





*Stone Buildings, 30th May, 1878.*

SIR,

In obedience to your instructions I have for the last thirteen weeks been engaged in exploring and cutting a track from the Great Bend of the Gordon River to Macquarie Harbour, and have the honor to forward you the following Report:—

I left Hamilton on Monday, the 18th of February, with four men and provisions for four months, and I reached the Florentine River the following day, and formed a depôt at that place, it being impracticable for me to proceed any further with a horse and cart, the river not having been yet bridged, and the track beyond the river covered with large logs and fallen timber. Having formed the depôt, and leaving one man in charge, I started with the others, taking as much provisions as we could carry, and reached the Gordon the same evening (Wednesday, 20th). I then sent back two of the men to carry up the provisions, and started with the other to explore the country to the south west to ascertain if a practicable track could be obtained in that direction. Crossing the Gordon nearer to Macquarie Harbour I followed along the Gordon Plains in a southerly direction; after leaving them I found the country very broken and covered with thick scrub. Ascending a low point of the Thumbs I obtained a good view of the country, and then determined to alter my course to a south-westerly direction, and picked up Gould's track; and found some of the old stakes still standing; but time had so effaced the track that it was impossible to follow it. Crossing the Thumbs I followed along a button-grass plain and camped for the night at Adam's River, rain descending in torrents. I may here state that this plain consists of land of very inferior quality, portions being very wet and boggy.

Leaving Adam's River I followed round the spur of a hill covered with a thick dogwood and pear-tree scrub, and having left this I again came upon open button-grass country and crossed the Boyd River. The land on each side is for a considerable distance very wet and swampy, covered with thick cutting-grass, tea-tree, and bauera scrub. Leaving the Boyd River I followed along another button-grass plain and reached the Wedge River: this river I had some difficulty in crossing owing to the late rains. After finding and felling a suitable tree I reached the other side, and found the country to be of a wet and marshy description, rendered nearly impassable from the thickness of the scrub combined with the overflow of the river completely deluging the surrounding land; on this cheerless spot I camped, night coming on. On the following morning I left the camp and worked my way through a very thick tea-tree and bauera scrub on to the Denison Plains, returning to camp the same evening thoroughly wet through. Finding I could not get a good pack track in this direction, owing to the marshy nature of the land for some considerable distance on each side of the rivers, I determined to return and endeavour to find a track from the Gordon Bend in a westerly direction; and on my way back I followed the Clear Hill Plain to see if I could get a track along the Gordon River. When I reached the river I found it impossible to even walk round, as there are perpendicular cliffs along the edge for some considerable distance; I had, therefore, to return and cross the Thumbs higher up. On reaching the other side I had great difficulty in descending on account of the abrupt declination of the hill.

On the following morning after my return to the Gordon Bend I explored the country for a distance of about four miles, and found a very good route for a track. Having decided on this route, my first object was to find the best position for a bridge: I examined the river on each side of the bend and I find the best position would be at the end of Dawson's Road, the river being narrower here than at any other point, and a reef running out into the stream would form a very good foundation. In a former report I estimated the cost of a bridge at £150, since then I have had an opportunity of seeing the river at a high flood, and I consider the cost would be at least £250, the timber on the east side being very scarce, and the logs would require to be bolted into the rock.

I have also found a very good fording place for summer traffic about half a mile to the north of Dawson's Road, to which I have marked a track connecting it with that road and my track on the opposite side. Near this ford a large tree bridges the river, giving a fair crossing if the stream is

moderately high. I allude to this fact as on my return home I should have been unable to have crossed, trees of that length being very scarce on the west side; even then I was detained three days waiting for the river to fall, and at last crossed with three feet of water over the tree.

During my absence three of the men had been employed carrying out the stores from my depôt at the Florentine River to the Gordon, a distance of twelve miles. To endeavour to remedy this expenditure of time and labour I determined to return to the Florentine and assist in getting all the provisions up a distance of four miles, to enable them to leave the Gordon and return the same day. We succeeded in removing some of the largest logs out of the track, and after carrying a cart across a log over the Florentine we were able to bring our stores up about four miles.

