

(No. 21.)



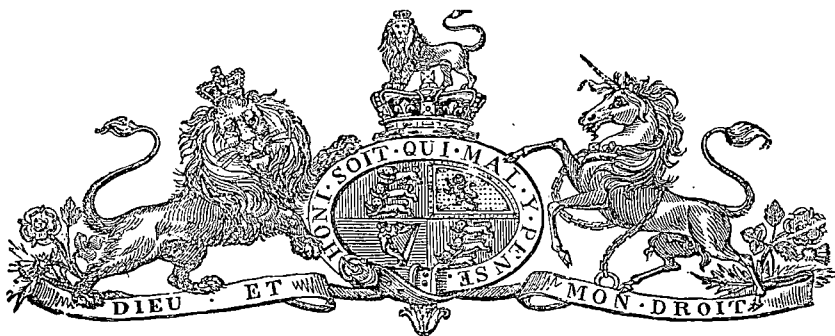
1861.

T A S M A N I A.

**SURVEY OFFICE REPORTS.**

Report of Mr. H. Hellyer, dated Circular Head, 13th March, 1827.  
Official Report of Journies made by J. H. Wedge, Esquire, in the North-  
west portion of Van Diemen's Land, 1828.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Henty, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
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*R E P O R T* of Mr. HENRY HELLYER,\* dated Circular Head,  
13 March, 1827.

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1827.

6th February.

On the 6th February I ascended the Dip, and saw from it a plain about 15 miles south of Table Cape, and a large tract of open grassy country S.E. by E. lying beyond the north side of the Peak, which I considered was the most desirable route for me to take and to endeavour to ascend the Peak; the country to the south being all high forest, tier above tier, and to the west one mass of low forest, so flat that I could see Mount Cameron and Cape Grimm 40 miles off, neither of which are very lofty. After taking minute observations of every feature of the surrounding country, I descended, and took the horses down through a steep forest into an extensive green flat, which I called Dipwood Marsh; and knowing it was all forest beyond for many miles in every direction, and finding here an abundance of fresh young grass and herbage (although very coarse), with grass trees and fern, I left the horses and the two prisoners,† who were already knocked up, and started for the open country beyond the Peak with two intelligent active men‡ used to the bush, each of us carrying a gun, a knapsack containing a large blanket, and a fortnight's provision. My strength I found was scarcely equal to it; but I was determined to go as far as possible.

*Dipwood Marsh.*

The country as far as Dipwood Marsh (from Circular Head), is everywhere sandy, and of no utility whatever for the purposes of the Company. It consists of barren, rocky, and heathy hills, with useless stunted trees, heathy swampy plains, and rocky forests. I observed there is a sharp white sand freestone to be had from the Dip, but its carriage would render it almost unavailable: it would, I think, make excellent grindstones and rubbers for scythes, &c. Dipwood Marsh extends from four to five miles in length, and is about half a mile wide. The soil is grey sand mixed with lumps of milky quartz. It appears to be a place much frequented by the Natives, and has been burnt a few months back. We found several kangaroos upon it when we came down.

I left Dipwood Marsh on the 7th February, and had a most fatiguing march for several days through a thick dark forest and a succession of woody mountains; and, although the men climbed trees upon every top where it was likely to obtain an observation, we found such a mass of foliage everywhere that no distant object could be seen until the evening of the 11th February, when we were so fortunate as to see the Peak, which then appeared to be a good three days' march from us. I began now to consider we had travelled five days out of the fourteen, and as I could not go near the Peak if I went on for the open plains, I determined to insure, at all events, my ascending the Peak.

7th February.

11th February.

On the morning of the 12th February, having altered my course from S.E. by E. to S.E. by S.½E., I found the travelling much the same all that day; but on the 13th February, we saw an emu track down the side of a hill, which assured us we were getting into a better country: and about noon we suddenly came upon

12th February.

15th February.

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\* A Surveyor in the employ of the Van Diemen's Land Company.

† Wells and Higginson.

‡ Isaac Cutts and Richard Frederick.

1827.

*Green Forest* (on the  
Map.)  
*Emu River.*

grassy hills, the extent of which we had then no idea of. The change was quite reviving. The peak was some miles before us. We went over these hills and passed through a considerable tract of myrtle forest similar to our last six days' travelling, and came to the widest and deepest river we had seen since leaving Circular Head. We crossed over on a fallen tree bridge twenty feet above the water. Its course here is from S.W. and going E.N.E. I have since named it Emu River. I expected this river skirted the Peak, and we afterwards found seven distinct tiers of hilly forest before we arrived at the base of the principal eminence.

On the night of the 13th we rested on the fourth hill of ascent.

14th February.

*St. Valentine's  
Peak.*

On the 14th February the day was very unfavourable, being wet and gloomy; but we could not wait for the weather, and about 2 o'clock we reached the top of the north pyramid of rock, the highest part being yet far above us, and in the clouds. Seeing the weather thicken to windward, and fearing the scene around me would soon be eclipsed, I hastened to take a sketch of it; but the clouds descended and it poured with rain, so that we could not see each other. There was such a thick mist, and it rushed passed us so furiously, we were obliged to take shelter in a nook of the rocks, and wrap ourselves up in blankets, it was so perishing cold. I wanted to wait to see if it would blow over. We waited till 5 o'clock, and finding there was no chance of its clearing, we descended; and I determined on going up again the next day. I had just sufficient time to look round and see there was a fine open country to the N.E. and S.W. We found it very difficult to get down, being obliged to hold on to jutting perpendicular rocks and the small twigs which grew between them; and finding water just before dark, we stood against some trees before a large fire. The rain continued a great part of the night.

