTION!

But they had no choice ...





For the next five days, the explorers made their way north-west along a high ridge.

5 p.m.  
28 May  
1813

As before, they cut a path ahead, then went back to camp to fetch the horses.

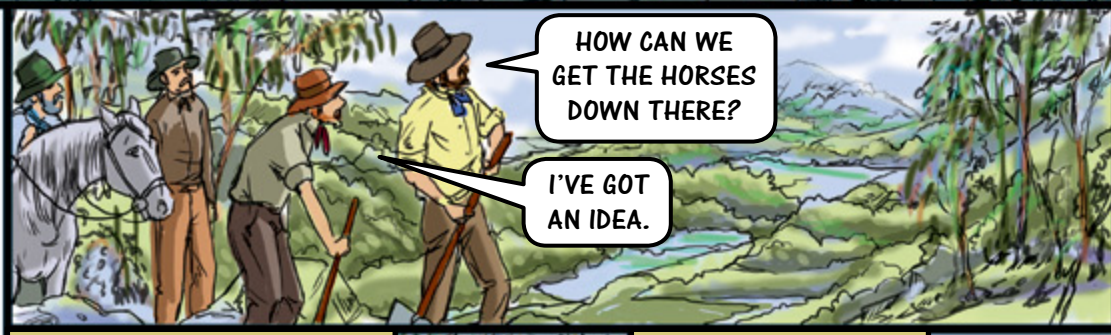
Exhausted, thirsty and with starving horses, they reached a high peak.



LET'S CAMP HERE.

WE NEED WATER.

THERE'S A CREEK, AND FOOD FOR THE HORSES, BUT IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.



HOW CAN WE GET THE HORSES DOWN THERE?

I'VE GOT AN IDEA.

The men cut steps down the cliff face ...



... and finally they reached the valley.



... with the horses well-fed for the first time in two weeks, they climbed back up to their camp.



Next morning, they headed down to the valley again, but ...



UNLOAD THE HORSES. IT'S TOO STEEP FOR THEM.

That evening



Without their loads, the horses reached the valley safely.



... a fine country... proceeded (went) ... through a fine meadow. Encamped beside a fine stream ... William Lawson

31 May



LET'S TURN BACK.

WE'RE NEARLY OUT OF FOOD.

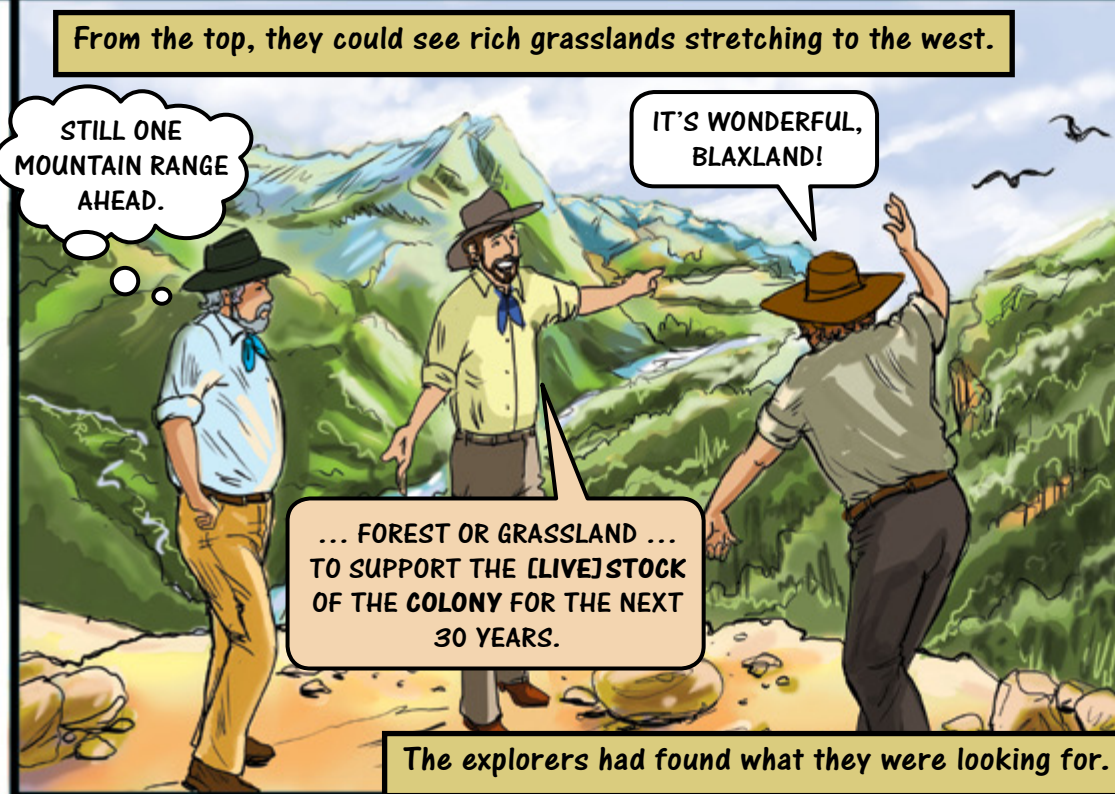
MY STOMACH HURTS!

