

Public notice about Macquarie's journey over the Blue Mountains

Dated 10 June 1815 Describing Macquarie's recent 'tour' over the Blue Mountains and Bathurst. The journey was undertaken for Macquarie 'personally to appreciate...the importance of that country.' NRS 1046 [SZ759, page 100; Reel 6038]

Government and General Orders

Government House, Sydney

10th June 1815

Civil Department

The Governor desires to communicate,
for the Information of the Public, the
Result of His late Tour over the Western
or Blue Mountains, undertaken for the
Purpose of being enabled personally to ap
preciate the Importance of the Tract of

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Country laying Westward of them; which had been explored in the latter End of the Year 1813, and beginning of 1814, by Mr George William Evans, Deputy Surveyor of Lands.

To those who know how very limited a Tract of Country has been hitherto occupied by the Colonists of New South Wales, extending along the Eastern Coast to the North and South of Port Jackson only 80 miles, and Westward about 40 miles to the foot of that Chain of Mountains in the Interior which forms its Western Boundary, it must be a subject of astonishment and regret, that amongst so large a Population, no one appeared within the first 25 years of the Establishment of this settlement possessed of sufficient energy of mind to induce him fully to explore a Passage over these Mountains: - But, when it is considered that for the greater part of that time even this circumscribed a Portion of Country afforded sufficient Produce for the Wants of the People, whilst on the other hand the whole surface of the Country beyond

those Limits was a thick and in many places nearly an impenetrable Forest, the surprise at the want of effort to surmount such difficulties must abate very considerably.

The Records of the Colony only afford two Instances of any bold attempt having been made to discover the Country to the Westward of the Blue Mountains. – The first was by Mr Bass, and the other by Mr Caley, and both ended in disappointment – a circumstance which will not be much wondered at by those who have lately crossed those Mountains.

To Gregory Blaxland and William Wentworth, Esquires, and Lieutentent Lawson of the Royal Veteran Company, the merit is due of having, with extraordinary patience and much fatigue, effected the first Passage over the most rugged and difficult part of the Blue Mountains.

The Governor being strongly impressed with

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the importance of the object, had, early after his arrival in this Colony, formed the resolution of encouraging the attempt to find a Passage to the Western Country, and willingly availed himself of the facilities which the Discoveries of these three Gentlemen afforded him. Accordingly, on the 20th of November, 1813, he entrusted the accomplishment of his object to Mr George William Evans, Deputy Surveyor of Lands, the result of whose journey was laid before the Public, through the medium of the Sydney Gazette, on the 12th of February 1814.

The favorable account given by Mr Evans of the Country he had explored, induced the Governor to cause a Road to be constructed for the Passage and Conveyance of Cattle and Provisions to the Interior; and Men of Good Character, from amongst

a number of Convicts who had volunteered their Services, were selected to perform this arduous work, on condition of being fed and clothed during the continuance of their labour, and being granted Emancipations as their final reward on the completion of the work.

The direction and superintendance of this great work was entrusted to William Cox, Esq. the Chief Magistrate at Windsor; and to the astonishment of every one who knows what was to be encountered, and sees what has been done, he effected its completion in six months from the time of its commencement, happily without the loss of a man, or any serious accident. The Governor is at loss to appreciate fully the services rendered by Mr Cox to this Colony, in the execution

of this arduous work, which promises to be of the greatest public utility, by opening a new source of wealth to the industrious and enterprising. When it is considered that Mr Cox voluntarily relinquished the comforts of his own house, and the society of his numerous family, and exposed himself to much personal fatigue, with only such temporary covering as a bark hut could afford from the inclemency of the season, it is difficult to express the sentiments of approbation to which such privations and services are entitled.