The country from Dipwood Marsh to the Peak is not by any means barren. After the first three miles from the Marsh it changes from a hungry sandy soil to a deep rich loam; and there is not a stone to be seen except at the bottom of brooks, which are mostly in deep ravines and gullies which intersect and drain the forest in all directions. The surface soil is actually rank with constantly decaying vegetable matter; its scent is quite disagreeable, and the air in these dense forests is putrid and oppressive,\* and swarms with mosquitos and large stinging flies the size of English bees. Daylight is completely shut out by masses of foliage impervious to the rays of the sun. Myrtle is the principal timber throughout this district: its appearance, as to a rough bark and thick foliage, very much resembles the elm; but there are no elms equal to these gigantic trees, being in general from one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet in height, and from thirty to forty feet in circumference. The wood is very like cedar. Sassafras is found here in great abundance, and of fine growth; and on many of the higher tiers are celery-topped pine and black wattle of considerable size. Fern trees twenty feet in height, laurel-fern and feather-fern are every where to be found, except in the thickest scrubs. The rivers and brooks are so numerous, we were scarcely half an hour during any day without crossing one or the other. Dead logs and branches impeded us at every step, and we were continually meeting with large tracts of dense thicket from thirty to forty feet high, so closely interwoven and matted together as to be impenetrable below; and we were often obliged to be walking upon these never-dry slippery branches, covered with moss, as much as twenty feet above the ground, which being in many instances rotten, occasioned us many awkward falls and tore our clothes to rags. We were not able to force our way on five hundred yards in an hour in some of these horrid scrubs. I was glad I did not attempt to bring the horses on any further. The grassy tract of country which we had crossed north of the Emu River appears to extend many miles to the south west, and unites with the large open country to the north east. It is covered with luxurious grass, and there are a few large stringy bark trees on the top of the ridge which runs down the centre of it.

The hilly forest, from the Emu River to the base of the Peak, is of the same description as all the other myrtle forest we have traversed, except that the soil here is rather rocky, and there are some stringy barks on these hills.

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\* Mr. Hellyer, though a most reliable narrator, gives us rather an overdose here of the putridity and disagreeable scents of these forests, which are not at all generally observable in them. In a day's march through them, something of the sort may be observed once or twice; but these effluvia are always confined to very small areas; were it otherwise there would be no travelling through them. In a recent trip from Franklin on Huon to the Arve, (18 miles) I was twice half stifled by the exhalations arising from a decaying vegetation; but it did not last for 20 yards, and I do not think it ever does.—J. E. C.

The Peak is composed of pudding stone (like several other of the principal mountains which I have examined), and is in shape, when viewed on the east or west side, like a three-masted ship in full sail; and when observed from the north or south, it is as sharp as any peak can well be imagined, the sides being nearly perpendicular. Its base extends six miles in length and about three miles in width. There is a Companion Hill\* on the north-west side, which is of considerable size, and very lofty, but woody to the top.

1827.

The morning of the 15th February was fortunately very clear and serene; there was not a cloud to be seen. We again toiled up the mountain with our loads, not knowing which way it would be most desirable to go on. After getting to the top, we were several hours struggling through thick scrub and wire-weed, and climbing over immense masses of rock. The scrub was dripping wet from the heavy rain which had fallen in the night. We at length arrived upon the very highest point, three thousand feet above the level of the sea. I found the stump of a withered box-tree, and cut upon it "St. Valentine's Peak," the date of my ascent, &c., which I drove into the cleft of the rocks at the top, with its roots in the air. The men rolled off some huge blocks of rock, which in their fall appeared to smoke from the splinters which flew off, as they struck and rebounded from one massive projection down to another. I had now to consider which way I should proceed on my return to see as much as possible of the good country I had discovered from the Peak; and as that portion lying to the north east might be more easily examined from the coast, I descended at the south end, after collecting specimens of the rock, in doing which I broke off several lumps sparkling with crystals and brought them away, although I had a long distance to carry them in my knapsack. We alighted in the evening upon an open spot which had caught my observation from the top. I found it consisted of grassy hills and knolls, and resembled a neglected old park—a thousand or fifteen hundred acres in a patch—without a tree, except a few clumps of blackwood. Dead trees lay rotting where they had fallen. Grass run to seed, the tops of which appeared at this season nearly white, made it very conspicuous when viewed from a distance. Here we saw kangaroos in abundance, and tracks of them in all directions. A brook runs across the district from the Peak in a south-east direction, which I think is very likely to be the source of the Leven river. The banks of the brook are green with trefoil. We found here as good mushrooms as any I have tasted in England. As I had only time to make one straight line through part of the open country, and endeavor to find my way through the mountains of forest which divided me from the horses, I determined, from what I had observed above, to go from this west south west, and see a fine large open tract about 10 miles off. We went on in an excellent country consisting of gently-rising, dry, grassy hills, divided from each other by brooks, the sides of which are adorned with blackwood and other elegant trees and shrubs; and on the hills are a few tall peppermints and stringy barks. About sunset, having routed some emus, we fired at them without impeding their progress; and having shot two kangaroos we halted for the night. As soon as we had made a fire, the flames caught the grass, and it spread to a great extent, quite illuminating the atmosphere until rain came on and by degrees extinguished it.

15th February.

On the 16th February we proceeded W.S.W., and after walking about half a mile, crossed the Emu River, here running N.N.W.; saw several wattle-birds, went over many considerable hills burnt by the natives, found a lot of native huts, and saw several trees from which bark had been taken to cover them; soon after which we came down to a noble river, with a strong current gliding smoothly along from S. to N. I called it the Don† by way of distinction. It is fifty yards wide, and took us to our middle in the shallowest place we could find. On its banks are complete sloping shrubberies. This river appears to rise from eight to ten feet in time of flood. At some short distance from the Don we ascended the most magnificent grass hill I have seen in this country, consisting of several level terraces, as if laid out by art, and crowned with a straight row of stately peppermint trees, beyond which there is not a tree for four miles along the grassy hills. I had now arrived at the grand opening seen from the Peak beyond the Brown Forest. Here the natives had been burning large tracts of grass. The morning being cloudy and wet, I was just able to discern, through the mist, that the Peak bore from hence E.N.E.: the top was in the clouds. I congratulated myself upon having had so fine a day yesterday, or I should have had a very imperfect idea of the extent of good country here. The plains, or rather hills,

16th February.

*Hellyer River*  
discovered.

\* In the Van Diemen's Land Company's map (published to illustrate their Surveyor's Journals) this Hill is called "Companion Hill."—J. E. C.

† This is the "Hellyer" of the present day.—J. E. C.

1827.