The men could go no further.

But before they turned back ...



WE'LL SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD FROM THE TOP OF THIS MOUNTAIN.



From the top, they could see rich grasslands stretching to the west.

STILL ONE MOUNTAIN RANGE AHEAD.

IT'S WONDERFUL, BLAXLAND!

... FOREST OR GRASSLAND ... TO SUPPORT THE [LIVE]STOCK OF THE COLONY FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS.

The explorers had found what they were looking for.



WE'VE DONE IT! WE'VE CROSSED THE BLUE MOUNTAINS!

WELL - NOT QUITE, BLAXLAND.

BUT WE'VE CROSSED THE HARDEST PART.

The men prepared for the return journey.



# Viewpoints

Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson are famous as the first three European men to cross the Blue Mountains and discover new **grazing lands** beyond. However, most people at the time saw things differently. They believed that, since the men had not gone far enough to see the western plains, they could not take credit for discovering them. Even the three **explorers** did not agree. These different points of view are presented here.

## Gregory Blaxland

Blaxland always claimed that he and his friends were the first to cross the Blue Mountains and reach the western plains. In a letter to his relative about the **expedition**, Blaxland wrote:

“... [our expedition discovered] unlimited pasturage (grassland) ... [for] the very fine flocks of **merino** sheep, as well as the extensive field(s) opened for ... the present, as well as future generations. It has changed ... the **colony** from a confined (limited) ... tract of land, to a rich and extensive continent ... This expedition ... has proved ... completely successful ...”

Gregory Blaxland, 1823

Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson saw this view from the last mountain they climbed before they turned for home. When George Evans returned to the mountain he named it Mount Blaxland.

