

Jorgensen's Journey Across the Central Plateau— September-October 1826

From the papers of the late

A. L. MESTON, M.A.

(*Edited by W. Meston and R. A. V. McCulloch*)

INTRODUCTION

These notes have been extracted from the mass of Mr. Meston's unpublished papers and represent the skeleton of a monograph on Jorgensen's explorations which was under preparation during the years immediately before his death.

The patient unravelling of Jorgensen's contradictory and often apocryphal reports against the test of actual country and weather conditions, and the reconstruction of his routes and camping-places, occupied the sparse leisure of many years and some hundreds of miles of walking.

One of these recurrent problems was Jorgensen's 1826 journey from Hobart across the Central Plateau, undertaken for the V.D.L. Co. in conjunction with Hellyer's expedition from the N.W. Coast, both designed to open a route across country to the West and North-West Coasts, and also in search of possible grazing ground within the terms of the V.D.L. Co.'s charter.

Jorgensen's Report claimed that he had reached the landmark then known as the "Peak like a Volcano" (which was named St. Valentine's Peak in the following February by Hellyer) and also the lake which he described as the source of the Derwent. He named Mt. Dundas and the Parsons's Hood, and believed that his circular route had taken him within a few miles of the Frenchman's Cap and the mouth of the Pieman River. All quite irreconcilable with the actual time and distance of the adventure.

These statements were for many years repeated as uncritically as a medieval transcript, and Jorgensen has been given the credit of discovering Lake St. Clair on the strength of his identification of the Derwent, and also of having preceded Hellyer in the Surrey Hills and Middlesex Plains area.

Alternatively, since no stretch of imagination can reconcile Jorgensen's report with the country he imagined himself to be traversing and the time he allowed himself for the exploit, the whole account has been written off as a fabrication.

Mr. Meston supported a part of the first interpretation in a paper read before the A.N.Z.A.A.S. conference of 1928, but after detailed and exhaustive investigation of the country he altered his conclusion, for he found it possible to identify Jorgensen's landmarks and descriptions under actual conditions of country and weather, reducing the irreconcilable distances and the conflicting ascriptions to a possible and quite creditable piece of exploration.

Points to be clarified were: first, the identification of the mountain which Jorgensen believed to be Flinders' "Peak like a Volcano", the lake beneath it from which two rivers flowed, the several mountains on which he orientated his positions, and the exact point from which he took his bearings: secondly, his crossing-place of the Ouse, the rock which deflected his compass, and the verification of his minor details of geological description, occurrence of "cyder" gums and "pine" trees, and other aspects of country.

Mr. Meston's conclusions were that Jorgensen never saw the Frenchman's Cap and never left the Plateau; that he reached neither Lake St. Clair nor St. Valentine's Peak, his "Peak like a Volcano" being identifiable as the highest point of the plateau, the Western Wall of Jerusalem, his "bottomless gulph" as the Gorge of the Mersey, and his lake that which Mr. Meston recorded in 1941 as "Lake Barbara",

directly below the complex of the Walls; that the place where he took his bearings is now known as the Big Hill near Liawenee, that he crossed the Ouse a little above the junction of the James River, and the camp where his compass failed him was at Little Split Rock.

The field-work for these conclusions was done in several trips, in 1927, accompanied by Professor King, in 1941, with N. J. B. Plomley, and in 1945, '46, and '48 with R. A. V. McCulloch. Little or no accurate surveying of the higher country had then been done, so that much of the work consisted of fixing positions, bearings, and cross-bearings, and of checking visibility. The work of the Aerial Survey and the H.E.C. has since covered the area and simplified problems which were formerly solved by intersecting observations from points as far separated as Cradle Mountain, Mt. Rufus, and Mt. Field.

Part of the country over which Jorgensen struggled has now fallen under the H.E.C.'s scheme. The new dam across the Ouse will drown several miles of hollow moor and obliterate the course and junction of the Ouse and the James Rivers where both men, over a century apart, but facing the same conditions, found each the same crossing place and were thrown by the condition of the country upon nearly identical camping grounds.