*Surrey Hills*  
discovered.

from the south foot of the Peak, I call, from their great extent and importance, the Surrey Hills, which name I here cut upon a large conspicuous tree, the country being about the same distance inland as that county in England. They resemble English enclosures in many respects, being bounded by brooks between each, with belts of beautiful shrubs in every vale, including blue-leaf tea-tree, box, sassafras, blackwood, woodpear, birch, sloe-leaf, musk-holly, celery-top pine, and myrtle. The whole country here is grassy. The grasses in the line of our walk are principally Timothy, fox-tail, and single kangaroo. The surface soil is dark vegetable mould, upon a rich brown open loam of various depths, and light in colour according to its depth; but on the tops of the hills there are rocks above the surface in several instances, and from what I could observe where trees had fallen torn up by the roots, the substratum is everywhere gravelly, which appears to render these hills perfectly dry. All the brooks have hard pebbly bottoms, free from mud, and the water is clear as crystal. The timber found on these hills is in general of fine growth, very tall and straight: some of it would measure more than 100 feet to the lowest branch. The trees are, in many places, 100 yards apart. They are principally peppermint and stringy bark, which having lately made their summer shoots, the whole country where they are appeared from the Peak of a lively brownish hue, by which I was enabled to distinguish the large tract of country which I have marked Brown Forest on the map; and from what I have seen from the Brown Forest thus far, I do not think it at all too thickly timbered to afford a little shade from the summer heat.\* It will not in general average ten trees on an acre. There are many open plains of several square miles without a single tree. The kangaroo stood gazing at us like fawns, and in some instances came bounding towards us; and if we shouted, they ran like a flock of sheep. We never saw so many together. The plains or hills to the north of the Peak, being nearer the coast, I called the Hampshire Hills. They appear even more park-like than the Surrey Hills, and are handsomely clumped with trees. We continued travelling in the Brown Forest until the morning of the 18th February: we found it the same kind of grassy country which I have before described all the way from the Peak. Our course in the Brown Forest has been nearly twenty miles; and as far as we were enabled to view it on both sides as we came along, there arose grassy hills out of number, which it was delightful to look round upon, from one higher than the rest that commanded such a prospect, which continually occurred in the course of our walk.

*Hampshire Hills*  
discovered.

18th February.

We now approached the high forest tier of woody mountains, near which we came upon a marshy country, and saw several snipe. We found here two native huts, and marks of many fire-places in the neighbourhood, as if the spot had been lately occupied by a large body of natives. In one of the huts I saw a drawing of the moon, done in charcoal, upon the inside of one of the slabs of bark which formed the hut; and regarding it as an evidence of there being artists among them, I cut out the piece and placed it carefully between two other pieces of bark in my knapsack. I sketched two figures of the moon with charcoal on the bark of the hut, and put the date of my visit. I was now travelling N.W. by N. towards the Dip Mountain, until I might be able to get an observation to correct my course; and having ascended the high forest tier, we hoped to obtain a bearing that would guide us in finding the nearest way to the horses; but there was no chance of it. Nothing could be seen but tops of trees upon the next highest tier. We descended, and on the 19th February came down through a very thick forest to the bend of a large deep and rapid river larger than the Don, and at this place, more than 10 feet deep, close to the bank. It was here coming from S.S.E. and going W. by S., we did not therefore suppose we should see any more of it. We pursued our way along a considerable tract of low forest, which had every appearance of being inundated in the rainy season, beyond which we again found this large river running N.E. We were obliged now to wade through it at the best fording place we could find, and as it was in some places so deep and dangerous we could scarcely withstand the current, but by holding on to poles we all got safe through it; and having wrung our clothes, we went on over several steep hills of forest and scrub, and about sunset had arrived on the top of a very high forest tier. The men climbed the trees as usual, and could see nothing but tops of trees upon the next highest tier, which was a great disappointment to me.

19th February.  
*Arthur River*  
discovered.

20th February.

On the 20th February we came down from high mountains of dark forest, and went over many very steep hills, without at all varying the dismal scene: but

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\* The carelessness or obscurity of expression observable here occurs in the original.—J. E. C.

1827.

suddenly it changed for a few minutes, we having come down upon an excellent level spot of high fern and stringy-bark; a capital soil for the plough, and easily cleared. Its extent might be 100 acres. It appeared to be a long flat terrace off the side of the mountain. Here we again heard the great river just below and found it running west. We had no alternative but to find our way over; and it here appeared so much larger, we all thought it had united with the Don since our first crossing it. We were, however, lucky in finding here a much better ford, with an island of gravel to rest upon; and the current, being wider, was not so powerful as at our former crossing place. This spot would suit for a ford and depôt, if ever a road should be made in this direction; which, I think, is most improbable, from the lofty mountains surrounding it. I have taken the liberty of styling this large river the ARTHUR, in compliment to His Excellency the present Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, it being one of the principal rivers in the Island. After travelling N.N.W. over several high mountains of forest, we at last obtained a view of the Blue Peak Range, by which we knew we were many days journey from the horses, and too much to the west. We now changed our course to N.N.E. We had no provisions left except flour, which, mixed with water only, (we having boiled our sugar bag) is poor living to take such violent bodily exercise upon.