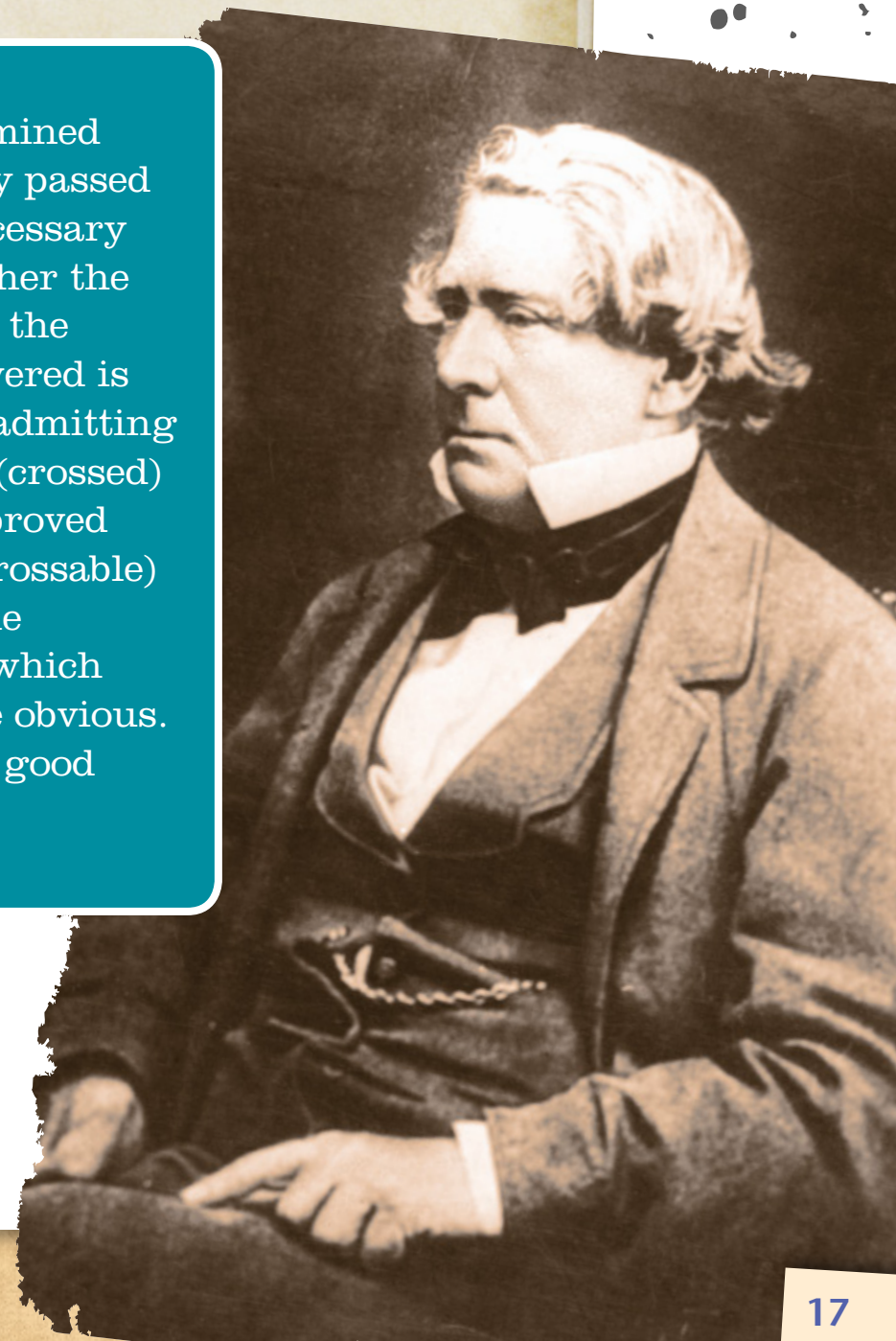
## William Charles Wentworth

Wentworth was at first delighted that he and his friends had found a way across the Blue Mountains. However, he soon realised that they had not completed the journey over the mountains to the western plains. In his journal of the expedition he wrote:

“Before it can be determined whether ... we have actually passed the mountains it will be necessary to ascertain (find out) whether the western boundary (edge) of the forest land which we discovered is similar to the eastern. But admitting that we have not traversed (crossed) the mountains we have ... proved that they are traversable (crossable) and that too, by cattle ... The importance of the country which we have discovered must be obvious. An extensive tract (area) of good grazing land ...”

William Charles Wentworth, 1813

Even Wentworth himself was not sure if they had successfully crossed the mountains.





# Opening a way to the west

The three explorers had found good grazing land and proved that the Blue Mountains could be crossed. But they had not crossed the whole mountain range, or reached the grassy plains beyond. Too exhausted to go on, they headed home.

1 June 1813

The explorers trekked back to the foot of the ridge.

LET'S CAMP HERE. WE'LL CLIMB UP TOMORROW.

WE'LL HAVE TO CARRY THE LOADS AGAIN.

Next morning

IT WILL BE MUCH EASIER, NOW THAT WE'VE CUT THIS PATH.

But then ...

IT'S EXHAUSTED.

UNLOAD IT SO IT CAN WALK.

Each night, they stopped at their old camp sites.

WE'RE MAKING GOOD TIME.

YES, 27 KILOMETRES TODAY.

5 June

They reached the end of their marked track.

WHICH WAY?

All day they struggled on, until ...

LOOK, WE'RE HOME!

... they found their way back to the top of the first ridge.

6 June

The men arrived back safely.

DID YOU MAKE IT?

WELL, ALMO—

YES! WE DID IT!

News of their success spread quickly.

I HEAR THEY FOUND NEW GRAZING LAND.

YES - ENOUGH FOR ALL OF US.

Blaxland was excited.

EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT OUR DISCOVERY. WE'RE HEROES!

... BUT WE DIDN'T ACTUALLY CROSS THE MOUNTAINS ...

WE DISCOVERED NEW GRAZING LANDS. THAT WAS OUR AIM.

GOVERNOR MACQUARIE WILL GIVE ME £100 REWARD FOR THIS.

I HOPE SO, DEAR.

He went to visit Governor Macquarie.

WELCOME BACK, BLAXLAND.

THANK YOU, YOUR EXCELLENCY.

YOU TURNED BACK HERE?

