

## 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.*

(p. 324)

### GOVERNOR KING TO THE DUKE OF PORTLAND

Sydney, New South Wales

10th March, 1801

My Lord Duke,

I am sorry it is not in my power to speak more satisfactorily at present respecting the coals, of which so sanguine an expectation was formed by different accounts previous to my leaving England. The want of vessels belonging to Government has hitherto prevented my sending to the rivers, where there are great quantities lying on the surface, some of which has been brought round here in boats belonging to individuals ; but from their being taken from the surface they have little or no bitumen in them, and are totally unfit for the forge. In my letter, No. 1, [see Governor King's letter to the Duke of Portland of 28th September, 1800, ante, p.181] by Governor Hunter, I had the honour of informing your Grace that I had employed the only miner there is in the colony, with eleven other convicts, in searching for coal in this neighbourhood, and with some hopes of success. The place he has fixed on is at the head of George's River, which is navigable to Botany Bay. In that situation he has opened a shaft 30 feet deep, and has bored 50 feet, making in all a depth of 27 yards. In that space he has passed two thin stratas of a very fine coal, and from the opinion he formed of the other stratas he is very confident of succeeding. If he should in the end fail here, I shall remove him and his men to the northward at the river, altho' [this] neighbourhood on many accounts would be the most desirable to succeed in, as it is by no means safe to send a vessel without the harbour, so frequently have the convicts found means to take them away. In this place, I am sorry to inform your Grace, that fifteen desperate characters seized a Government vessel of 25 tons, [probably the Colonial vessel the Norfolk, ante, p. 254] laden with 500 bushels of wheat, on its returning from the Hawkesbury. They kept possession of the vessel, with an intention of proceeding to some Dutch settlement among the Molluccas; but from the want of ability to manage her they soon ran her on shore and bilged her, saving their lives with difficulty. They afterwards seized a small vessel, belonging to an individual, lying in the Coal River. On receiving information, I sent a party after them in a boat, who recaptured the vessel they had seized, and brought off nine of the pirates in, two of whom have been executed and the other seven transported for life. Those examples, and the miserable state of those I pardoned, I hope will prevent any future attempts of that kind....

I have, &c.,

PHILIP GIDLEY KING