On the 21st February, about noon, we came down upon the Arthur again, 21st February. running east; but seeing it turned to the north, we went round to the bend, and from it ascended a very high and steep bank in a N.N.E. direction, and came up to the foot of a long line of perpendicular cliffs of slate from two hundred to three hundred feet high; which, upon examination, proved to be slate of the best quality, splitting into parallel thicknesses, to the size of Ladies, Countesses, or Duchesses, and lying in regular horizontal strata from end to end. I brought away specimens, and engraved upon a large slab standing under the cliff:—  
 “Whoever is found stealing slate from this Quarry will be dealt with according to law,” with the date below it. If the Arthur should be found navigable for barges from hence to the coast, this discovery, so near the river, might be valuable. These cliffs appear to extend for miles, and would supply all the world in slates. We continued travelling in the dreary forest, over high mountains of slate, with an abundance of capital whetstone in every deep ravine, a great part of the 22nd February, and were obliged to make our way, 22nd February. for many miles, along the top of a highly dangerous serpentine, stony and rocky ridge, so narrow at top that a single large tree would often occupy the whole width of it; and we were obliged to creep along its almost perpendicular sides to get past such a tree. It resembled the top of a wall of a large castle, and on either side below us was a rocky ravine many hundred yards deep. After getting over several high hills of forest, we came down to a large river, which we knew could be no other than the Don; and now discovered that it had not joined the Arthur, as we had reason to suppose. It here ran west, in a deep valley of rugged rocks, among mountains of rocky forest. Having, with difficulty, waded through it, about three hundred yards above a noble cascade, where the whole body of water fell twenty feet perpendicular with an astounding noise: we went up one of the loftiest forest tiers we had yet encountered, which we found to be perfectly level on the top, and thickly covered with an almost impenetrable espalier grown scrub, that a dog could not get through below. We persevered in getting over it till dusk. It had poured with rain nearly the whole day. The water streamed from our finger ends. We were obliged to go on or starve. This compulsory moving on, past our strength, and the anxiety we all felt as to our ever being able to get back to tell what we had seen, rendered our situation, at this moment, by no means enviable. The men began to consider it hopeless, and said they should never be heard of any more, like the seven soldiers that went from Macquarie Harbour after bushrangers\*; but if we had only strength left to crawl on at all, I told them, I was sure we should get out. We could not be far wrong in our course; and, at all events, could make the sea coast, even if we should continue to be so buried in dark forest as not to be able to get another observation.

On the 23rd February we toiled, as usual, over tremendous mountains of forest, 23rd February. and had some thoughts of throwing away every thing we carried, being all exhausted with fatigue and want of food.

On the 24th February we came to the brink of a frightful precipice, and saw 24th February. a river below, running N.E. We went along it some distance, and found a place to

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\* It is presumed that the remains of these men were found in 1837, at Skullbone Plains, about 10 miles north of Marlborough.

1827.

25th February.

descend, where we crossed the river, and knew it must be the same we had crossed going to the Peak, which runs into the sea at Table Cape. From a tree on a high hill further on we saw the sea and Table Cape. We immediately altered our course to N.W., and on the 25th February, after surmounting several steep and lofty ridges of forest, we caught sight of the Dip, only five miles from us, bearing W.S.W. We became a new set of men in a moment. We struggled hard to get out of the forest as quickly as possible, knowing now exactly the ground we had to go upon. We soon arrived at the heathy hills surrounding Dipwood Marsh; and, when within a mile of the spot where we had left the men and horses, we fired a signal, and as we walked briskly on we had the satisfaction of hearing a report in answer to it, which I was rejoiced at, as we could not tell whether the men had not been murdered by the natives during our nineteen days' absence. As we descended the hill we were grieved to see two of the horses lying dead. The men came to meet us. They were glad to see us come back, having given up all hopes of it, and were going to leave the place the next day, and endeavour to make their way back to Circular Head. They said the horses had fallen off every day since they were brought here. One of them died six days after I left; the other died the day before I returned; the third horse was nearly dead. I found the poor animal very weak, and scarcely able to eat a piece of bread. I had some warm gruel made and poured down his throat, and blankets wrapped round him; the other two appeared to have died of indigestion.

26th February.

On the following day, I had the pack saddles, and several other articles we could not carry, planted, to be sent for at some future opportunity. We were all much in need of a day's rest. The two men, Wells and Higginson, had taken great care of everything, and deserve encouragement. They did not know what to do for the horses. I had left the two kangaroo dogs with them, thinking they would be starved in the forest, or I should be obliged to give them part of our provisions, which would prevent our going as far as we otherwise might. The dogs had caught them three kangaroos and two badgers or wornbacks. They had not heard or seen anything of the Natives. I had now an opportunity of putting on clean linen, which I had not been able to do for three weeks (during such profuse perspiration), or to have any of my clothes off, except to wring them out. I was anxious to get the remaining horse within reach of better food; and on the 27th February we quitted Dipwood Marsh for Circular Head.

27th February.

The country through which we had been travelling the last seven days—from Surrey Hills to Dipwood Marsh—was much more difficult to get through than that by which we went to the Peak, the mountains being considerably higher, the ravines much deeper, with bold rocky sides and giddy precipices requiring the utmost caution not to descend too far to be unable to reascend, which we were often obliged to do, and toil again to find a more practicable declivity along the mountain side, after getting a considerable distance down, which was very harassing, and seemed often to render our return hopeless. To add to our difficulties, we had no provisions left for the last four days, except a little flour, of which we could only allow ourselves about a pint a day stirred in hot water; and we had only enough left for one more meal when we returned to the horses. We determined, however, to persevere to the utmost to extricate ourselves. The weather, too, had become very unfavorable since leaving the Peak. The timber in this district I found to be principally myrtle, sassafras, and stinkwood; and on a mountain W. of the Arthur I saw several pepper trees, and procured the berries, bark, and root, which are all very biting to the tongue. Large roots of closely-matted scrub, with cutting-grass, very much impeded our progress. Fern trees and fern occupy the more open spaces under the dark spreading branches of the large forest trees. A great number of fine stringy barks are here to be met with where the soil is dry; but the principal part of this extensive country is as completely overshadowed with enormous myrtle as that through which I went to the Peak. A great proportion of the soil here is mixed with slate and rock; but there are many cultivatable tracts of great extent, with a rich loam of considerable depth. Creeks and cascades are to be found in every gully, up to the very summits of the mountains.

When we arrived with the only remaining horse upon a heathy hill on the west side of the Dip, the day being fine and the heath dry, we set it on fire; and it raged so furiously we were obliged to hurry out of its way, and were in danger of getting burnt and losing the horse, from his having fallen down, and being unable to go on; and it required the strength of us all to remove him out of the way. I expected, by making a fire here, the smoke might be seen at Circular Head, and it would be known that the party who had gone in that direction were returning, as the month for which I was provisioned was now expired. We retraced our former

steps to the mouth of the Detention River in 4 days, and made a signal of 3 large fires on the shore, as agreed, for a boat. The next morning, March the 3rd, seeing no boat coming, we proceeded round the shore; and in going along, my attention was attracted by some curious appearances of metal among the rocks, where I broke off some grains resembling copper, under a kind of old metal sheathing, which covered great part of the surface of the rocks; and in stagnant water near I picked up shells dyed blueish, and observed a greasy scum upon the surface of the water. I am of opinion there must be a large proportion of copper in it, and send the best specimens I could procure. These rocks extend about two miles along the shore, and considerably inland near Crayfish River.

