

(No. 77.)



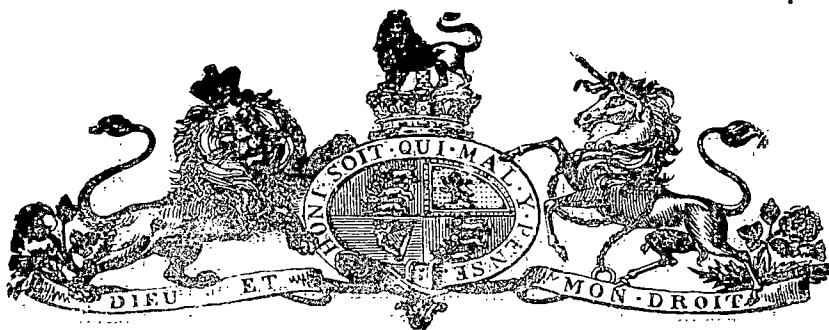
1890.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

EXPLORATION OF FLORENTINE VALLEY :

REPORT UPON MARKING TRACK.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



REPORT upon marking Track to and Exploration of Florentine Valley, and South round Rocky Mountain to Huon.

Stone Buildings, Hobart, 14th March, 1890.

SIR,

On Saturday, 18th January, I had pack-track cut, depôt formed, and provisions taken out to the end of the reserved road in the Russell's Falls, and on Monday, the 20th January, I commenced marking the track to the Florentine Valley in the direction of a low spur bearing N. 65° W. After marking the track through the land recently surveyed, I crossed the main stream of the Russell's Falls, and at a distance of about 10 chains from the river came into barren land covered with button-grass, stunted ti-tree, and bauera. Travelling through this for about two miles from the main stream, I discovered a second branch of the river running north-westerly. After crossing and re-crossing this stream for about two miles I then left it to the west, and passed over several small spurs through a dense horizontal scrub until the dividing range was reached. Before passing over the Range I formed a temporary depôt, and sent four men back to carry up provisions, while myself and another went on marking track through the Range north and north-west to a point about one and a half miles north-west of high point on dividing range. Having formed my last depôt at this place, and having all provisions packed up, I gave Marriott instructions to go to work with two men, marking track west for about two miles and then south, so as to keep well clear of the High Rocky Mountain (as from the observations I had taken on point B shown on plan I found this would be the best course to adopt to get a good track), arranging with him to meet me again at the depôt in about ten days' time so as to take out all provisions along track. I then started with two men marking the track through to the Florentine Valley, on a bearing N. 30° W., to strike Dawson's Road near Gell's Look-out; but after keeping this bearing for about three and a quarter miles I found that I would have to cross and re-cross the Florentine. I therefore, after having crossed the river, altered the bearing to west for about 40 chains (at about 20 chains on this course I discovered a limestone cave with a few stalactites in it), and then N. 30° W., striking Dawson's Road near Gell's Look-out. This road, which was opened and cleared about 12 years ago; is now covered with a dense scrub, and it is only by observing the logs that have been cut out of the track that it is possible to find it. Gell's Look-out is not a hill as shown on plan furnished me, but a long low range running north along the Florentine Valley, Dawson's Road to the Gordon crossing the southern side; again on the south another low range comes in, running south, and dividing the waters of the Gordon from the Florentine. After getting my camp up on Dawson's Road, near stream, I ran a line parallel with the road, and then lines east and west across the valley. When these lines were marked, I proceeded along the road to bridge over Florentine, and marked lines east, south, and south-west crossing Dawson's Road, and returned to camp. Moving my camp again back along the track, I again ran line east and west, and then returned to my depôt No. 2, to meet Marriott and men.

Description of Land passed over between Russell's Falls and Florentine Valley.

