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
coun-
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 In
terior which forms its Western Boundary, it
must be a subject of astonishment and regret,
that amongst so large a Population, no one ap
peared within the first 25 years of the Establish-
ment of this settlement possessed of sufficient energy
of mind to induce him fully to explore a Passage
over these Mountains: - But, when it is consid-
ered 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 Lieutenant 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
the importance of the object, had, early after
his arrival in this Colony, formed the reso-
lution 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 Gen-
tlemen 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, in-
duced 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
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 pri
vations 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, com-
menced his Tour on the 25th of April last, over
the Blue Mountains, and was joined by
Sir John Jamieson at the Nepean, who ac-
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
just idea of the difficulties he has after
wards to encounter. – At a further distance
of four miles a sudden change is per-
ceived 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 sup-
posed 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 plan 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 romantically 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’ – Proceeding 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 astonishment. The circular form in which the whole is so wonderfully disposed, induced 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 wa-
ter 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
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
Clwyd Mss* 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 sur
prize 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 but
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 exten-
sive 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
surprise, 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 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 inevi-
table 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 they
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° 24’ 30” South, and in Longitude 149° 37’ 45” East of Greenwich, being also 27½ miles North of Government House, in Sydney and 94½ West of it, bearing West 20° 30’ North, 83 geographic miles, or 95½ 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 canned 101½ 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 follow-
ing 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 Regu-
lation 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 Acknow-
ledgements 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
Ministers.

By Command of His Excellency

The Governor

(signed) J. T. Campbell,

Secretary