YES, SIR, BUT WE SAW FINE GRASSLANDS TO THE WEST.

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, BLAXLAND, AND I GRANT YOU 1000 ACRES OF LAND AS A REWARD.

Blaxland was furious.

BUT WHAT ABOUT A CASH REWARD? WE CROSSED THE BLUE MOUNTAINS!

WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT LIES WEST OF THE MOUNTAINS, BLAXLAND.

NO, SIR, BUT ...

I'LL GET A GOOD SURVEYOR TO FINISH THE JOB.



August 1813  
Mr. George Evans Esquire  
His Excellency Governor Macquarie requests that you return to Sydney to undertake an expedition across the Blue Mountains.

George Evans, a government surveyor, had explored many parts of New South Wales.

I WANT YOU TO FIND A PASSAGE OVER THE BLUE MOUNTAINS.

HASN'T THAT JUST BEEN DONE, SIR?

YOU HAVE AN EXPEDITION FOR ME, SIR?

YOU WILL GO RIGHT OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND INTO THE LAND BEYOND. HERE ARE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.

I SEE.

THAT EXPEDITION DID NOT CROSS THE FINAL RIDGE.

Macquarie showed Lawson's map to Evans.

When Blaxland heard, he was furious.

Governor Macquarie gave Evans everything he needed for a two-month expedition.

WE'LL NEED ENOUGH FOR SIX MEN.

Evans chose two men who knew the mountains and three convicts.

WE'LL FOLLOW MR LAWSON'S PATH ...

... THEN CONTINUE ON INTO UNKNOWN COUNTRY.

By November 1813, everything was ready.

[Begin from] the present known country ... about 36 miles from Sydney, and ... proceed [go] ... west ... and ... continue [your] journey as far as [you are able to go].  
Governor Lachlan Macquarie



20 November 1813  
Evans' expedition set out from Emu Ford near Blaxland's farm.

The track made by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth made Evans' journey much easier.

THIS WAY, MEN.

24 November  
They reached the newly discovered valley in just five days.

THAT'S THE MOUNTAIN BLAXLAND AND HIS MEN CLIMBED.

YES, SIR.

Evans named it Mount Blaxland.

That night ...

AND THIS IS WHERE THEY TURNED BACK.

I'LL PITCH THE TENTS.

[this valley is] beautiful and fertile with a rapid stream running through it.

Next morning, Evans got to work.

... checked the soil ...

... and surveyed and mapped the area.

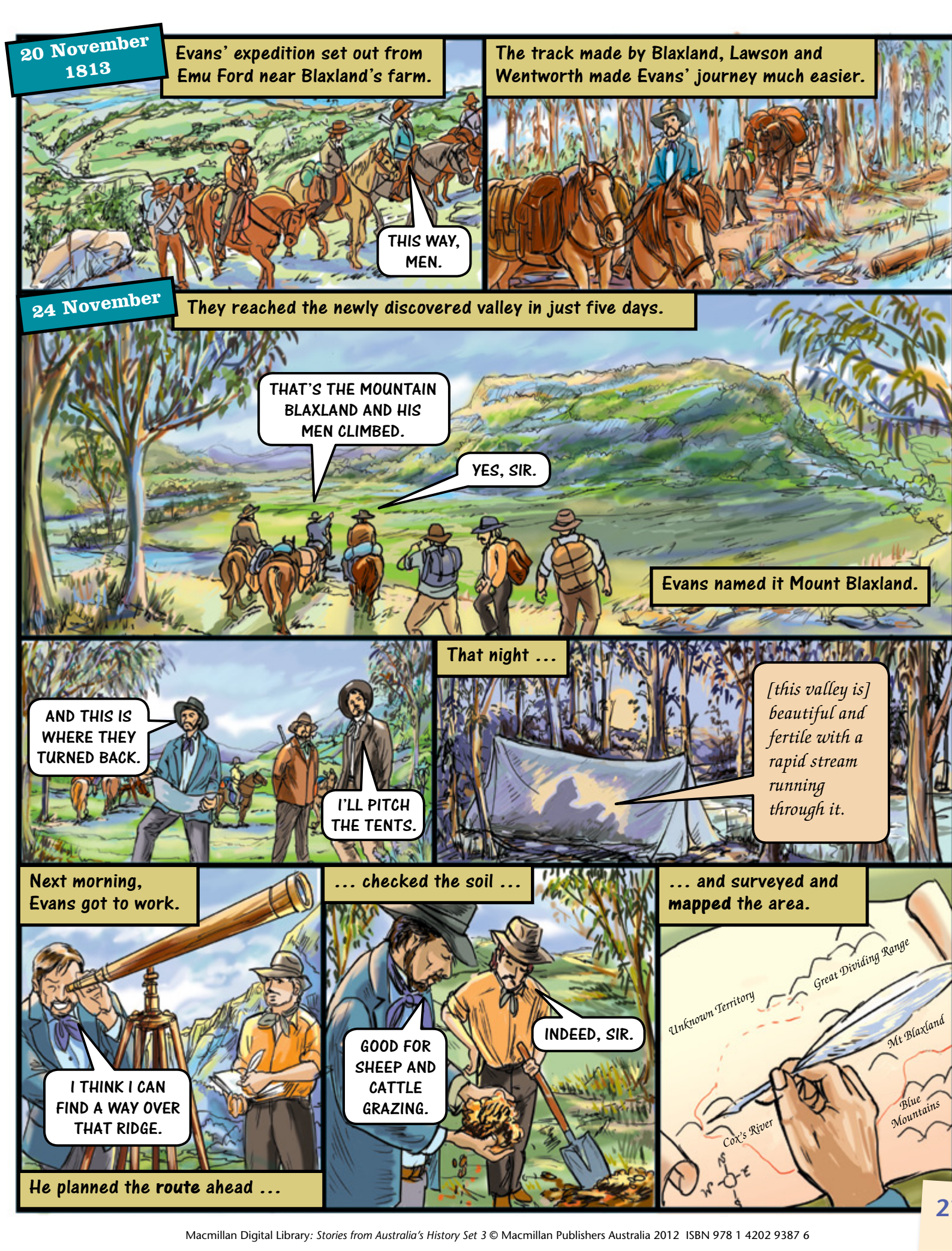
I THINK I CAN FIND A WAY OVER THAT RIDGE.

