

M/373

REPORT ON THE LAKE SELINA-LAKE ST. CLAIR TRACK.

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Sir,

I HAVE the honour to report as follows, on surveying and cutting a track, in compliance with final instructions received from your office on 4th January last, which authorised me to continue the track from Red Hills to Eldon Bluff—completed by me last year—to Lake St. Clair, which now allows through communication from Zeehan to Hobart, *via* the overland route:—

The necessary supplies requisite for carrying on the work, consisting of tents, tools, surveying instruments, and provisions for four men for three weeks, I had conveyed from Zeehan on pack-horses to Lake Selina, a distance of about 24 miles, which is as far as horses can proceed. To Eldon Bluff, the terminus of the track previously constructed by me, is 20 miles, over which we conveyed camping requisites on our backs. After a careful examination, I considered it advisable to break through to Lake St. Clair, and work back to the Bluff, for the following reasons:—(1) Provisions could be packed cheaper from the Ouse district; (2) a material advantage was gained by going over the intended route, and thus acquiring a clearer idea of the most advantageous way to bring the track, from a prospector's point of view; (3) in the building erected by the Government, and used by tourists, at Lake St. Clair, I had a good base for a *dépôt*, and for shelter for some weeks. On starting from Eldon Bluff to reach Lake St. Clair, everything proceeded satisfactorily until Pine Hill was surmounted, about seven miles out, when I noticed there was a dense smoke in the vicinity of Coal Hill, which lay in the direction I wished to take. Thinking bush fires were raging, I decided to make for the overland route from Hobart, taking a course south from Gould's Pyramid. In breaking through between the Inkerman and Alma rivers, close to their junction with the Collingwood River, we passed through good agricultural land for about two miles, running from north to south, but its extent in the opposite direction time did not permit my ascertaining; I would judge, however, from a rough estimate, there were some six hundred acres of chocolate soil, lightly timbered with myrtle and silver wattle. On arriving at Lake St. Clair, I at once commenced the survey and cutting of the track, which starts, according to your instructions, at the Derwent Bridge, where the overland route to Gormanston crosses the branch road to Lake St. Clair Accommodation House. Along the banks of the head waters of the Derwent River to the lake, a distance of about three miles, a good cart road exists, which only required traversing and chaining. From Lake St. Clair the route chosen runs in almost a westerly direction, coursing through the vale of the Cuvier River for a distance of about nine miles, when Lake Patriarch is reached; from this lake, the

track runs on its south side, and also on the south side of Coal Hill. The watershed of the Dorwent is left at Coal Hill, and, still continuing westerly, the divide of Inkerman and the Canning rivers is entered; then, proceeding to the north, Gould's Pyramid is approached, at a point 17 miles from Lake St. Clair, Pine Hill. Taking a course between the divide of the South Eldon and Canning rivers, the track runs north-westerly from Pine Hill for seven miles, which completed the connection to last year's work at the 20-mile peg near Eldon Bluff.

Distance.—The distance from the overland track to Eldon Bluff is 27 miles 60 chains.

Gradient.—For the first twelve miles, the track is almost level, and then there is a fairly easy grade, until "Last Hill" is reached. For about sixty chains down "Last Hill" the grade is rather heavy, but makes easy travelling to the terminus, with the exception of a short pinch of about forty chains at "Round Hill."

Timber.—A belt of fairly good stringy-bark was passed through for about three miles after leaving Lake St. Clair, which embraces the only timber of any commercial value met with. The balance of the country consists of button-grass, clumps of white gum (with undergrowth), mountain ti-tree, cutting grass, bauera, the latter being very heavy after "Last Hill" was passed.

Geological formation.—The basaltic rock found at Lake St. Clair lasts for some 10½ miles, when a brown sandstone is passed through, until within five miles of the Eldon Bluff; here a band of black slate, with veins of quartzite, comes in. At "Last Hill" and "Gould's Pyramid," fossils were found in the sandstone on the surface, and small veins of coal were met with at Coal Hill, but no other indications of minerals were exposed in cutting the track.

