

NOTES IN REFERENCE TO "SCOTT'S TRACK," VIA
LAKE ST. CLAIR, TO THE WEST COAST OF
TASMANIA.

BY JAMES ANDREW.

I have been requested by a Fellow of this Society, whom circumstances prevent from himself representing the subject dealt with in these notes, to call attention to an error in the designation of a track which appeared in a paper on "The Highlands of Lake St. Clair," read at the November meeting by Colonel Legge.

The member to whom I refer, Mr. T. B. Moore, is well known as an explorer, and he asks me to bring under the notice of the Royal Society that "Scott's Track," along the Cuvier Valley and westward to the coast, is, as such, incorrectly described.

Of my own knowledge I can state that it was Mr. Moore who explored this route and cut the track referred to, along which, many weeks later, the Hon. J. R. Scott travelled. Having preserved my notes taken at the time, and from reference to various public documents, I am enabled, with the permission of the Council of the Society, to lay before you a brief statement of the nature desired by Mr. Moore.

Colonel Legge, however, in speaking of "Scott's Track," used the name recently adopted by the Lands Office, and it would be most unlikely that he should have any cause to imagine that the gentleman whose name it bears had no claim to such credit as might be attached to developing the first overland route from the southern side of the island to Mount Heemskirk.

It was owing to the untimely death of Mr. Scott, shortly after his return from this trip, that Mr. Moore neither obtained, nor has ever sought to obtain, what may seem a trivial privilege, but which is, nevertheless, one of an estimable value in an explorer's eyes—that of having his route charted in his own name, and of suggesting to the Government the adoption of such designations as he might select, by right of discovery, for mountains, lakes, or rivers, which were previously undescribed or unknown. It is not my object, therefore, in calling attention to this error, to seek to have it rectified, but merely to place on record in the proceedings of the Society such a condensed chronological statement of the movements of the two gentlemen referred to, and

their parties, as may, I trust, clearly establish the justice of Mr. Moore's claim as the pioneer of this particular portion of the colony.

The late Mr. C. P. Sprent, then a Government surveyor, in a report dated May 3rd, 1876, to the Minister of Lands and Works, of his explorations in the country between Mount Bischoff and Mount Heemskirk, stated that to completely open up the West Coast to prospectors, three main tracks were required, of which one should be from Lake St. Clair to some point on the coast.

Encouraged by the indications of gold and tin found in the vicinity of the Pieman and its tributaries by Mr. Sprent's party, Mr. T. B. Moore started from New Norfolk on January 1st, 1877, with two companions—his brother, Mr. J. A. Moore, and myself—with the object of finding a practicable overland route to the West Coast in the direction recommended, and also with the view of prospecting the country passed through for minerals. The party were provisioned for four months, and in spite of heavy losses in supplies from depredations by bush vermin, remained in the field for five months.

Of the country traversed, of the magnificent scenery in the Western ranges, and of the incidents of travel, except so far as they relate to Mr. Scott's journey, I do not propose to speak this evening. As previously stated, the party, of which I was the junior member, left on the 1st of January, 1877, and it was not until two months later, viz., on the 1st March, that Mr. Scott made a start for the coast. On the 13th of that month it was necessary for me to return for supplies, and I left my companions on the Mount Read—Mount Dundas range—hard at work cutting through some of the worst scrub it has ever been my bad fortune to become acquainted with. The distance reached by this date was, according to Mr. Scott's own estimate, 60 miles from Lake St. Clair. On the 15th March, having then travelled about half this distance, I met Mr. Scott with two men, and did all in my power to facilitate his westward journey by directions as to where he could best pick up our route. The Messrs. Moore had, meanwhile, decided to make a trip to our main depôt, and they also met Mr. Scott near a lake now charted as Lake Dora, and gave him further directions with the object of assisting him on his way.

The next entry in my diary in reference to the subject of these notes occurs on April 2nd, when having again travelled back with the Moores nearly to the limit of our track, we found warm ashes at a camp recently occupied by Scott, and indications of the route he had taken in the shape of three direction notices, placed in cleft sticks, one pointing coast-

wards to Mount Heemskirk, another along our route westerly to the summit of Mount Dundas, and the third towards home, giving the distance from Hobart as 176 miles.

