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HENRY HELLYER

Henry Hellyer (1790 - 1832), a surveyor for the Van Diemen's Land Company, was a son of John Hellyer and Betsy (Maine) of Portchester, Hampshire, England. He arrived in Tasmania in 1826 and explored the north-west for the V.D.L.Co., especially the district between Port Sorell, Valentine's Peak and Black Buff. He named the country north and south of Valentine's Peak the Hampshire Hills and Surrey Hills and recommended it to the V.D.L.Co. In 1827 he was sent to lay out a road from Emu Bay to the Hampshire Hills. He later surveyed most of the district from Black Buff to Mount Bischoff, the Cripps Range, Cradle Mountain and the Murchison River. In 1832, the mapping and surveying needed by the V.D.L.Co. being completed, he was appointed to the Government Survey Department, but committed suicide at Circular Head on 9 September 1832, believing that slanderous reports had been circulated (A.D.B.)

A diary or journal of Henry Hellyer, July-August 1827, has been with family papers of the Roberts family in Wales, U.K. for some time, but it is not known how it came to the family. Until recently it was owned by Miss Roberts' grandmother (nee Griffiths) and was brought back to Tasmania by M. Roberts' sister in January 1978.

This diary, 3 July 1827 to 29 August 1827, is entitled: 'H. Hellyer's journal of operations in opening a road from Emu Bay towards the Hampshire Hills'. It is written in an octavo notebook, interleaved with blotting paper, bound in light brown leather, marked 'No. 7'. A pencil note inside states: 'H.H.'s diary continued from a memo book opening lengthwise having yellow edges and green covers and marked No . . . (the number has been omitted). At the bottom of the last entry is a note 'Diary continued in a memo book with green covers and yellow edges marked No . . . (opening lengthwise)' (the number has been omitted).

The diary is illustrated by neat drawings of animals (eg. 'native cat'), plants, trees, scenery and the camp.

At the front are tables of 'the quantity of timber etc. upon

one quarter of an acre of heavily timbered land in three different parts of the Forest where the soil is unexceptionable'

In his journal ~~is of~~ Hellyer noted the weather conditions - they were hampered by rain and their camp was very cold and damp, there were rats and Hellyer was troubled by a sore and inflamed face, but there were sunny days when he commented that 'this climate is certainly far superior, it is never so cold and seldom so hot as the Dog days in England'. He described the timber, dogwood interspersed with Forest Trees of stringy bark, blackwood, etc. - one tree was sixty feet in circumference. The clearing work was done mainly with axe and cross cut saw and occasionally a pile of logs too difficult to move was burnt. Hellyer calculated that it could cost as much as £93 in labour to clear 2½ acres. The work men mentioned included Richard Frederick, who seems to have acted as second in command, Jones the cook, Harley, McDonald, Wells, Higginson, Isaac, and Mackie. They lived mainly on salt pork, brought from England in the Company's supply ship, and dough boys (flour and water boiled hard). The men would not eat salt mutton even when it was available. Supplies were very short as the expected ship had not arrived and on 14 August Hellyer wrote to Edward Curr the V.D.L. Company manager complaining of the arrangements for supplies for they were reduced to flour only and they could not work on that.

On one occasion Hellyer went back in the 'long boat' to Circular Head for supplies and described the coast, a cavern, grass tree hearts which he found tasted like walnuts, and pieces of the wreck of the Dotterel (wrecked in March 1827 off Port Dalrymple) which they found. At Circular Head he obtained stores from Mr White, paint from Mr Watson and medicines from Dr. McNab. He noted that the sheep had foot rot, that the freemen [of the Company] had been on strike owing to the lack of supplies and that ten of the Company's servants, including the prisoner White, had drowned since March.

R.12/1 Journal of Henry Hellyer 3 Jul. 1827 - 29 Aug. 1827

'No 7'

(Octavo notebook, bound leather)

R.12/1

see also

X13/5 Henry Hellyer - discovery of Mackintosh, Eldon Range etc, 20 Nov. 1828.