Mr Cox having report the Road as completed on the 21st of January, the Governor, accompanied by Mrs Macquarie, and that Gentleman, commenced his Tour on the 25th of April last, over the Blue Mountains, and was joined by Sir John Jamieson at the Nepean, who accompanied him during the entire Tour. – The following Gentlemen composed the Governor's

Suite; Mr Campbell, Secretary; Capt. Anthill,
Major of Brigade; Lieut. Watts, Aid-de-Camp;
Mr Redfern, Assistant Surgeon; Mr Oxley,
Surveyor General; Mr Meehan, Deputy Surveyor
General; Mr Lewin, Painter and Naturalist;
and Mr G. W. Evans, Deputy Surveyor of Lands,
who had been sent forward for the purpose of
making further discoveries, and rejoined the
party on the day of Arrival at Bathurst Plains.

The commencement of the ascent from
Emu Plains to the first Depot, and thence
to a resting place, now called 'Spring Wood',
distant 12 miles from Emu Ford, was through
a very handsome open Forest of lofty trees,
and much more practicable and easy than
was expected. The facility of the ascent for
this distance excited surprize, and is certain
ly not well calculated to give the traveller a

just idea of the difficulties he has afterwards to encounter. – At a further distance of four miles a sudden change is perceived in the appearance of the timber and the quality of the soil – the former becoming stunted, and the latter barren and rocky. At this place the fatigues of the journey may be said to commence. – Here the country became altogether mountainous, and extremely rugged. – Near the 18th Mile Mark (it is to be observed that the measure commences from Emu Ford), a pile of stones attracted attention: it is close to the line of road, on the top of a rugged and abrupt ascent, and is supposed to have been placed there by Mr Caley, as the extreme limit of this tour; - hence the Governor gave that part of the Mountain the name of 'Caley's Repulse' To have penetrated even so far, was an effort no small difficulty. – From hence,

forward to the 26th mile, is a succession of steep and rugged hills, some of which are almost so abrupt as to deny a passage altogether; but at this place a considerably extensive plain is arrived at, which constitutes the summit of the Western Mountains; and from thence a most extensive and beautiful prospect presents itself on all sides to the eye. The Town of Windsor, the River Hawkesbury, Prospect Hill, and other objects within that part of the Colony, now inhabited, of equal interest, are distinctly seen from hence. – The majestic grandeur of the situation, combined with the various objects to be seen from this place, induced the Governor to give it the appellation of ‘The King’s Table Land’ – On the S.W. side of the King’s Table Land the Mountain termi

nates in abrupt precipices of immense depth,
at the bottom of which is seen a glen, as roman-
tically beautiful as can be imagined, bounded on
the further side by Mountains of great magnitude,
terminating equally abrupt as the others; and the
whole thickly covered with timber. The length of
this picturesque and remarkable tract of country
is about 24 miles, to which the Governor gave
the name of 'The Prince Regent's Glen' – Pro-
ceeding hence to the 33rd mile on the top of a hill,
an opening presents itself on the S.W. side of
the Prince Regent's Glen, from whence a view is
obtained particularly beautiful and grand –
Mountains rising beyond mountains, with
stupendous masses of rock in the foreground,
here strike the eye with admiration and as-
tonishment. The circular form in which
the whole is so wonderfully disposed, in-
duced the Governor to give the name of
'Pitt's Amphitheatre' (in honour of the late
Right Honorable William Pitt), to this

offset or branch from the Prince Regent's Glen. The Road continues from hence, for the space of 17 miles, on the ridge of the mountain which forms one side of the Prince Regent's Glen, and there it suddenly terminates in nearly a perpendicular precipice of 676 feet high, as ascertained by measurement. The road constructed by Mr Cox down this rugged and tremendous descent, through all its windings, is no less than three fourths of a mile in length, and has been executed with such skill and stability as reflects much credit on him. The labour here undergone, and the difficulties surmounted, can only be appreciated by those who view this scene. In order to perpetuate the memory of Mr Cox's services, the Governor deemed it a tribute justly due to him, to give his name to this grand and extraordinary pass; and he accordingly called it

'Cox's

'Cox's Pass'. Having descended into the valley at the bottom of this Pass, the retrospective view of the overhanging mountain is magnificently grand. Although the present Pass is the only practicable point yet discovered for descending by, yet the Mountain is much higher than those on either side of it, from whence it is distinguished at a considerable distance, when approaching it from the interior, and in this point of view it has the appearance of a very high distinct hill, although it is in fact only the abrupt termination of a ridge. The Governor gave the Name of 'Mount York' to this termination of the Ridge, in Honor of His Royal Highness the Duke of York.