On the 3rd April I again left my companions, and thus had no opportunity of learning how far Mr. Scott had proceeded before they overtook him, but as both parties camped together that evening, the distance could not have been very great, nor was the country difficult.

It was on the 13th May that I next joined my comrades, and I then learnt that they and Mr. Scott's party had combined to cut the track down the spur of Mount Dundas to the open coast country, and that they had separated on the 6th April.

Of the remainder of Mr. Scott's journey I need only make brief mention. At Mount Heemskirk and on the Pieman he fell in with Donnelly's party and the Brothers Meredith—besides ourselves, the only prospectors up to that time on the coast—and he naturally availed himself of their tracks, as far as available, for the completion of the round journey to Mount Bischoff. I am not aware, however, that this portion of his route has ever been charted or referred to as "Scott's Track."

Upon our return to Hobart at the end of May, 1877, some notes of the expedition were communicated by Mr. John A. Moore to the Lands Department, and I quote his remarks so far as they bear on the subject dealt with. Mr. Moore states:—

"Our party had reached Dundas with our track, and went back for provisions to what Scott had named Lake Dora before we met him on his way out, being quite six weeks through that country before he was. We were the first white men ever on Dundas, and I doubt whether a black-fellow ever was there, judging from the look of the country."

He adds: "It took ten days to get from the foot of Mount Read to the top of Dundas, and hard work, too."

The Hon. Nicholas J. Brown, then Minister of Lands and Works, supplied a copy of these notes, with a map, to the Editor of the *Hobart Mercury*, and wrote that "with reference to the statement made in the latter portion of Mr. Moore's notes as to his party having been through a considerable portion of the western country before the late Hon. James Reid Scott, I can assert that from my own knowledge this statement is correct, and I am quite sure that but for the premature death of that lamented gentleman, the claims of the Messrs. Moore to some credit for having materially assisted in exploring that hitherto almost unknown region would have been fully recognised and borne out by him." (*Vide Mercury* 26th November, 1877).

Further testimony as to Mr. Moore's priority as the explorer of this part of the colony is borne by the late Mr. Sprent, who, in a paper on "Recent Explorations on the West Coast of Tasmania," read before the Victorian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia on the 4th September, 1885, spoke of the work done in 1877. He stated that "besides the parties who were working from the Pieman, one party had succeeded in reaching the locality from Lake St. Clair, and had cleared and marked a good foot track. This work was accomplished by Messrs. T. B. and J. A. Moore and James Andrew. It was in every respect most useful and interesting. The route they had adopted passed over a most mountainous country, and it was only by dint of much toil that provisions could be got out."

Mr. Sprent, who was well acquainted with the details of these journeys, does not mention that Mr. Scott in any way assisted in the exploration and development of the western country, and on the chart attached to his paper the track is correctly ascribed to T. B. Moore.

In May, 1878, Mr. E. A. Counsel, Government Surveyor, who had been commissioned to "cut, mark, and clear a track from Lake St. Clair to the deep waters of the Pieman River," which work was discontinued owing to scarcity of provisions and bad weather, returned to Hobart along our route in company with Mr. T. B. Moore. That the difficulties of the small section of track formed conjointly by Scott and the Moores were not very great, may be estimated from the fact that on the first night after leaving Mount Heemskirk, the party camped between Mounts Dundas and Read. Of the succeeding day's tramp Mr. Counsel remarks:—"We had to journey over the top of Mount Read, the roughest piece of track from Mount Heemskirk to Lake St. Clair; the day's march must be experienced to be understood." This was the section which was completed weeks before Mr. Scott passed through, and on which three of us were occupied for ten days in cutting the track.

Mr. Scott's most deservedly high reputation as an explorer and as a bushman is far too firmly established in the memories of those who knew him, to suffer in the least degree from any remarks of mine in reference to this particular journey. It would, I feel sure, cause either of the Messrs. Moore as much annoyance as it would myself, should anyone imagine that the object of these notes is to detract in any way from the credit which was due to Mr. Scott, and I trust that the statement given has been fully sufficient to acquit me of any such intention.