

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. 597-598)

MR. M. MASON [Mr. Martin Mason was appointed a magistrate for the districts of Parramatta and Toongabbie in January, 1801 – ante, p. 288] TO GOVERNOR KING (King Papers)

Hunter's River, 24th October, 1801

The reason assigned for not having more coals at hand – the men were allowed nine days for extr[a] labour in loading the schooner last voyage, and four days getting fustic and propping the `mines. With three minors and six carriers they have got three tons p'r day, often not so many. With the same number of minors I can get nine tons, and when we have wheelbarrows three carriers will be sufficient, and the other three can be employed in taking them to the beach where the boats load. Can set three more minors to work immediatly, and in fourteen days six or eight more. If the mines are to be worked on an extensive scale, much may be done at a small expence to reduce labour by having a way laid with slabs from the pits, and a wharf run out upon a bank of stones and sand where boats may load at any time of tide without the men going in the water. As the men get farther under ground the coals are better in quality. Small candles, from twenty to twenty-four in the pound, are what is commonly used in coal-mines. They answeare every purpose of large candles.

We want large scales and weights to weigh a basket or barrow load of coals, to know what quantity is got every day ; three hammers, seven pounds each ; six box barrows that hold two hundred weights each ; large and small baskets ; a blacksmith, with his tools, and some steel. The minor's tools are badly constructed, and wants repairs. If we had boards and ironwork we can make the barrows here. The carpinter wants one road ax, one adz, one long plain, jack do., smoothing do., compasses, two-foot rule, oilstone, and chalkline.....

.....Fred. Kirkwold is gon up the river with Mr. Grimes and Barrallear, to see where the cardjang [sic] [probably intended for Kurrajong] is found. The weather hath been against any attempt at curing fish, and I have not men to spair from other duty. The old net that was left here is not fit for anything. The situation of the settlement is unfavourable for cultivation ; the soil is poor and sandy, and the winds cut off everything.

Permit me to request some lines and fish-hooks may be sent for the people, and at the same time the men your Excellency is pleased to allow me. I left the names of three of them with Mr. Thompson, and there is one man I spoak to Mr. Marsden for. I brought but one man with me, and cannot with propriety take any from public duty here for my private concerns.

Inclosed is an acc't of provisions and stores received from Corporal Wexstead. A list of the civil, military, and prisoners victualed from the stores herewith, their rank, and how

employed, with the monthly return, which in futer will be made up to the first of every month, and accompanied with a return of how the people have been employed the preceding month. [These enclosures are not available.]

Permit me to subscribe myself, &c.,

M. MASON.