1827.  
3rd March.

The following day, March the 4th, we arrived with the horse near to Circular Head, to which place I went forward and reported to Mr. Adey the propitious result of the journey, and the loss of the two horses.

4th March.

We saw no natives, but several huts, and marks of them. We picked up green boughs by the embers of their fires that had not been gathered two days: we supposed they were not far off, and might have used the boughs for mosquito fans. We saw several trees with steps cut in the bark; and, at twenty miles from the sea, picked up the shells and claws of very large lobsters\* and crayfish which they had roasted. When the heath was set on fire, I caught one of those curious insects, the native-straw; it is, I apprehend, a nondescript. The only creatures inhabiting these large forests appeared to be opossums and bandicoot-rats, and, I suppose, tigers, or native dogs as they are called; as we often heard the cracking of sticks by some heavy creature after dark as we lay, like mummies, rolled up in blankets to keep off the mosquitos, by our fire-side upon our bed of fern leaves. This, and the owl's doleful cry of "more pork," and the screaming of opossums, were the only disturbances we experienced during the night. Parrots, far above our reach, were chattering all day; and when they made an unusually loud noise, it was occasioned by the eagle-hawk pouncing upon them for his prey. We also occasionally heard the trumpeter, or black magpie, and black cockatoos in large mobs, but they kept so much aloft that we were only able to shoot one of them and one parrot during the whole journey; and one of the men shot a "more-pork."

I cannot conclude the few particulars I have been enabled to give of my late walk in the bush, without acknowledging how much I am indebted to the unwearied exertions of Richard Frederick and Isaac Cutts, the two free men you had appointed to attend me. But for their assistance, it would have been, from the nature of the country, quite impossible that I could have penetrated so far as to see that part which is so desirable as a sheep country; the extent of which I have endeavoured to convey an idea of in my map by giving it a yellow wash. I beg therefore to recommend them most particularly to your future consideration, as well as the privations they have endured, and the losses they have sustained in their clothes and several articles belonging to themselves. I cannot omit to state the great care taken by Frederick to save the remaining horse, as I should have been obliged to leave the animal to his fate but for Frederick's constant attention and perseverance in conducting him from Dipwood Marsh to Circular Head.

Had I not taken the pack horses, and conveyed provisions as far as I did, so as to enable us to start from thence, we could not have carried sufficient to have reached that country from this part of the coast. I therefore consider that our being enabled to see so much of the interior during my last journey, was greatly owing to those poor animals, whose lives have been lost in the service.

HENRY HELLYER.

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\* Mr. Hellyer, who was young in the country when he wrote this Report, was probably unaware, at the time, that lobsters (quite as large as the largest crayfish of Hobart Town) abound in the large rivers of the north west. They are very delicate. Their range is, at least, from the Mersey River to the Gordon in Macquarie Harbour.—J. E. C.





*OFFICIAL REPORT of Journeys made by J. H. WEDGE, Esq., Assistant Surveyor, in the North-west portion of Van Diemen's Land, in the early part of the Year 1828.*

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SIR,

I BEG to communicate that, in obedience to the instructions I received from the late Acting Surveyor-General on the 13th December, 1827, directing me to survey, examine, and report upon the North-west District of the Island, for the purpose of locating to the Van Diemen's Land Company a grant of land, I proceeded to that quarter, and have executed the task entrusted to me to the fullest extent practicable, the season being so far advanced; and although I was unable to survey it by sections according to my instructions, as it was not possible, in consequence of the distance and the nature of the country, to provide conveyance for the provisions required for the men employed on the duty; yet, I hope the result of the examination I have made is such as will enable the Local Government to come to a decision. As considerable delay in executing the survey must unavoidably have resulted, had I adhered to the strict letter of my instructions, and the period be unnecessarily protracted before sufficient information could be furnished, by which the limits of the grant could be fixed—a matter not less important to the interests of the Company than to the despatch of the business of the department to which I belong—I was induced to employ Mr. Charles Wedge in the survey of the coast, whilst I was occupied in the examination of the interior; the charts of this part of the Island being so entirely incorrect that it was not possible to describe the routes with any degree of accuracy.

My examination commenced at the Crawfish River, about ten miles east of Circular Head. From the mouth of the river I proceeded in a south direction over a country which, for the first two miles and a half, with the exception of a very narrow strip of indifferent sandy soil free from timber, with a small proportion of herbage, is composed of low rocky rises, rather thinly covered with the gum and stringy-bark trees. A small space of sandy land covered with heath and free from timber now succeeds, and appears to continue nearly of the same character in a direction parallel with the coast to the westward as far as the Black River. From the sandy land to the distance of about seven miles and a half, is a thick forest of stringy bark and gum trees, being broken into a succession of low ridges, between which are numerous runs of water with an easterly direction. The soil is composed of clay, and would make fine tillage land if cleared. In the water-courses the prevailing timber is sassafras and the pencil cedar, with a few blackwood trees. Continuing nearly in the same direction, I crossed the Hook River, and proceeded along a range of hills intercepted with steep gullies for about seven miles, and then crossed the Alarm River. The east side of these hills is destitute of timber, and covered with heath; the soil is wet and sandy, and but little adapted for grazing in its present state. On the west it is thickly covered with gum trees, and the country in that direction, as far as can be seen from the tops of the hills, is one continued forest similar to that I have already described. Extending from the entrance of the River Tret into Bass' Straits to these hills, there are plains free from timber, the soil of which is sandy, producing a coarse grass intermixed with heath, which would maintain a limited quantity of stock if artificial grasses were introduced, and which might be easily accomplished at a very inconsiderable expense by burning off the grass, &c. in the dry season, and sowing the seeds in the early part of autumn. There are, I think, from three to four thousand acres in these plains. It may perhaps be worthy of remark, that whilst travelling through the forest I set fire to the underwood on the margin of the plains, and that it burnt to a considerable extent, and in a great measure cleared the land, and rendering it, with little additional labour and expense in collecting and burning the dead timber, fit for the purposes of grazing.