On descending Cox's Pass, the Governor was much gratified by the appearance of good pasture land and soil fit for cul-

tivation, which was the first he had met with since the commencement of his Tour. The valley at the base of Mount York he called 'the Vale of Clwyd', in consequence of the strong resemblance it bore to the vale of that name in North Wales. The grass in this vale is of a good quality, and very abundant, and a rivulet of fine water runs along it from the eastwards, which unites itself at the Western extremity of the vale, with another rivulet containing still more water. – The junction of these two streams forms a very handsome river, now called by the Governor 'Cox's River'; which takes its course, as has been since ascertained, through the Prince Regent's Glen, and empties itself into the River Nepean; and it is conjectured, from the nature of the country through which it passes, that it must be one of the principal causes of the floods which have been occasionally felt on

the low banks of the River Hawkesbury into which the Nepean discharges itself. The Vale of Clwyd, from the base of Mount York, extends six miles in a westerly direction, and has its termination at Cox's River. Westward of this River, the country again becomes hilly, but is generally open forest land, and very good pasturage.

Three miles to the westward of the Vale of Clywd Mss^s Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson had formerly terminated their excursion, and when the various difficulties are considered which they had to contend with, especially until they had effected the descent from Mount York, to which plan they were obliged to pass through a thick brush-wood, where they were under the necessity of cutting a passage for their baggage horses, the severity of which labor had seriously affected their healths, their patient endurance of such fatigue cannot fail to excite much surprise and admiration. – In commemoration of their

merits, three beautiful high hills joining each other at the end of their Tour at this place, have received their names in the following order; viz. 'Mount Blaxland', Wentworth's Sugar Loaf, and Lawson's Sugar Loaf'. A range of very lofty hills and narrow vallies alternately form the tract of country from Cox's River, for a distance of 16 miles, until the Fish River is arrived at; and the stage between these Rivers is consequently very severe and oppressive on the cattle. To this range the Governor gave the name of 'Clarence Hilly Range'.

Proceeding from the Fish River, and at a short distance from it, a very singular and beautiful Mountain attracts the attention, its summit being crowned with a large and very extraordinary looking rock, nearly circular in form, which gives to the whole very much the appearance of a hill fort, such as are frequent in India. To this lofty hill Mr Evans, who was the first European discoverer, gave the name of 'Mount Evans'

Passing on from hence the Country continues hilly

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but affords good pasturage, gradually improving to Sidmouth Valley, which is distant from the Pass of the Fish River 8 miles. The land here is level, and the first met with unencumbered with timber: it is not of any considerable extent, but abounds with a great variety of herbs and plants, such as would probably highly interest and gratify the scientific Botanist. This beautiful little valley runs North, West, and South East, between hills of easy ascent, thinly covered with timber. Leaving Sidmouth Valley, the country becomes again hilly, and in other respects resembles very much the country to the eastward of the valley for some miles. Having reached Campbell River, distant 13 miles from Sidmouth Valley, the Governor was highly gratified by the appearance of the country, which there began to exhibit an open and extensive view of gently rising grounds and fertile plains. Judging from the height of the banks and its general width, the Campbell River

must be on some occasions of very considerable magnitude; but the extraordinary drought which has apparently prevailed on the western side of the Mountains, equally as throughout this Colony for the last three years, has reduced this River so much that it may be more properly called a Chain of Pools than a running stream at the present time. In the reaches or pools of the Campbell River, the very curious animal called the Paradox, or Water-mole, is seen in great numbers. The soil on both banks is uncommonly rich, and the grass is consequently luxuriant. Two miles to the southward of the line of road which crosses the Campbell River, there is a very fine rich tract of low lands, which has been named Mitchell Plains. Flax was found here growing in considerable quantities. The Fish River, which forms a junction with the Campbell River a few miles to the northward of the road and bridge over the

latter,

latter, has also two very fertile plains on its banks, the one called, 'O'Connells Plains' and the other 'Macquarie Plains', both of considerable extent and very capable of yielding all the necessaries of life.

