

## 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. 476-477)

### GOVERNOR KING TO THE DUKE OF PORTLAND

Sydney, New South Wales, 21st August, 1801.

My Lord,

With this I have the honor of forwarding the duplicate of my letter respecting the employment of the Lady Nelson and its enclosures, in which your Grace will observe that vessel sailed in March last to prosecute your instructions ; but, I am sorry to say, from the same unheard-of bad weather we have had here, her commander was not able to execute the whole of the orders he sailed under.....

The Coal River, 70 miles to the northward of this place, which was seen by a lieut't of the Reliance in 1798 [the river was discovered and named by John Shortland, jun., first-lieutenant of the Reliance, on 19th September, 1797. He had been sent by Hunter in pursuit of convicts who had escaped in the Government vessel the Cumberland. He proceeded as far north as Port Stephens in the Governor's whale-boat, and it was while returning, close in shore, in quest of the fugitives, that he discovered the entrance to the river. Vol. iii, pp. 347, 481, 727] and named by him "Hunter's River," not having been since examined or any survey taken of it, I was anxious to ascertain how far it might be accessible to vessels, and could be depended on for a supply of coals, and as the service allowed of Lieut.-Colonel Paterson's absence, I accepted his offer of accompanying Lieut. Grant in the Lady Nelson on that service. That vessel and the Colonial schooner sailed from hence the 10th June, and returned the 25th July. I enclose the narratives [see Grant's and Paterson's accounts of this excursion, ante, pp. 404 and 448] of that excursion, which, with Ensign Barralier's accurate survey of the Coal Harbour and its rivers as high as they went, will give your Grace the details of that examination. But it is much to be regretted that the entrance into the harbour is so very shallow and difficult, as the wind and time of tide must always be consulted in going in or out ; and even under the most favourable circumstances there is the greatest cause for being more than commonly careful. However, notwithstanding this disadvantage, the other advantages respecting the very great quantity of coals to be got there, and the immense quantity of shells for lime, being so highly spoken of by those who went on that survey, I have established a small post there, consisting of a trusty non-commissioned officer and eight privates, with twelve prisoners to collect coals for such Government vessels as can go for them. Since the Lady Nelson went there, two Government vessels have brought 45 tons of coals which has been bartered with the master of the Cornwallis for articles for the public use. This being the first natural produce of the colony that has tended to any advantage, I have enclosed the Commissary's statement of that exchange, being more a matter of curiosity than of consequence. At present several boats are employed getting coals for the Cornwallis, and a prize brig, belonging to an individual, is now at the Coal Harbour lading with coals and timber

for the Cape of Good Hope. By the inclosure [see the Government and General Order of 3rd July, 1801, ante, pp. 430, 431] your Grace will observe that I have made the coals and timber an article of revenue. How far it will be productive must depend on events.

I have, &c.,

PHILIP GIDLEY KING.