GOOD FOR SHEEP AND CATTLE GRAZING.

INDEED, SIR.

He planned the route ahead ...

Unknown Territory  
Great Dividing Range  
Mt Blaxland  
Blue Mountains  
Cox's River





26 November  
1813

Evans' party headed west, up into the Great Dividing Range.



They followed the stream through the mountains until ...



LET'S CLIMB  
THAT PEAK - SEE  
WHAT'S AHEAD.



GOOD IDEA, SIR.

From the top of the Great Dividing Range they saw  
rich, well-watered plains stretching westward.

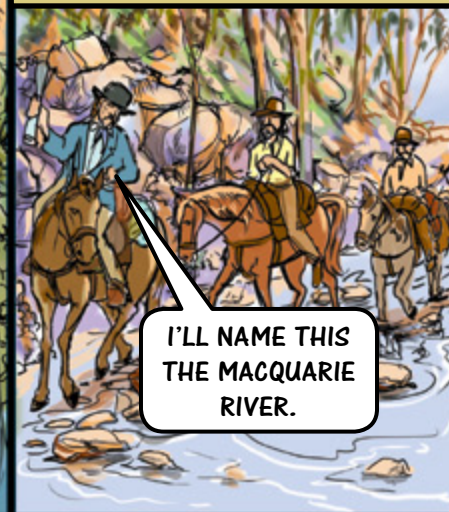


They had crossed the Blue Mountains.

[ENOUGH] TILLAGE  
(FARM) AND PASTURE  
(GRAZING) LANDS FOR  
A CENTURY TO COME!



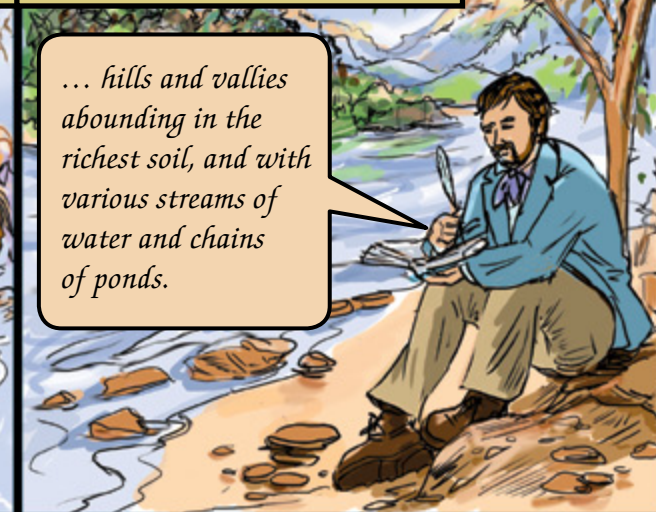
Evans and his men trekked  
westward across the plains.