Between the main stream of Russell's Falls and dividing range there is about 500 acres of good land along the second branch of the river, in small lots of from 25 to 50 acres. The remainder of the land is of the poorest description, covered with button-grass, stunted ti-tree, bauera and horizontal scrubs. Crossing the dividing range I again came into a small patch of good land, covered with gum, tree-ferns, and myrtle. After passing through this the barren land makes covered with button-grass and stunted ti-tree. Leaving the depôt (No. 2) the poor land continues for about 30 chains until a creek is crossed, which seems to divide the good from the poor land. Crossing this creek I came upon some splendid land, covered with gum-top, myrtle, cat-head and tree-ferns. The timber, although very large, is not dense, there being only about 10 or 12 trees to the acre. The gums are very fine trees—clean, straight barrels, running up about 90 to 100 feet without a limb. This good land extends for two miles, when a small patch of poor land

comes in for a distance along track of about 20 or 30 chains. I afterwards found, when running lines east and west through this portion, that the land soon improves again to the west across Florentine to low range, but that the poor land runs for some distance east towards Mount Field West, being covered with horizontal scrub. After passing through this small portion of poor land the country again takes a change for the better, and good land is to be found on to Dawson's Road. The line marked W. also passes through first-class land, covered with gum, myrtle, and tree-ferns for about 70 chains, when a barren spur is crossed, and poor button-grass country again appears. The easterly line crossing the Florentine passes through first-class land, covered with gum, pear-tree, musk, and fern scrub, the country being slightly undulating for about two miles, when it commences to rise sharply to Mount Field West, but the land, although steep, still continues good. Along Dawson's Road the country varies. I passed through small patches of poor gravelly land, covered with stringy-bark and myrtle, and then again into splendid land, covered with swamp-gum and high tree-ferns, to Florentine Bridge. Along the river, near the bridge, I came across the remains of an old garden, the black and red currant trees being 6 and 7 feet high, growing amongst the scrub, and loaded with a heavy crop of fruit. Leaving the bridge and travelling east, south, and south west, I passed over some splendid land, covered with pear-tree, dogwood, musk, and fern scrub, also swamp-gum and silver wattles. One silver wattle I measured as a fair specimen out of many growing about, and it was 6 feet in circumference and about 100 feet high. A swamp-gum growing close by measured 55 feet in circumference about 5 feet above the ground. I noticed a peculiar appearance in one of the creeks near the river on the S.W. course. A number of branches from the trees had fallen into the stream, and had become covered with a thick coating of lime, giving them the appearance of long stones, which I at first mistook them for, until examining them.

Estimated Area of Land.

In the Florentine Valley I have been over and through about 18,000 acres of land, about 12,000 acres out of this being first-class soil, and a large portion of it equal to any of the Crown lands in Tasmania; the balance being land of medium and poor quality. On my return to Depot No. 2 I took the opportunity of again ascending the high hill and also the low saddle to west of my track, and although I found that where my track crosses and the other saddle were about the same height, yet the one marked B will be the best to take a line of road through, as the hill does not rise so abrupt on the north and south sides, thus enabling an easier ascending and descending grade to be obtained. This is the only difficult part on the whole route; and if this spur is crossed, as shown on sketch plan, a first-class road can be obtained from the Russell's Falls to the Florentine Valley; but until some means of communication are established to enable selectors to reach a market, this splendid lot of land will remain as it has in the past. Before concluding this portion of my report I would suggest that a line be marked, either east from the end of where I have marked the line near the Florentine Bridge to Sassafras Creek, or else from Sassafras Creek to Florentine Bridge, as I believe a large area of first-class land will be found in this locality; and as Ellendale is now becoming a large settlement it will enable selectors to come out and see the country and select the portions nearest to that town. My reason for believing that a considerable extent of good land will be found is that, upon marking the track east from Florentine when I altered my course, the land was still of first-class quality, and seemed to extend for a great distance.

Track West and South round High Rocky to Weld River and Huon.