By the 18th of March I had a log-hut built on the west side of the Gordon to prevent my communication being cut off by the rising of the river, and deposited therein my stores. While the men were engaged on that work, I with one man explored the country to find the best continuation of my track, and crossed the Denison Range and succeeded in getting a very fair route; but thinking I might succeed in obtaining a better one by keeping more to the north, I followed along the range to see if it was practicable, but the country proving to be a continuous mass of hills I resolved to adopt my first track. On the range we were overtaken by a heavy fall of sleet and hail, succeeded by a dense fog. Leaving our knapsacks we ascended a higher spur to see if it was possible to get a better view of the country, but the fog becoming more dense we were compelled to return. We descended the hill during a heavy fall of rain, and followed the course of a creek through an almost impenetrable horizontal scrub which so impeded our progress that we did not reach the plain until the following morning, having camped for the night in this scrub with our rugs and clothing wet through.

The creek referred to is one of the principal streams which forms Boyes' River, and is not laid down on the chart. I have shown it on sketch plan forwarded with this Report.

Having exhausted every effort to find a better track than the one referred to in this Report, and shown on plan herewith forwarded, we commenced to blaze the line round a high hill through thick tea-tree and bauera; I then returned to the Gordon and began with the other men clearing, marking, and staking.

The track follows along the Valley of Rasselas for about four miles and crosses the Denison Range at the lowest point, (this range is composed of quartzite and conglomerate). After crossing the range the track follows about a westerly direction up the next open spur and descends through a thick scrub.

Being now about ten miles from our depôt at the Gordon it became necessary to remove our camp to this point. During the time we camped here we were overtaken by a continuous downpour of rain, which considerably increased the labour of carrying up our provisions. Leaving the tent we followed on in a westerly direction for about two miles, crossing the streams which form the Boyes' River. In these streams I found large quantities of iron sand, and on the land adjacent hornblende rock; the track then turns to the north west round a high hill through a thick tea-tree and bauera scrub. After ascending the hill the track bears westerly through a myrtle forest to a river not shown on any charts. This river, in my former Report of the 12th of April, I described as the Denison, but on examining my chart I found it a river not laid down.

From the Boyes to the last-mentioned river we met with great obstacles, and the men were engaged for a considerable time cutting out and removing logs of considerable girth, and by this labour we have opened a track which for years to come will be plainly traceable.

With reference to the river not marked on the chart I may mention that it is one of considerable importance, averaging about a chain and a half wide and passing through a plain of about a thousand acres of medium quality land, that on the west side being naturally drained, the eastern side wet and swampy. This river is formed from small streams issuing out of numerous hills to the north, and like all streams in this locality rises and falls with great rapidity; for during the time we were camped there it suddenly rose in one night bank high, washing away some of our camp articles.

By the 18th of April we had finished cutting out the logs in the track to the river; from that date the weather, which had long been threatening, broke up, and day after day torrents of rain, sleet, and hail descended.

Owing to this heavy weather the work progressed very slowly, myself and men returning night after night wet through and nearly benumbed, nevertheless we cleared and staked on, and although the men worked well and with great perseverance, still I could not help seeing we proceeded slowly with the track. I then determined to make one last trial, and having remained at the tent for a few days we prepared ourselves for the worst and again started on with the track; but the rain and sleet still descended, and I then reluctantly resolved to bring the work to an end. I considered

my position, and first thought of discharging the men and proceeding with one to Macquarie Harbour, so that I would be able to furnish you with a report of the country; but knowing that the Denison and Franklin Rivers were perfectly impassable, I determined to break up the party and return to town, as I considered it would be unjustifiable to remain any longer at the cost of the Government, seeing I was prevented from keeping on with the track on account of the heavy weather.

On the 12th of May a heavy fall of snow came on, and the river having risen and surrounded our camp, rendering the surrounding country perfectly impassable, and having taken full bearings of our position, we started on our return, but had to leave behind one month's provisions.

From this date to the 16th of May we were engaged removing our camp to the Gordon, and then I proceeded with one man to Hamilton to send up my cart with a pair of horses to bring down the camp which the men were packing out to the commencement of the cleared track, and by the 22nd of May all the staff arrived at that township.

In concluding this Report I may lastly add, that I believe the track which I have described and marked out to be a good and serviceable one, and the best and most practicable that it would be possible to obtain. The track has been plainly and distinctly marked out; and should it become requisite to open up communication in the way described, I consider my chart will be most serviceable, and I may add accurate and trustworthy, having fully followed out your instructions.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS FRODSHAM, JUN.

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*