General.—For the first eleven weeks we were favoured with fine weather, but afterwards it was extremely rough, rain, hail, sleet, and snow prevailing until the work was completed, which retarded operations very much during the latter part of the time, amidst great discomfort to the party. At every mile, posts, about eight inches square and three feet high, have been placed, with the mileage cut deeply into the wood, in Roman figures, marked clearly thereon. In the timbered country the track is well cut out, and all logs removed, or else notched, to allow of being easily passed over. The trees are marked plainly fore and aft. In the open country, stakes, about four inches in diameter and five feet in height, have been placed, on an average of about fifty to the mile. I considered it necessary to place them as stated, on account of the heavy fogs which exist at this altitude. In places the stakes had to be carried a distance of two miles and over. Signboards, with the mileage and direction plainly stencilled on them, have been placed at each end, and principal places along the track. Aneroid readings recorded in my field notes were taken at every principal rise and fall in the country, the instrument being set at the Zeehan Railway Station. Magnetic bearings and rough general bearings have been taken with theodolite from point to point, as recorded in my field notes. Mountains have been observed from different points all along the track. All chaining has been done by horizontal measurement. The assistants first engaged comprised Alan Pybus, James New, Leslie Ims, and myself, Ims leaving on 19th February necessitating my journeying to Zeehan to engage another man, which I did, after packing portion of the supplies to Eldon Bluff. Charles V. Roberts started work on 11th March. By the completion of this track, through communication is now established from Zeehan to Lake St. Clair, a distance of about 62 miles, and will enable prospectors to explore the country under much more favourable conditions than was before possible. I spent three days, by myself, examining the country running from Eldon Bluff to the Mole Creek-Rosebery Track, as referred to in your letter, dated 8th January. The country is very rough, much broken, and heavily timbered; but, with a little trouble, a connection could be made. In a distance of about ten or twelve miles, the "Wooden Store," on the overland track, can be connected with the track now completed, near "Gould's Pyramid." This would open a large area of mineral-bearing country to prospectors; also, a connection from the track just completed could be made with the Mole Creek-Rosebery Track by keeping on the west side of Lake St. Clair, thence bearing northerly on the eastern slopes of the Ducane Range, joining Mole Creek Track somewhere about head waters of Forth River.

Deviations.—Instructions from you, under date Hobart, 6th March, were received by me at Lake St. Clair, on 3rd April, to make a deviation from the track surveyed last year, with the object of lessening the distance, and obtaining an easier grade. This work was carried out, after the track from Lake St. Clair was completed, supplies being packed from Eldon Bluff. The deviation, which was commenced at 30½ miles from Lake St. Clair, has been surveyed and cut out for a distance of eight miles, where I joined the Dora Pack-track, near Lake Rolleston. For the first three miles the deviation goes slightly west of south, then a leading spur is picked up, which brings the course almost due west for a mile; still keeping on the spur, the track bears in a northerly direction for about two miles, and then turns west for about a mile, picking up the divide between the North Eldon and Antony rivers. From this point to the junction with the Dora Track it runs south and south-westerly. The grade, though steep is a decided improvement on the route first surveyed, being easier for walking, and much shorter. In cutting the track, heavy bush country was met, consisting of dense horizontal scrub, manuka, ti-tree, bauera, and cutting grass, which was only got through after laborious efforts, increased by heavy falls of snow and wet weather, which prevailed while the work was proceeding. In the North Eldon valley the country is well worthy the attention of prospectors, being mineral-bearing, with most encouraging indications. The country is principally of micaceous slates. Operations were greatly hampered through it being impossible to obtain a suitable camping-ground between the North Eldon valley and Lake Dora, owing to the snow and stormy weather preventing the tents being erected. Two slight deviations were made on track surveyed last year; first, between the 19 and 20-mile peg, and between the 18 and 19-mile marks, which resulted in getting a far easier grade, and, therefore, better track.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ROBERT EWART.

E. A. COUNSEL, Esq., F.R.G.S., Surveyor-General.