I'LL NAME THIS  
THE MACQUARIE  
RIVER.

Evans surveyed and mapped  
the new lands and took notes.

... hills and vallies  
abounding in the  
richest soil, and with  
various streams of  
water and chains  
of ponds.



Late December  
1813



WE'VE COME  
160 KILOMETRES  
FURTHER THAN  
BLAXLAND'S PARTY.

SIR, WE'RE  
RUNNING OUT  
OF FOOD.

HMM ...

They had achieved their aim. It was time to turn back.

They trekked back over the mountains.



8 January 1814

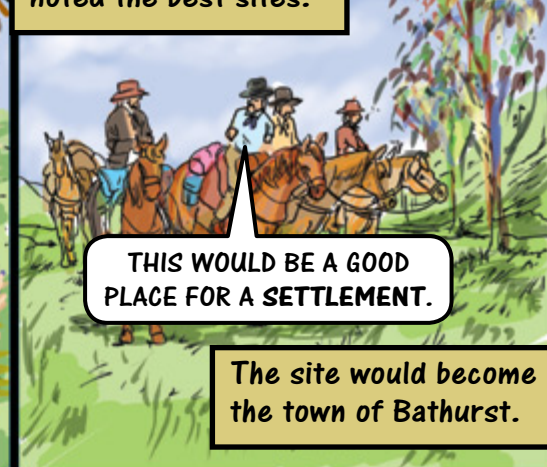


THERE'S  
EMU FORD!

WE'VE MADE  
IT BACK.

Evans' journey had  
taken seven weeks.

On the way back, they  
noted the best sites.



THIS WOULD BE A GOOD  
PLACE FOR A SETTLEMENT.

The site would become  
the town of Bathurst.

A few days later at Government  
House, Sydney...



CONGRATULATIONS,  
MR EVANS!

THANK  
YOU, SIR.

EXCELLENT! WE'LL BUILD A ROAD,  
MR EVANS, AND SOON SETTLERS  
WILL SPREAD RIGHT ACROSS THIS  
GREAT LAND, AUSTRALIA.



[WE'VE FOUND]  
A VAST EXTENT  
OF FLAT COUNTRY  
... [WHICH] FAR  
SURPASS[ES]  
IN BEAUTY AND  
FERTILITY ... ANY  
SOIL [I HAVE SEEN].

Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's  
expedition had led to a successful  
passage over the Blue Mountains,  
and opened up countless possibilities  
for future settlement.





# What happened next?

**Governor Macquarie** was delighted with Evans' success. He appointed him **Deputy Surveyor** of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) and rewarded him with money and land. After many other journeys of exploration, Evans settled in Van Diemen's Land where the town of Evandale was named after him. Governor Macquarie gave Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson 1000 acres of land each, but Blaxland was angry that he received no cash reward.

## Building the mountain road

Within weeks of Evans' return, Governor Macquarie ordered a road to be built across the Blue Mountains to the Macquarie River on the western plains. He hired William Cox, a road **engineer**, to do the job. On 7 July 1814, Cox began the huge task, using 28 **convicts** and six guards. Following the **route** that Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson had taken, they built 163 kilometres of road 3.5 metres wide, with cuttings through high ground and bridges over **gorges**. By 14 January 1815, just six months later, the road was complete.

The road that Cox built across the Blue Mountains followed the path that Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson cut through the bush. Parts of the road are still visible today.



## The settlement of Bathurst

In April 1815, Governor Macquarie took surveyor George Evans and 50 friends on a tour of the newly built road. Macquarie was delighted with William Cox's work and **granted** him 2000 acres of land on the Macquarie River. The convicts who built the road were freed and given grants of land, too. Where the road ended, around 200 kilometres west of Sydney, Macquarie marked out a town site and named it Bathurst. Soon, hundreds of settlers were using Cox's road to cross the mountains to the western plains.

This view of the fine **grazing land** beyond the Blue Mountains was painted by John Lewin, the official artist on Macquarie's journey in 1815.



## Eyewitness words

Henry Colden Antill, who travelled with Macquarie on his tour of the new road in 1815, watched as Macquarie chose a grassy rise near a river as the site of the town of Bathurst.