JORGENSEN'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE CENTRAL PLATEAU—1826

Introductory Notes

Jorgensen had spent only three months in Van Diemen's land when he received, through the London influence of Mr. Dundas, employment with the Van Diemen's Land Company as explorer and surveyor.

His 1826 expedition from Hobart to the Central Plateau was intended to open a stock-route from the settled areas of the Clyde and the Derwent to the Company's holdings on the North-West Coast, and possibly to find a practicable approach to the West Coast. He was expected to meet Hellyer and his party somewhere in the no-man's land between the Great Lake and Valentine's Peak, and Thomas Scott's "Chart of Van Diemen's Land" (1824) illustrates the undertaking of both these men. (See chart facing page 110.)

In the blank space on which Jorgensen launched himself, two landmarks stand out by general familiarity and reasonably accurate location—the Frenchman's Cap, and Flinders' "Peak like a Volcano", so described in Scott's Chart, and later named Valentine's Peak by Hellyer on February 1, 1827. It is to be remembered that no one had yet seen either of these mountains from the angle whence Jorgensen approached them.

In summary, Jorgensen left Hobart on September 2nd for "Dr. Ross's Farm" on the Shannon (the Hermitage), having with him Mark Logan and Andrew Colbert, "a black man". They carried knapsacks, but expected to live mainly on kangaroo, and took two dogs for hunting. On September 11th, they were 16 miles further on at Patrick Plains, in bad weather, where there was a stockkeeper's hut. From the 16th to the 20th they were unable to cross the Shannon there and Logan went back to Patterson's farm (3 miles above the Hermitage) for more provisions.

On September 21st in fine weather they crossed the Shannon and made camp that night on the South-West corner of the Great Lake.

On the 22nd they were stopped by the Ouse, which at the time Jorgensen was inclined to identify as the Derwent, and camped in the bush a little back from the river.

The 23rd was still wet and the river still unfordable seven miles up where the river made a westerly bend and approached the foot of a snow-covered mountain.

The 24th was fine. Again following the east bank of the river they advanced two miles further (i.e., nine from last camp), found the river returned to its northerly course and poured between two stupendous rocks. They built a hut on a high hill. From here Jorgensen took his latitude $41^{\circ} 52'$, approximately the position of Liawenee) and recorded bearings of "Frenchman's Cap", "Table Mtn.", "Mt. Dundas", and Parson's Hood". In wet and stormy weather the party retreated to civilisation, returning to Patrick's Plains on the 28th, and the Hermitage on the 29th.

On the 30th Logan returned to Hobart with a provisional report from Jorgensen.

On October 11th the party again set out from Patterson's hut, reaching the Ouse (near Skittleballs) on the 18th and camping again in the hut they had previously built at Liawenee. Following up the east bank of the Ouse on the 20th, they found the first practicable fording place above the junction of the James River, and slept that night under Little Split Rock. Here the compass was deflected, but Jorgensen for the first time records a bearing on the "Peak like a Volcano" (i.e., the West Wall).

On the 21st they set out, West by North, for the Peak, crossed the James with difficulty (a little below Lake Pillan), were much impeded by lagoons and basins of water and saw pines growing.

On the 22nd they reached the southern side of the Peak which was too deeply covered with snow to be climbable. The country was high, rocky, and desolate, the trees small and scanty. Proceeding westward they were obstructed by a river flowing North and South and rising from a large lake between the summit of the Peak and the main mountain mass on which they stood. Their way was barred by "a chasm many miles in width, to the view a bottomless gulph".

On the 23rd, still trying to skirt the lake, in bad weather, they recorded a second river, broad and rapid, flowing from it towards the S.S. West. This Jorgensen concluded to be the source of the Derwent.

On the 24th, the third day of snow and fog, they retreated toward lower country, keeping as far westward as possible towards the mountains Jorgensen had named Dundas and Parson's Hood. He believed that the Derwent, as he considered it, effectively barred his approach to them and held a southerly course.

By the 25th they had reached good grazing country, abounding in timber and plentiful in fat kangaroos.

