

London 17th Dec 1791

Dear Sir
I have the pleasure to receive your letter of the 10th inst.

Have the misfortune to relate to you a disaster from fire which has been attended with the loss of the whole of my crop from thirty acres except about half an acre of barley. On Wednesday the 8th inst at noon some scattered snow from leading in the young took fire & away to the strong sea breeze almost immediately laid hold of the barn (which was full of wheat) & two stacks were on fire in an instant with nearly the whole of my agricultural implements indeed so sudden was the fire that a large quantity of poultry & some fine pigs were burned in a twinkling, its fury was such that it was with the greatest difficulty the house & other premises were saved. I then have been deprived of every particle of grain except the small quantity of barley mentioned & am compelled to part with that part of my live stock (pigs) requiring grain & reduce the number of men so as only to keep proportion.

There has been within a few days of this year in the Colony & I challenge any person to prove that I have received this year from my farms, the two crops of maize were with the exception of a few bushlets actually swept off by the blinks, notwithstanding the same example I made of several of them, the crop of wheat the year before owing to the culture ground not being then fixed in, suffered so much from the continued wind of the Govt flocks & herds that it only produced a narrow margin supply for the men & my own family, the crop now destroyed was the first I expected any return from.

I conceive my case to be different to that of any person up this River, perhaps in the Colony, our making
Fred. Goulburn Esq
Colonial Secretary

my mind to emigrate to N.S. way I was refused by the Governor of
State to the Colonies to a Mr. Barnard who appeared to have the management
under the Gov^t of the affairs of this colony in the local office, in answer to his
sundry stories as to what I knew of wool & Tobacco in my excursions in
Safety & residence in the W. of America, I reply'd that I had paid attention
to neither, the conversation turning to Saw Mills, I said I had paid some
little attention to them in North America & the W. & enquir'd them of
great utility in a new settlement, he immediately said if I would embark a
part of my capital in any thing of the kind it would have the most
decided support of Gov^t if I had said volumes of the facilities which
would be afforded he in all which I have found to be erroneous &
erroneous Mr. Barnard in his zeal for this Colony must have mistaken his
instructions, or I never could have been so disappointed, I have built
a moderate sized wind mill with the intention of driving mill saws
but owing to not being able to procure proper Machinery is not yet completed
but sufficiently so as to drive a pair of stones, the present population of
Hunters here will not for the next year afford more grinding for their
own consumption than will pay the expense of keeping a free Miller &
perhaps pay repairs, consequently the whole sum I have laid out in this
concern is dead, could I have foreseen the consequences I not have listened
to Mr. Barnard's suggestions, I might now have been one of the most
independent stockholders up this River my whole attention would then
have been paid to farming pursuits & I must from the capital I now
had, have done well, I escaped all the anxiety of mind attendant on
Machinery, but at present I have not a single prospect, not even the
indulgence of the Gov^t cattle, as when they were sent out at Newcastle
I was four men short of the number consequently the cattle fell into
other hands, in private life if a person suffers materially from the
suggestions & advice of another who has it in his power & is in
the habit of bestowing favours he would think it hard when

How favours are distributed to be paid by for want of some legal
formality, I took up twenty men in October 1823, the list was lodged in
your Office, & Mr. Crawford promised to have the bonds made out & sent
down to Newcastle for signature, as it was not convenient for him then to
do so, some little objection was at the same time made to two of the men
being Colonial venturers, I never heard any more of the bonds but had the
misfortune to witness the cattle turn'd over to Newcastle to others, all the
Cross the first applicants after it was officially announced they were to
be distributed, As the persons holding Govt. Cattle up the River as for
the greater part only nominally in possession of the number of men, some
of whom have only two against sixteen Cows & others in not a small
degree, I should hope that the Excellency would not for the
sake of precedent deny me the indulgence of the twenty Cows at this
moment as they would enable me to supply the men beyond to prepare
for another crop with their produce partly in lieu of annual food
(as others do who have this indulgence) which I have not at present
the means of procuring, by disposing of some little remaining appurtenances
to our former respectability I may be enabled to obtain a supply
of such commodities as will purchase grain to supply my wretched
family & a few men until next harvest, the general opinion of every
one in this neighbourhood is that this last blow is fatal to us, -
they are all aware of the enormous difficulties I have had to
encounter by being settled too near a penal depot, the immense
contributions that the Newcastle prisoners have from time to time
laid upon me, especially when on setting off for bushranging,
the annoyance my few Cows & working Cattle have met with
from the Govt. Stockkeepers driving them off for rewards &
other evils too numerous to detail, but which I may say

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laws almost entirely subverted owing to the removal of the most
experts to Paul Maguire & the prompt attention of the present
Magistrate to complaints against these offenders, not a person who
has been here any time but must have observed the difficulties
I have had to surmount in endeavouring to complete what I sent
it out upon, a Saw Mill, which I have declined for the
present only,

No Colony cannot be construed into a British
Hope this Excellency will under all these circumstances afford
the indulgence of the twenty laws which at this period would
be of infinite value had this disaster not have taken place
I should not have thought of making a request which could
in any way tend to a breach of rule or establishing a precedent
which others might lay hold of, but certainly there is no one
who knows the present forlorn situation of myself & family
who could ever make any application to the Government to
afford me at this moment a subject of mercy

Platt

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Shew the honor to be,
with the greatest respect,
Yr
Your most obedient,
humble servant,

Wm. Platt