“Tis pleasing to look forward and think that perhaps at some future period (time) not far distant a flourishing town may arise on the very spot we are now occupying on the banks of the Macquarie River.”



# The effects of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's expedition

The route discovered by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson and completed by Evans led to a road being built across the Blue Mountains. This had far-reaching effects in Australia.

## New farming land

The new road opened up the land beyond the Blue Mountains to European settlers. The town of Bathurst was established on the plains that Evans had discovered. The Bathurst Plains provided good **grazing land** for sheep. Graziers bred **merino** flocks there and helped develop Australia's wool industry. Wool became Australia's richest export for more than 100 years.

As the settlers moved further inland, they cleared the land and built cities. In time, they transformed Australia from a tiny **convict settlement** into the modern nation of Australia.

## Lost land

For the Wiradjuri people of central New South Wales, the crossing of the Blue Mountains spelt disaster. European settlers stole their land, fenced waterholes so **Indigenous people** could not use them and shot the native animals they hunted. The settlers also brought diseases such as smallpox and measles, which were fatal to Indigenous people. Led by the famous warrior Windradyne, the Wiradjuri people fought back against the settlers in the 'Bathurst wars' of the 1820s. The Indigenous people tried to drive off the settlers by killing stockmen and their cattle. However, after the settlers killed many of their women and children, the Wiradjuri surrendered. They are still fighting for their land today.



Windradyne was the leader of the Wiradjuri people, who fought to defend their land against the settlers in the 1820s.

## What ever happened to ...

### Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson?

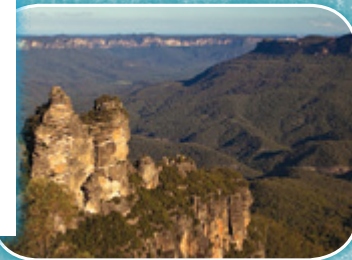
Gregory Blaxland became a leading woolgrower. In 1823 he published a book presenting himself as the hero of the **expedition across the Blue Mountains**. He died a bitter man in 1853, still angry at the lack of recognition and reward. William Charles Wentworth became a lawyer and one of Australia's most famous politicians. He died in England in 1872. William Lawson was appointed commandant of Bathurst in 1819. He became a rich landowner and a member of parliament before he died in 1850.

## Timeline

This timeline shows the main events relating to the crossing of the Blue Mountains.

### Before 1788

Thousands of years before European settlement, Indigenous Australians establish walking paths across the Blue Mountains and use them as trading routes.



### October–November 1802

Francis Barrallier explores a route from Nattai to Yerranderie, but cannot get any further.

### November 1804

Botanist George Caley, taking a new route, reaches Mount Tomah and climbs Mount Banks before turning back.



### 11 May–6 June 1813

Gregory Blaxland, William Charles Wentworth and William Lawson cross the Blue Mountains to Mount Blaxland, just short of the Great Dividing Range.

### 7 July 1814–14 January 1815

William Cox, with a team of convicts, builds a road over the Blue Mountains.

### 25 April–19 May 1815

Governor Macquarie makes the first journey by road across the Blue Mountains and chooses the site of Bathurst.

1790

1795

1800

1805

1810

1815

### 1788

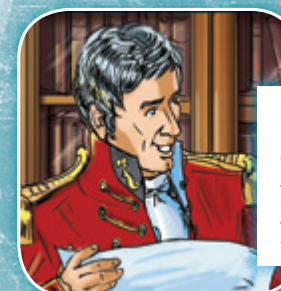
European settlement of New South Wales begins with the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney.

### 1792–1797

Freed convict John Wilson lives with Indigenous people, and with them crosses the Blue Mountains as far as Hartley.

### 1798

John Price's expedition, with convict John Wilson as guide, explores south-west as far as Towrang near Goulburn.



### December 1809

Governor Lachlan Macquarie arrives in New South Wales.

### 20 November 1813–8 January 1814

Government surveyor George Evans follows Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's route and then continues over the Great Dividing Range onto the western plains as far as the site of Bathurst.





# What do you think?

The crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813 opened up the western plains to European settlers. This raises important questions about land ownership and the rights of the Wiradjuri people who lived there then and now. Try the following activities to test your own ideas about this important subject.

## Who was right?

European settlers believed that they had a right to occupy any land they found. However, the Wiradjuri people believed that the settlers had stolen their land. Read the following opinions and have a discussion about who you think is right.