On the evening of the 26th they camped by a lake nearly as large as the Great Lake, which Jorgensen believed to be Lake Fergus, but he describes it as being sheltered from the North by a series of amphitheatres and lofty forest.

Walking, on the 27th, over good grazing country, they saw the tracks of wild cattle and native huts, and found themselves within sight of the tableland of the Clyde and the two Sugar Loafs near Shannon Point, concluding therefore that they must be within forty miles of habitation. They reached Hobart by way of New Norfolk on the 1st of November.

In making his report Jorgensen concluded that he had "explored the whole of the country marked 'unknown' in Scott's map situated eastward of that range of mountains" (23rd inst.) which he identified with Flinders' "Peak like a Volcano", that he reached the outlying spurs of the Peak before he was finally blocked by the bottomless gulf beyond which he considered human endeavour could not penetrate; and that the upper course of the Derwent was drawn from the lake he found lying below the Peak. He believed that he had approached within 15 miles of the Frenchman's Cap and within 20 miles of the mouth of the Pieman, and that "a road for sheep and cattle may certainly be traced immediately to the Southward of Mt. Dundas to the Pieman River and Cape Grim". He had named the moor west of the Great Lake "Arthur's Plains" and had sighted and named two high mountains, "Mt. Dundas and the "Parson's Hood".

The following account is given in Jorgensen's own words, condensed from his daily Journal and from his final Report.

Of the Journal only a fragment exists. It was given by himself to Mr. George Scott at Mount Moriston near Ross while he was lodging there in 1828 or '29. It lay there unregarded in the kitchen and the remainder "was torn out by the convict servants to light pipes", but the existing portion carries the conviction of fresh experience.

The Report is dated November 8th and varies slightly from the journal in places while in his later writings other variations of a well-told tale creep in. As Roberts admits, there is the possibility that Jorgensen lied—"in fact this would be the normal thing for him to do". But where rock, stream and watershed remain in corroborative evidence, his statements may reasonably be accepted.

Thanks must be recorded to the Mitchell Library for permission to quote Report and Journal in extenso.

REPORT BY JORGEN JORGENSEN OF A JOURNEY UNDERTAKEN FOR DISCOVERY OF A PRACTICABLE ROUTE FROM HOBART TOWN TO CIRCULAR HEAD—NOVEMBER 8, 1826.

(Extract from *Van Diemen's Land Co.'s Report*, 1828)

SIR,

On the 2nd September Mark Logan, Andrew Colbert (a black man) and myself departed from Hobart Town and conformably to the instructions you supplied me with we proceeded direct to Mr. Ross' farm on the Shannon where we arrived on the 6th.

Section of the "*Chart of Van Diemen's Land*", 1824, by Thomas Scott.
(Reproduced by courtesy of the *Tasmanian Museum*.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Great Lake | (6) "Circular Head visible 10 leagues" |
| (2) Shannon River | (7) "This part of the Country
Unknown" |
| (3) River Ouse | (8) "High rugged mountains" |
| (4) St. Patrick's Plains | |
| (5) "Peak Like a Volcano" | |
| (9) "P.S. It was the intention of the COLONIAL GOVERNMENT to make a Survey of the North-Western part of Van Diemen's Land in the Summer between 1823 and 1824, say, the months of November, December, and January. A vessel was also to be despatched to co-operate with the land expedition on that part of the Coast . . .". | |