Returning to my last Depot, No. 2, I met Marriott and two men, and after sending the latter out with provisions along track, I ascended with Marriott the high hill in this locality to take further bearings. Upon reaching the top, 2790 feet above Glenora by aneroid, I found that Marriott had made a slight mistake in the track by keeping too much to the east of south and thereby getting into the steep spurs of the High Rocky. I afterwards had to alter this portion, and succeeded in getting a fair track to the dividing range between Florentine and Weld River. Leaving the Depot, No. 2, the track passes through poor land covered with button-grass, stunted ti-tree, and peppermint for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles until the Florentine is reached. The track then runs south to west along main stream of Florentine and across a branch of the river through land of medium quality, covered with myrtle and ferns for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. From this point I altered track to a general bearing of south, going along a barren button-grass and ti-tree spur for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, the land falling on the east and west. Coming off this spur I came along a steep bank to a creek; the land on both sides of this creek for some distance was covered with thick ti-tree, bauera, and cutting-grass. From this point to the dividing range I crossed several creeks and low spurs, the creeks and spurs being heavily timbered, but the remainder of the country being button-grass, stunted ti-tree, and bauera to the dividing range. I fired the whole of this country, which saved us afterwards a considerable amount of time in marking tracks. Upon reaching dividing range I had a splendid view of surrounding country, and found that it was very rough and broken; but, taking what appeared to me the best course, I started on a bearing of S. 57° E. to reach the lowest point of a high spur near the Weld River, crossing at first through open button-grass country, and then across several creeks and along steep spurs for about six miles, until a large stream was reached about a chain wide. This stream is one of the main branches of the Weld River, and takes its rise near the High Rocky. I believe that I crossed it at a short distance from where it joins the other branch coming round Mount Anne.

Between the dividing range and this stream I passed through some of the worst horizontal scrubs I have ever been in, being quite as bad as any of the worst scrubs on the West Coast. After crossing stream I altered my course to S. 45 E., ascending a high spur, and, descending the other side, I crossed what is shown on charts as the main stream of the Weld River. My provisions were now very short—consisting of tea, biscuits, a small quantity of flour, and about 7lbs. of oatmeal—but I determined to try and mark the track through down the Weld to the Huon. After crossing and re-crossing the river with track through cutting-grass and bauera, and then through myrtle, stringy-bark, and laurel fern for a distance of about a mile and a quarter, I found that the spurs of the hills came in very steep, and covered with a dense horizontal scrub, and that as it would take, from the nature of the country, at least a month to mark a track, I started down the stream without doing so; and on Sunday, noticing a high button-grass hill to the north east, I determined to ascend it to fix my position and decide which was the best way out of the difficulty. Upon reaching this hill I found I had two courses open—either to return along this high button-grass hill towards High Rocky, or else through to the track marked near Mount Anne. I chose to adopt the latter course as more in accordance with my instructions, and noticing some burnt ground about six miles off, near Mount Anne, and believing this to be near the track, I determined to strike for it, returning to the camp the same evening. I started next morning and marked a track through, crossing first a high spur, and then across a small stream to another large branch of the Weld River. This stream is subject to very high floods; it is about 120 links wide, and covered with flood timber; a small patch of first-class land about five chains wide on each side, but flooded in winter. After leaving this stream we again passed through poor land across another myrtle hill to a large creek running into the river. Crossing this creek, I had another very steep spur to ascend, and then reached the marked track at the 9m. 20ch. peg from the Huon River.

I regret that on account of very wet weather I was unable to fix the position of this track; but as we were very short of provisions, having been on biscuits and tea for some time, I could not possibly wait for finer weather. This track to the Huon River is a well cut one, but it is not well marked on the open button-grass, it passes over principally very poor steep land of no value, a large portion of it being button-grass country. Before it is possible to give a decided opinion as to the practicability of getting a good road from the Huon to the Florentine, the country will require to be further examined; but from what I have seen, it would be a most expensive undertaking, necessitating either very deep cuttings round the steep spurs, or else crossing and re-crossing the Weld River. The country between the Florentine divide and Weld River is of the poorest description, but, from what I could see of the Weld River further south east, I believe some good land will be found. The plan forwarded herewith shows heights taken above Glenora; most of them have been checked by a second reading. The only portion which has not, is after passing the dividing range towards the Weld. The track has been well blazed, and when in open country high pegs have been erected with cross-pieces to attract attention. Notice-boards have also been put up, giving bearings of track and estimated distance to fixed point.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS FRODSHAM, *District Surveyor.*

E. A. COUNSEL, *Esq., Deputy Surveyor-General.*