

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF HUNTER'S RIVER

Exerpts from *Historical Records of New South Wales. Vol. IV. Hunter and King. 1800, 1801, 1802. Edited by F.M. Bladen. Sydney: Charles Potter, 1896.*

(pps. 416-418)

SURGEON HARRIS TO GOVERNOR KING (King Papers)

Hunter's River, 25th June, 1801

Sir,

Four days after our departure from Sydney we arrived at this place, tho' not without some difficulty, having been nearly led into danger by the ignorance of James, who mistook the entrance of the river.

Since our arrival here we have been employed procuring the necessary information respecting the entrance, and which I hope we have pretty well succeeded, as you will perceive by the chart, at which Mr. Barrallier has been indefatigable. The schooner also was another grand object which we did not lose sight of, as the Colonel thought her speedy departure from hence was of some moment, and indeed her commander, in my opinion, deserves the greatest credit for his exertion in expediting her lading, considering that for these four days past it has blown a gale from the westward, but she is now compleated. The sawyers have been employed cutting some light wood for repairing the boats, and latterly some oars, but as we have not as yet been able to get up the Cedar Branch, we have not been able to comply with your directions in that particular. From what I have been able to judge from the appearance of these branches, it will be some weeks before we are able to give you any satisfactory account of them; but the Colonel is determined to persevere, and I am sure I have not the smallest objection. The Colonel says he has found several new plants here, and Mr. Lewen also says he has met with new birds. If so they are above my comprehension, as I see nothing new about them, one hawk excepted, and that only in colour, being red with a white head. Cureous shells here are none, and very few living ones, from the violence of the surf, I imagine ; but such quantities of oyster shells I never in my life beheld. The schooner might here be loaded in a day, and a hundred vessells her size. I know not whether the Colonel had mention'd it to you, but it was our opinion that it would be a very proper place to procure lime. The wood on Ash Island are of may sorts, and of which you will have specimens on our return.

I have been a considerable way up the southern branch, but cannot take upon me to give you any just description of the country where I have landed ; shall reserve that till another opportunity. The natives here are remarkably shy. I am afraid they have been badly used by the white people here some time since. We have, notwithstanding, caught two of

them in the woods, treated them kindly, and let them go about their business. I hope it may have a good effect.

The native which we brought from Sydney with us, Bongary, ran off the day after we made the River, and has not since returned. The Colonel proposes to let the miners continue to work as usual till our return, and to take the sawyers up with us to Cedar Branch. We shall start to-morrow, if the wind wou'd but moderate, which still blows hard. I am afraid I have tired your patience with this scrawl, as no doubt but Capt. Grant and the Colonel has given you every information relating to our proceedings and plans, and which I hope will meet your approbation. Have the goodness to remember me kindly to Mrs. King and Miss Elizabeth, and believe me to be, with much truth,

Yours, &c.,

J. HARRIS