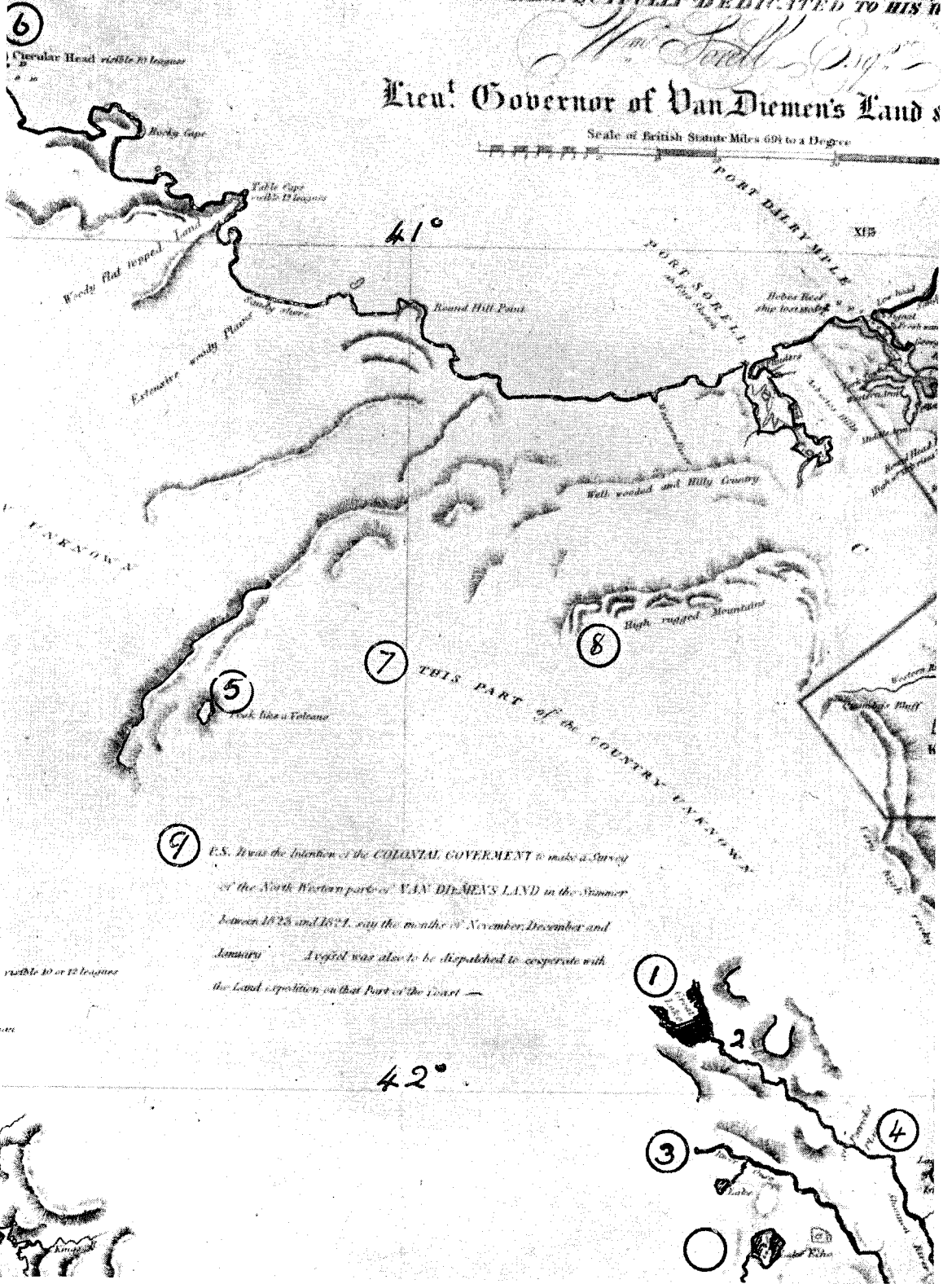
Assistant Surveyor Gen^l of Lands in the Island

MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

Wm. Arthur Phillips Esq^r

Lieut. Governor of Van Diemen's Land

Scale of British Statute Miles 691 to a Degree



⑨ It was the Intention of the COLONIAL GOVERNMENT to make a Survey of the North Western parts of VAN DIEMEN'S LAND in the Summer between 1828 and 1831, say the months of November, December and January. A vessel was also to be dispatched to cooperate with the Land expedition on that part of the coast.

Visible 10 or 12 leagues

We had experienced nothing but bad weather and incessant rain since our departure from Hobart Town and we found it equally impossible to cross the river at Mr. Patterson's. . . . we thought it most advisable to proceed to Patrick's Plains 16 miles farther up where we were told the Shannon is more shallow.