### The European settlers

The settlers were **pioneers** in a harsh, empty land. Unlike the **Indigenous people**, they cleared the bush for farms so they could grow food for all Australians. It was because of the settlers' work improving the land that Australia became the wealthy country it is today.

### The Wiradjuri people

The Wiradjuri people had lived in the western plains for thousands of years. They understood the land and, unlike Europeans, could live on it without destroying it. The European settlers had no right to steal the Wiradjuri people's land and destroy their way of life.



## What would you do?

The following events actually occurred during and after the crossing of the Blue Mountains. Read each scene, then choose what you would do.

### Scene 1

You are William Charles Wentworth. During your trek over the mountains with Blaxland and Lawson, you come across an Indigenous man collecting food. He does not notice you as you come up behind him. Would you ...

- A** shoot him so he won't attack you
- B** scare him away on purpose
- C** try to make friends with him?

### Scene 2

You are William Cox, in charge of building the road over the Blue Mountains. You have 28 **convict** workers who must build the road in record time. Would you ...

- A** treat the convicts with kindness so they will work well
- B** threaten to stop the convicts' food rations if they don't work hard enough
- C** order the guards to flog any convict who is slack?

### Scene 3

You are **Governor** Macquarie on your journey over the new road across the Blue Mountains. One of your men has gone with the Indigenous people to their camp and not returned. You send a search party but they find no trace of the man. You suspect he has been murdered. Would you ...

- A** order all Indigenous people in the district to be rounded up and sent away
- B** do nothing as you believe the man had only himself to blame
- C** send a squad of soldiers to the camp to kill the Indigenous people?

Once you have chosen what you would do in each scene, find out what actually happened on page 31.



# Find out more

## Websites

[http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_collections/history\\_nation/exploration/blue\\_mountains/index.html](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/exploration/blue_mountains/index.html)

This extensive website from the State Library of New South Wales includes the original journals of Wentworth and Lawson, an interactive map of their journey and John Lewin's original paintings of Macquarie's journey over the new road.

[http://www.infobluemountains.net.au/history/the\\_way.htm](http://www.infobluemountains.net.au/history/the_way.htm)

This site includes extensive information on pre-1813 attempts to cross the Blue Mountains, as well as transcripts of original documents by **Governor Macquarie** and others.

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200411h.html>

This is the complete text of Blaxland's journal of his journey across the Blue Mountains, written in 1823.

## Places to visit

### The Blue Mountains, New South Wales

The modern highway and the railway over the Blue Mountains mostly follow Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's 1813 **route**. Many lookouts and walking trails throughout the mountains allow visitors to follow their route. Much of the country that the **explorers** saw remains unchanged today, and traces of Cox's road can also be seen.

### Great Western Highway, Glenbrook, New South Wales

The monument at this site commemorates Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's **expedition**. This is near the site where the men found water on 12 May 1813.

### The Blue Mountains Heritage Centre, Blackheath, New South Wales

The centre provides information and an interactive educational display, and organises heritage walks.

The Blue Mountains Heritage Centre,  
Blackheath, NSW





# Glossary



- colony** an area of land that is controlled by a distant country
- convict** someone serving a sentence in jail for committing a crime
- engineer** a person who builds machines or structures
- expedition** a journey of discovery
- explorers** people who travel into little-known regions
- gorges** narrow spaces with tall cliffs on either side
- governor** a person in charge
- grant** give land
- grazing land** grassland where farm animals can feed
- Indigenous peoples** the original peoples of Australia
- livestock** farm animals
- mapped** studied and made a map of
- merino** a breed of sheep with fine wool
- pioneers** the first people to enter or settle a district
- ridges** high edges along a mountain range
- route** a way to a place
- settlement** a place where people live
- surveyor** an expert at mapping land
- World Heritage Site** an area that has been recognised as a place of great importance

## What actually happened in the 'What would you do?' scenes described on page 29:

Scene 1: B. Wentworth and his friends shouted to scare the man away. Before they set out, they had agreed to avoid all contact with **Indigenous people** to prevent anyone from getting hurt.

Scene 2: A. Cox treated the **convicts** with great kindness, giving them fresh meat and vegetables to keep them healthy. When the road was finished, he made sure each convict was rewarded with his freedom.

Scene 3: B. Governor Macquarie did nothing as the man was drunk and had put himself in danger by going with the Indigenous people.



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