At the distance of seven miles from the bridge over the Campbell River, Bathurst Plains open to the view, presenting a rich tract of champaign country, of 11 miles in length, bounded on both sides by gently rising and very beautiful hills, thinly wooded. The Macquarie River, which is constituted by the junction of the Fish and Campbell Rivers, takes a winding course through the Plains, which can be easily traced from the high lands adjoining, by the particular verdure of the trees on its banks, which are likewise the only trees throughout the extent of the Plains. The level and clean surface of these Plains gives them at first view very much the appearance of lands in a state of cultivation.

It is impossible to behold this grand scene without a feeling of admiration and

surprize, whilst the silence and solitude
which reign in a space of such extent and
beauty as seems designed by Nature for the
occupancy and comfort of Man, create a de-
gree of melancholy in the mind which may
be more easily imagined than described.

The Governor and Suite arrived at these
Plains on Thursday the 4th of May, and
encamped on the southern or left bank of the
Macquarie River. The situation being selected
in consequence of its commanding a beautiful
and extensive prospect for many miles in
every direction around it. At this place the
Governor remained for a week, which time he
occupied in making excursions in different
directions through the adjoining country, on
both sides of the river.

On Sunday the 7th of May, the Governor
fixed on a site suitable for the Erection of a
Town at some future period to which he

gave

gave the name of 'Bathurst', in Honour of the present Secretary of State for the Colonies. The situation of Bathurst is elevated sufficiently beyond the reach of any Floods which may occur, and is at the same time so near the River on its south bank as to derive all the advantages of its clear and beautiful stream. The Mechanics and Settlers of whatever description who may be hereafter permitted to form permanent residences to themselves at this place, will have the highly important advantages of a rich and fertile soil, with a beautiful river flowing through it, for all the uses of man. The Governor must however add, that the hopes which were once so sanguinely entertained of this River becoming navigable to the Western Sea, have ended in disappointment.

During the week that the Governor remained at Bathurst, he made daily excursions in various directions; one of

these extended 22 miles in south-west direction, and on that occasion, as well as on all the others, he found the country composed chiefly of vallies and plains, separated occasionally by ranges of low hills; the soil throughout being generally fertile, and well circumstanced for the purpose of agriculture or grazing.

The Governor here feels much much pleasure in being enabled to communicate to the Public, that the favourable Reports which he had received of the country to the West of the Blue Mountains have not been by any means exaggerated. The difficulties which present themselves in the journey from hence are certainly great and inevitable but those persons who may be inclined to become permanent settlers there, will probably content themselves with visiting this part of the Colony but rarely, and of course will have them seldom to encounter

Plenty of water, and a sufficiency of grass are to be found in the Mountains for the Support of such cattle as may be sent over them; and the tracts of fertile soil and rich pasturage which the new country affords, are fully extensive enough for any increase of population and stock which can possibly take place for many years.

Within a distance of ten miles from the site of Bathurst, there is not less than fifty thousand acres of land clear of timber, and fully one half of that may be considered excellent soil, well calculated for cultivation. It is a matter of regret, that in proportion as the soil improves, the timber degenerates; and it is to be remarked, that every where to the westward of the Mountains it is much inferior both in size and quality to that within the present Colony; there is, however a sufficiency of timber of tolerable quality within the district around Bathurst, for the purposes of house-building and husbandry.