The Hook and the Alarm are rivers falling into the Tret, the stream of the former being about the size of the Hobart Town Rivulet, the latter rather larger. After crossing the Alarm River near its junction with the Tret, I came to the foot of the hills forming the Dip Range. The direction of these hills is S. 26° W. for about twelve miles, the Alarm River running along their western side dividing them from the forest. On their western aspect they are free from timber, wet and sandy, producing little besides heath. Near the junction of the rivers there is a portion of alluvial land covered with coarse herbage, which might be rendered available. Having arrived at this point I was obliged to return, contrary to my intention, in consequence of the illness of one of my men. I therefore went about three miles up the Tret, which takes its course from a thickly wooded country east of the Dip Range. Having crossed the river, I passed through a narrow tract of thickly wooded land, and came to the bare hills which lead to Rocky Cape. These are of the same character as the western side of the Dip Range. There is a narrow forest between them and the River Tret, and the country to the eastward of them is also thickly wooded to a considerable extent. After arriving at Rocky Cape, I crossed the mouth of the Tret, about which the land is marsh; and from hence to the Black River along the coast there is a narrow strip of land affording pasturage for stock.

My second journey I commenced at East Bay, near Circular Head, taking a direction nearly south for about fifteen miles, touching on the course of the Black River, the direction of which is from the east of south, and from thence to the sea it runs east of north. The whole of this distance is one continued forest, the timber of which, after passing through a narrow vein of tea tree, I found, for the first two or three miles, to consist of gum, stringy bark, pencil cedar, and with fine blackwood trees interspersed. The remainder of the distance the forest is almost entirely composed of the pencil cedar and sassafras, with stringy bark. The fern tree was also in great abundance. My track was along the foot of some low rises for seven or eight miles. I then entered the hills and found them to be a clay soil of good quality. Having changed my direction, I went due west for about ten miles over the same description of country. My course for the next five or six miles was due north, still amongst the hills and forest, and the soil of the same nature as the forest land before mentioned. At the foot of these hills I came on a narrow tract of sandy and heathy plains, bounded on the west by a small rivulet running nearly in a northern direction to its entrance into Duck Bay, and on the east by the forest. Where the rivulet falls into the bay, there is a portion of good land and pasturage for sheep, upon which the Company have removed a flock from Cape Grim, consisting of about 500, and besides these they have a sheep-run at the Hampshire Hills, 18 miles from the coast; but the amount cannot be very great as I was told that their flocks, including both purchased and imported sheep, do not exceed 2000. In the bed of the rivulet and on its banks, and also in the east end of the bay there are a number of mineral springs; the nature of them I had no means of ascertaining, but have left instructions with Mr. Charles Wedge to bring some of the water with him in order that its character may be determined. I started on my third journey from the left bank of the Duck River at its entrance into Duck Bay, and followed up its course (S. 20° W.) for about eight miles; thus far it was a heathy plain, varying in width from half a mile to a mile and a half, being intersected in one place by a forest about a mile wide, and bounded on the east by the Duck River, and on the west by a thick forest of gum and stringy bark trees, with a thick tea tree underwood on its margin. The soil of the forest is silicious and wet, but adapted to agricultural purposes when cleared. After crossing the Duck River, the same description of sandy soil continues for about a mile, when I entered a low flat forest of very fine alluvial soil, which continued for about three miles, a branch of the Duck River running through it and joining it a little above where I crossed. I now passed over a succession of hills, proceeding in a south direction for upwards of sixteen miles. These hills are a continuation of those described in my second journey, and are of the same character both as respects the timber and soil. This part of the country is well watered by the Duck River and the River Montagu, and their numerous branches, running nearly parallel to each other.

From hence I went in a north-west direction to Mount Cameron, on the West Coast, having descended the hills for about a mile, I entered a swampy forest, frequently mid-leg deep in water and mud, so thickly choked up with tea tree and tied together with sharp flag grass, that it required the most persevering exertions to force my way through it. This forest, continued for about six miles, and I was only enabled to travel at the rate of rather more than two miles daily. It is an alluvial soil, and is capable of being drained. Emerging from it, I travelled through a low forest of stringy bark trees and pencil cedar, skirting the swampy forest on my right for about five miles, occasionally passing through veins of tea tree growing very thick. Hence towards the coast the country was rather more hilly, and the soil clay for about five miles. The country to the north is somewhat lower, undulating with low rises, and covered with the Eucalyptus and pencil cedar, and a thick underwood of dogwood. I had now again to encounter a wet forest of tea tree extending about five miles, and terminating at the heathy plains which skirt the West Coast of the Island. The tea tree in this forest is of a different description to that I before noticed, growing into spars of various dimensions, some

of them of considerable girth. After ascending Mount Cameron to get a view of the country, I proceeded in a direction N. 27° E. to Robin's Passage. Mount Cameron and the adjacent land, to a small extent, is a silicious soil of fine quality, covered with very rich and luxuriant pasturage; and the line of coast is bounded by land of the same description to a limited extent. At rather more than five miles from Mount Cameron I crossed the Welcome River, which runs from the east of south and falls into Bass' Straits a few miles east of Cape Grim. The land on the banks is thinly timbered, and the soil is of the same description, but of better quality than the heathy plains which continue all the way to Robin's Passage. These sandy and heathy plains are intersected with numerous rills of water. As deep as I was enabled to examine (three feet and upwards,) the soil is composed entirely of sand; but, from its being so exceedingly wet, it has probably a substratum of clay. The plains are bounded nearly all the way to Robin's Passage by the forest, and are from three to five miles in width.

The description of a considerable portion of the country within my last route remaining unascertained, I started from the coast, about ten miles west from the Duck River, directing my course due south ten or twelve miles. There is an excellent strip of marsh land, of limited extent, immediately adjoining the coast; and from thence, for a mile and a half, there is a heathy plain covered with coarse grass, but of better quality than the generality of the plains of a like description, and by drainage might be made productive. This plain is bounded by forest on the east, south, and west sides. Continuing onward for a mile, I touched on the end of another heathy plain, which extended to the westward, and again entered the forest, and for four miles passed over a succession of low rises and a good clay soil. I now came on a flat tract of forest, principally of tea tree, the soil a fine loam. This description of land continues for about three miles and a half to some bare heathy hills which project into the forest for about three miles or more, a little north of Mount Cameron. These hills are sterile and bad, producing no herbage fit for the depasturing of stock. Taking a direction N. 77° W. along the hills for about two miles and a half, I descended to the banks of the Welcome River, near where it enters the forest, and crossed it: I followed down its course for about five miles. The land is of the same character as where I crossed it before. I again passed the river, to examine more particularly the land on its banks, near its entrance into the bay. I found it to be of rather better quality; and there is excellent marsh land along the west side of the bay and adjoining it, for about a mile and a half. To the west the land is lightly timbered with gum trees, affording pasturage both for sheep and cattle.

