

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.*

[Draft in King's handwriting, not dated, but evidently written on or about July, 1801.]

(pps. 428-429)

GOVERNOR KING TO COLONEL PATERSON (King Papers.)

Dear Colonel,

The schooner arrived here last Saturday (27th ult.) [doubtless the Francis, which returned from Hunter River with coals towards the end of June, 1801] with the coals, &c. As Lord [Simeon Lord] had sold his coals to the captain of the Cornwallis for £3 per ton, and to take his articles at .30 per cent. above the invoice, I made the same bargain with him for articles for the public use. The schooner delivered all the coals. She brought 24 tons, out of which I send two casks of porter, one for the Lady Nelson and another for the schooner people and the colliers. It appears by Mr. Grant's, as well as all your accounts, that the entrance into the river is not good and requires much caution. This, I hope, Mr. Grant and his assistants will be able to do away [with] by observing at what time of the tide and with what winds the going out, &c, is attended with more or less danger, and the advantages that are to be taken of such an intricate passage, so as to render its access less dangerous.

As far as I can judge from the description you give of the coal on Collier's Point, I certainly agree with you that it is the best place to work at for the present and future, as from what judgement I can form of the island from Barrallier's chart, it does not seem to me so secure a place for a vessel to lye in or load at, and liable to great hindrance (as the boat must depend on the tide) if the wind sets in strong from the sea, which must be the case constantly in the summer ; whereas it appears that Collier's Point is in some measure sheltered from those winds. However, if the coals on the island can be got at without any preparatory labour there no doubt may be times when a small vessel might load there. This must be confirmed by observation and experience. As the coal-mine will be permanent, I shall send Broadbent round by the Anne Josepha, which shall sail about -----.[blank in MS]. I will then thank you to hear his opinion, and the other miner (Platt), where the best place would be to open the mine, supposing that the work cannot be carried on to as equal and as safe an advantage from below. I shall hear his opinion by return of the schooner. If you judge it advisable, be so good to set him to work.

From your representation, and the two gentlemen with you, I am so anxious to hope for great advantages from that river that I have sent Corporal Wixtead and five privates to take post there. Wixtead is recommended by Captain McArthur, and the privates are of his own choice. I knew him formerly, and his character was always good. Among the soldiers who came out in the Earl Cornwallis is a young man named Cole, brother to a captain in the Navy and a clergyman of that name who is chaplain to the Duke of Clarence, from all whom I have

received letters about him. He is also brother-in-law to Major Creswell. When he came here I put him into the store with Captain McArthur's [during Lieutenant-Colonel Paterson's absence, Captain Macarthur was the senior officer in charge of the military at Sydney] concurrence, and now, I think, is a fair opportunity of putting it in his power to merit the esteem of his superiors here and his friends at home. I have, therefore, requested Captain McArthur to allow him to go as storekeeper and to issue the provisions. I have recommended Wixtead and him to be together. By the enclosure you will see that I have endeavoured to supply their immediate wants, for building huts, &c. The situation I will thank you to fix on, and in addition to the instructions I enclose you will be so good to add any other you may judge proper and necessary. As a great many coals may be ready, I hope soon to see the schooner back again, and however much the public service has and will benefit by your discretion and assistance, and that of Mr. Harris, where you are, yet I beg you will make your stay or departure quite convenient to yourself. But in the event of your remaining until the survey is completed, I am well assured that every arrangement you may see proper to make will be not only judicious but highly beneficial to the public service, and to that particular part that you are now engaged in.

Respecting salt works and lime, we will speak more of that hereafter. At any event it is a sure resource, and I hope the advantages of that river will be much increased by your discovering a passage into Port Stephens. Respecting the time for the survey, I would wish it to be done thoroughly. If you cannot complete it by the 1st August you must take till the 1st September, but on no account later, as it will then be more than necessary to dispatch Her Ladyship [the Lady Nelson] to the south'd. However, by return of the schooner I shall hear your progress and inclinations, and will transmit your observations to the Minister and Sir Joseph Banks in your own hand.

I am now dispatching the Anne Mornington for India with 16,000 galls. of Bengal and prepare for Barker's departure, which will be in three weeks. I send you a few of the latest papers.