The Governor has here to lament, that neither Coals or Lime-stone have been yet discovered in the Western Country: articles in themselves of so much importance, that the want of them must be severely felt whenever that country shall be settled.

Having enumerated the principal and most important features of this new country, the Governor has now to notice some of its live productions. All around Bathurst abounds in a variety of game; and the two principal rivers contain a great quantity of fish, but all of one denomination resembling the perch in appearance, and a delicate and fine flavour, not unlike that of a rock cod; the fish grows to a large size, and is very voracious. Several of them were caught during Governor's stay at Bathurst, and at the Halting Place on the Fish River. One of those caught weighed 17 lbs, and

The people stationed at Bathurst stated that

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they had caught some weighing 25 lbs.

The Geld game are the kangaroos, emus, black swans, wild geese, wild turkies, bustarde ducks of various kinds, quail, bronze and the pigeons, etc etc. The Water-mole, or paradox, also abounds in all the rivers and ponds.

The site designed for the Town of Bathurst, by observation taken at the Flagstaff, which was erected on the day of Bathurst receiving that name, is situated in latitude $33^{\circ} 24' 30''$ South, and in Longitude $149^{\circ} 37' 45''$ East of Greenwich, being also $27\frac{1}{2}$ miles North of Government House, in Sydney and $94\frac{1}{2}$ West of it, bearing West $20^{\circ} 30'$ North, 83 geographic miles, or $95\frac{1}{2}$ statute miles; the measured Road distance from Sydney to Bathurst being 140 English miles.

The road constructed by Mr Cox and the party under him, commences at Emu Ford, on the left bank of the River Nepean, and is thence canded $101\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the Flagstaff at Bathurst this road has been carefully measure, and

and each mile regularly marked on the trees
growing on the left side of the road proceeding
towards Bathurst.

The Governor in his tour made the following stages, in which he was principally regulated by the consideration of having good pasturage for the cattle, and plenty of water:-

1st Stage – Spring Wood, distant

from Emu Ford _____ 12 miles

2nd ditto – Jamison's Valley, or 2nd

depot, distant from ditto _____ 28 miles

3rd ditto – Blackheath, distant

from ditto _____ 41 miles

4th ditto – Cox's River distant

from ditto _____ 56 miles

5th ditto – the Fish River, distant

from ditto _____ 72 miles

6th ditto – Sidmouth Valley, distant

from ditto _____ 80 miles

7th ditto – Campbell's River, distant

from ditto _____ 91 miles

8th ditto – Bathurst distant from ditto ____ 101½ miles

At all of which places the traveller may assure himself of good grass, and water in abundance.

On Thursday the 11th of May, the Governor and Suite set out from Bathurst on their return, and arrived at Sydney on Friday the 19th ultimo.

The Governor deems it expedient here to notify to the Public, that he does not mean to make any Grants of Land to the Westward of the Blue Mountains until he shall receive the Commands of His Majesty's Ministers on that subject, and in reply to the report he is now about to make them upon it.

In the mean time, such Gentlemen or other respectable free Persons as may wish to visit this new country, will be permitted to do so on making a written Application to the Governor to that

effect; who will order them to be furnished with written Passes. It is at the same time strictly ordered and directed, that no person, whether Civil or Military, shall attempt to travel over the Blue Mountains without having previously applied for and obtained permission in the above prescribed form. The Military Guard stationed at the first depot on the mountains will receive full instructions to prevent the progress of any persons who shall not have obtained regular passes. The necessity for the establishing, and strictly enforcing this Regulation is too obvious to every one who will reflect on it, to require any explanation here.

The Governor cannot conclude this Account of his Tour, without offering his best Acknowledgements to William Cox, Esq for the important Service he has rendered to the Colony in so short a period of time, by opening a Passage to the new discovered Country, and at the same time assuring him, that he shall

have great pleasure in recommending his
meritorious Services on this Occasion to the
favourable consideration of His Majesty's

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Ministers.

By Command of His Excellency

The Governor

(signed) J. T. Campbell,

Secretary