A tract of about three miles and a half of wet sandy plain now intersects some rich marshes, which adjoin a fine country for sheep at and about Cape Grim. This country is rather hilly, the soil of a light silicious nature, with a sufficient quantity of gum and honey-suckle trees to afford shelter for the stock from the extremes of the climate: it is covered with luxuriant grass, and is watered by springs.

From Cape Grim to Mount Cameron, along the coast, the land is of the same silicious nature as at Cape Grim, but not quite of so good a quality; but still affording abundance of feed for sheep: it contracts in width as it approximates Mount Cameron. And again, from the Mount to West Point, where the forest which bounds the heathy plains closes in on the coast, the good land becomes very narrow. Immediately at West Point there is a small quantity of land adapted for sheep; but from thence, for about ten miles, the coast is skirted by a tract of bad heathy plains, varying from two to three miles in width; and these again are bounded by a forest. At the termination of the plains, I came to some undulating land, producing very abundant feed for sheep: it is lightly covered with dwarf gum and honey-suckle trees. This fine tract of land continues for about fourteen or fifteen miles down the coast, and is watered by the River Arthur passing through it about two miles from its commencement. This river is of very considerable magnitude, discharging into the sea a greater body of water than the South Esk in the Tamar; and it is near a quarter of a mile in width where I crossed it. It has a bar harbour. About three miles and a half from the river the grassy hills gradually contract in width to their termination, and are divided from the forest by heathy plains of the same quality I have before described.

About six miles further to the southward, the sandy plains suddenly open to a considerable extent eastward; and towards their extremity, at the distance of ten or twelve miles from the coast, there is a high conical mount (Mount Balfour), which I ascended, from whence I had an extensive view of the country. To the north and north east beyond the plains, the country is apparently all forest; to the east and south east, hilly, with valleys lightly timbered. The hilly country to the south east is bounded by a range of mountains whose direction is from east to west, and (I think) connecting with the mountains in the centre of the Island.

About six miles N. 75° E. from the mount I crossed the River Balfour, which comes from the neighborhood of Mount Norfolk, and runs in a direction N. 30° E., and proceeded about two miles further, skirting the forest on my left. In this direction the country gradually

improves, and there are valleys opening to the south east which I have but little doubt terminate in a fine country, and probably are connected with the Surrey Hills.

The wind continuing from the south west, and driving a prodigious surf on the shore, I was unable to get the boat past Cape Grim with my provisions; and, as I did not know the situations of the very few boat-harbours on the coast, I was under the necessity of having them conveyed in knapsacks. Being thus circumstanced, and without an adequate supply of provisions to enable me to push my researches further in this quarter, I determined to penetrate through the forests in a direction N. 60° E., with the view of making the Dip Range. At the distance of two miles and a half from the River Balfour, I crossed the River Leigh, which runs N. 40° W., and entered the forest. Continuing in the same direction (N. 60° E.) for about half a mile, I came to some good open grassy plains, extending to the left towards the Leigh. These plains I consider are to the extent of fifteen hundred acres or more: they are a clay soil. Beyond them, I passed through a forest about three miles in extent, and crossed the River Horton, which divides the forest from some beautiful open plains, extending rather to the east of south towards the Surrey Hills. About five miles to the northward, these plains are watered by the River Frankland running through them; again, about two miles further on, by the River Don, and also by the River Arthur. The latter has a considerable and rapid stream: a narrow forest of stringy-bark trees extends along its course (N. 20° W.) From the entrance into these plains to the Arthur the surface is unequal, rising into easy acclivities, and diversified by clumps of trees, forming the most beautiful park-like scenery. It is clay soil, rather wet, but covered with luxuriant grass. I found the Arthur much swollen by the continued rains, and had great difficulty in crossing it, after being delayed two days. In the neighbourhood of this river, in a direction N. 20° E., I passed over some poor heathy hills for about four miles, and from thence through a hilly forest for about five miles, with a rapid river running through it in a direction S. 40° W. I now ascended the Blue Peaked Hill, which is surrounded by a poor heathy plain. From the top of this hill I had an extensive view of the country, which to east and south east is bare hills, intersected by narrow veins of forest. Descending this hill and passing through a strip of forest, I again came on some narrow plains, about three miles in length, with a coarse grass upon them. Continuing along the plains for two miles I entered the forest, through which runs a river falling into the Hellyer, flowing nearly west. The width of this river and the rush of water was such as to give me little hopes of effecting a passage over it, particularly as the large trees we cut down were washed away by the violence of the current. A delay of five days ensued before we succeeded in crossing it. Instead of continuing towards the Dip Range, I was necessitated to make a direct course for Circular Head, as our provisions were nearly exhausted. With the exception of a narrow wet plain, the country is one continued forest the whole of the way to Circular Head. A range of hills of about two miles in width runs along the course of the river, from which to the plain it is a flat forest. The plain is a wet cold clay soil producing coarse herbage: it is about half a mile in width and and three miles in length. From this plain for about four miles or more, I passed over the east side of the hills described in my second journey. In consequence of the forest I could nowhere get a distinct view, but it appeared lower and hilly in the direction of the Dip Range. I now passed through the forest which skirts the coast in the vicinity of Circular Head. This extensive forest is of the same description, as far as I had an opportunity of ascertaining; the soil being a rich clay, and the timber for the greater part pencil cedar, intermixed with sassafras, and a few stringy bark of the largest dimensions I ever met with, and also a great quantity of fern trees.

The promontory at Circular Head, on which the Company have commenced their operations, contains about four thousand acres; and, with the exception of a small quantity of poor sandy soil surrounding the high land to the south, it is land of first-rate quality, producing the most luxuriant herbage, and adapted for the feeding both of sheep and cattle. In the northern part of the promontory are fine open plains which, in places, are rather wet; in the centre it is somewhat heavily timbered with gum trees; but the land, when cleared, is admirably adapted for the cultivation of grain, turnips, and potatoes. At the establishment, the extent of the improvements is at present confined to the erection of three weather-boarded houses and a number of sod huts for the men, a log building for a store, and a good stable. A substantial barn also is building. Of fencing, notwithstanding the advantage of the situation, little has been done; not more than 200 acres have been enclosed, of which 60 or 70 have been brought into cultivation. At the Hampshire Hills, 18 miles inland, they have a station simply for the shepherds and their flocks in that quarter.

In order to bring under one view the nature and eligibility of the different tracts of land I have explored, and to assist the Government in its decision respecting the limits of the Company's location, it will be necessary to particularize the different descriptions of land in the north-west quarter of the Island. It will appear that it consists of grassy land that may be taken possession of with but little expense—the sandy plains and the forest land. Without

taking into the estimate the small detached spots, it may be calculated that at Circular Head, Cape Grim along the West Coast, and the Grassy Hills, I discovered that there are at least forty thousand acres of land fit for the immediate purposes of grazing, with the probability that there is a considerable extent interspersed among the forest yet undiscovered; and also that a great scope may be brought into tillage at a very moderate outlay of capital. The heathy hills in the neighbourhood of the River Tret, the plains in the vicinity of the Duck River, those along the northern coast, and also the extensive plains dividing the good land from the forest along the western coast, amount altogether to about one hundred thousand acres; and cannot be considered fit for either of the purposes of agricultural or grazing, being of a bad quality and very wet. The forests are extensive, and may be estimated at about seven hundred thousand acres. This land, being heavily timbered, is unpromising in its present state, and such as no private individual could possibly undertake to improve. It is, nevertheless, of excellent quality, and such as the Company's resources might be employed upon, with the prospect of ultimate success. There is no doubt but the expense of clearing such land will be great; but if a judicious system be laid down and acted upon, it will not be so heavy as it would appear to be on a first glance; for, if it be progressively done, the produce of that which is first cleared will contribute largely towards improving the remainder. The timber in these forests, of which the greater proportion is pencil cedar, may prove a valuable article of export, and defray a great portion of the expense of clearing the land. It is therefore my opinion, that this description of land is available for the Company's purposes, for it will undoubtedly, when cleared, be some of the most valuable land in the Island; and, in support of this opinion, I may instance that, in the United States and other New Countries in America, the land with the greatest quantity of timber upon it is chosen as being the most valuable.

As there is a considerable quantity of sandy plains not available, and the expense of reclaiming the forest land will be great, I would beg to recommend that the limits of the grant should be extended, and that the Tret and Alarm Rivers should be appointed as the eastern boundary as far as their courses will answer for that purpose; and from the end of the latter river, a line bearing due south till it intersects an east line to be drawn from the west coast, passing over Mount Balfour for the southern boundary; the contents of which area will amount to near a million of acres. Within these limits, it may be fairly computed that there will, at least, be fifty thousand acres of land fit for the reception of stock, without any considerable outlay being required; which may be considered a very fair proportion in reference to their grant; thus affording an ample scope for the employment of their extensive capital.

In remarking on the rivers which fall into Bass' Straits and along the western coast, I observed that some of them discharge considerable quantities of water; but that they are all bar harbours: and it did not appear to me that—with the exception of Emu Bay, Circular Head, and on the east point of Cape Grim—there is any place affording shelter for vessels, or being capable of being made fit for such a purpose. As the Company are in possession of two of these situations, namely Circular Head and Cape Grim, I beg to bring under the consideration of the Government the importance of reserving the other situation (Emu Bay) for a township, or for any other Government purpose which may be deemed necessary. And I may further observe, that the interest of those colonists who may locate in the adjacent country to the southward of Emu Bay will require it as their port; and the importance of that part of the country will be materially enhanced by such a reservation, it being the only situation on the coast that will answer for a township from whence their produce can be exported. Indeed, I consider the reservation of this situation of such moment, not only to the interest of the colonists, but also to the Government itself, that I feel bound to bring it under special consideration; and, in doing it, I beg further to observe, that I do not consider it will interfere in the least with the interest of the Company, as their boundary will not extend so far eastward. But, should it be thought essential to the interests of the Company to have an establishment there, the indulgence of an allotment could be given; thus extending to them every advantage that the possession of the whole place could afford. The Company have already taken possession of this spot; but no improvements have been made besides the erection of one building intended for a store, and a few miserable bark huts, and the clearing of about two acres of land; the whole of which might be included in one allotment, making the usual reservation of frontage to the Crown.

All the advantages to be looked for in a country in its natural state, and which are so desirable in the commencement of an undertaking on the scale the Company are supposed to proceed upon, are comprised within the limits I have recommended. The rivers, being shoal and rapid, do not afford the means of inland navigation; but this defect is peculiar to the Island, and has been felt in the settled districts. With the exception of the heathy plains, the land is of the first-rate quality, though to a great extent heavily timbered; but this, I imagine, will not be any impediment to the Company in their outset, as they have a fair proportion of pasture land that they may commence and carry on every agricultural pursuit with little trouble, and at a comparatively trifling expense. The country is altogether well watered by numerous

streams which empty themselves into Bass' Straits and the Western Ocean, and possesses many sites for the erection of every description of machinery. Of the more useful woods, there is plenty of the finest description and of easy access; for the country presents fewer impediments to inland transport than the more mountainous parts of the settled districts.

As some time may elapse before Mr. Charles Wedge will reach Launceston with his survey, I have been under the necessity of adopting the general outline of the coast in that quarter as given in the chart of the Island; which, though incorrect, may serve to exhibit my different routes. To avoid confusion, I have quoted the names used by the Company's Surveyors, and the rivers and other prominent features of the hitherto unexplored country to the south of Circular Head. I have given the names appearing on the accompanying sketch for the facility of reference.

I have, &c.,

J. H. WEDGE.

GEORGE FRANKLAND, *Esquire*,  
*Surveyor-General.*