After having procured 2 dogs and filled our knapsacks with provisions we set out on the 11th. The rain continued to pour down in torrents It was late before we arrived at Patrick's Plains and found shelter in a stock keeper's hut the whole country around covered with snow Seeing that for the present every attempt to cross (the Shannon) would be in vain, I despatched Mark Logan and the Stock keeper, Andrew Martin, to Mr. Patterson's for a fresh supply of provisions

On the 20th we proceeded on our journey and succeeded in crossing the Shannon (21st).

We saw numerous Cyder trees which I was told afforded an excellent beverage in summer. The country was well wooded though not super-abundantly.

Towards evening we arrived at the South-West extremity of the Great Lake.

Swan Bay

Jorgensen camped on the South-West corner of Swan Bay, turning off westward over the low saddle locally known as "Murderers'". He met the Ouse at about the position of the old Stock bridge, his estimate of four or five miles reduced subsequently to two, and was inclined at first to identify it as the Derwent.

REPORT

FRIDAY THE 22ND, in the morning we set out early in the direction pointed out in our instructions; and after having walked over 4 or 5 miles of marshes and seemingly good land, we were suddenly and unexpectedly stayed in our progress by a river, which divides some very extensive plains, stretching in all directions farther than the eye can reach. We learned afterwards that this was the Ouse, or more commonly termed the Big River. The depth, magnitude, and rapidity of the current of this river far exceeds the Shannon in those particulars. We followed its banks downwards for about one mile, and upwards for 3 miles but could find no place where to cross.

SATURDAY THE 23RD after tracing the river upwards for about 7 miles I came towards the bottom of a mountain covered with snow, and I now perceived the river pursued an exact Westerly direction

SUNDAY THE 24TH. We took advantage of a clear morning and proceeded at an early hour towards the mountain mentioned yesterday, but after having traversed the same ground I had done the previous day, and walking about 2 miles farther up, I observed the river to take a direction towards the North. This again disappointed our hopes. I entertained some idea that we had advanced nearly towards its source, for we saw two stupendous rocks, between which the water precipitated itself with amazing impetuosity and great roaring which led me to form that conclusion. I lost no time in examining the country beyond the two high rocks alluded to and now found that the river flows in a direction from the North-North-West as far as the eye can reach from the lofty summit whence I saw it.

SEPTEMBER 25TH set out early in defiance of the wet and stormy weather to cross the river about 4 miles higher up, but found the current so rapid and the water so deep that we were under the necessity of returning to our hut.

FRAGMENT OF JORGENSEN'S JOURNAL, GIVEN BY HIMSELF TO MRS. GEORGE SCOTT OF MT. MORISTON, ROSS, AND AT PRESENT IN THE MITCHELL LIBRARY.

21ST THURSDAY weather fine and South by East. We crossed the Shannon at the place mentioned and the (patience)? and sagacity of George (Andrew Colbert) enabled us to reach the S. West point of the Lake before sunset. On the whole we passed a fine tract of land, well wooded, but not superabundantly

and met with large quantities of (Cyder)? trees but not the oak (wattle)? tree. Caught 3 kangaroo . . . White gums mostly. Marshes not ankle deep. In the beginning of the night cloudy with snow and heavy frost. At mid-night the wind came round to the N. West. On the lake beautiful silver sheen.

FRIDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER. After having walked four or five miles over marshes we came unexpectedly to a river which divides a most extensive plain. Stretching in all directions farther than the eye can see, this vast tract of which neither my companions nor myself nor anyone else as far as I know have given an account to for by far the greater part is fit for cattle and sheep and there is no impediment to a good cart road . . . we were all equally disappointed in finding ourselves opposed in our progress by a river of greater magnitude than the Shannon. My companions and myself used our utmost exertions to cross over. George and Logan are however ready and willing to make a desperate attempt to get over tomorrow and I hope we shall be able to find some convenient places.

This day at 1 p.m. the weather became cloudy with much wind and occasionally snow and rain. I consider the tract of land we have seen of a nature to require a more particular examination by some of the company's servants. Some spots might be selected for cultivation.

Began this day to put ourselves on a strict allowance of biscuit and . . . to save all the kangaroo tails for our future subsistence.

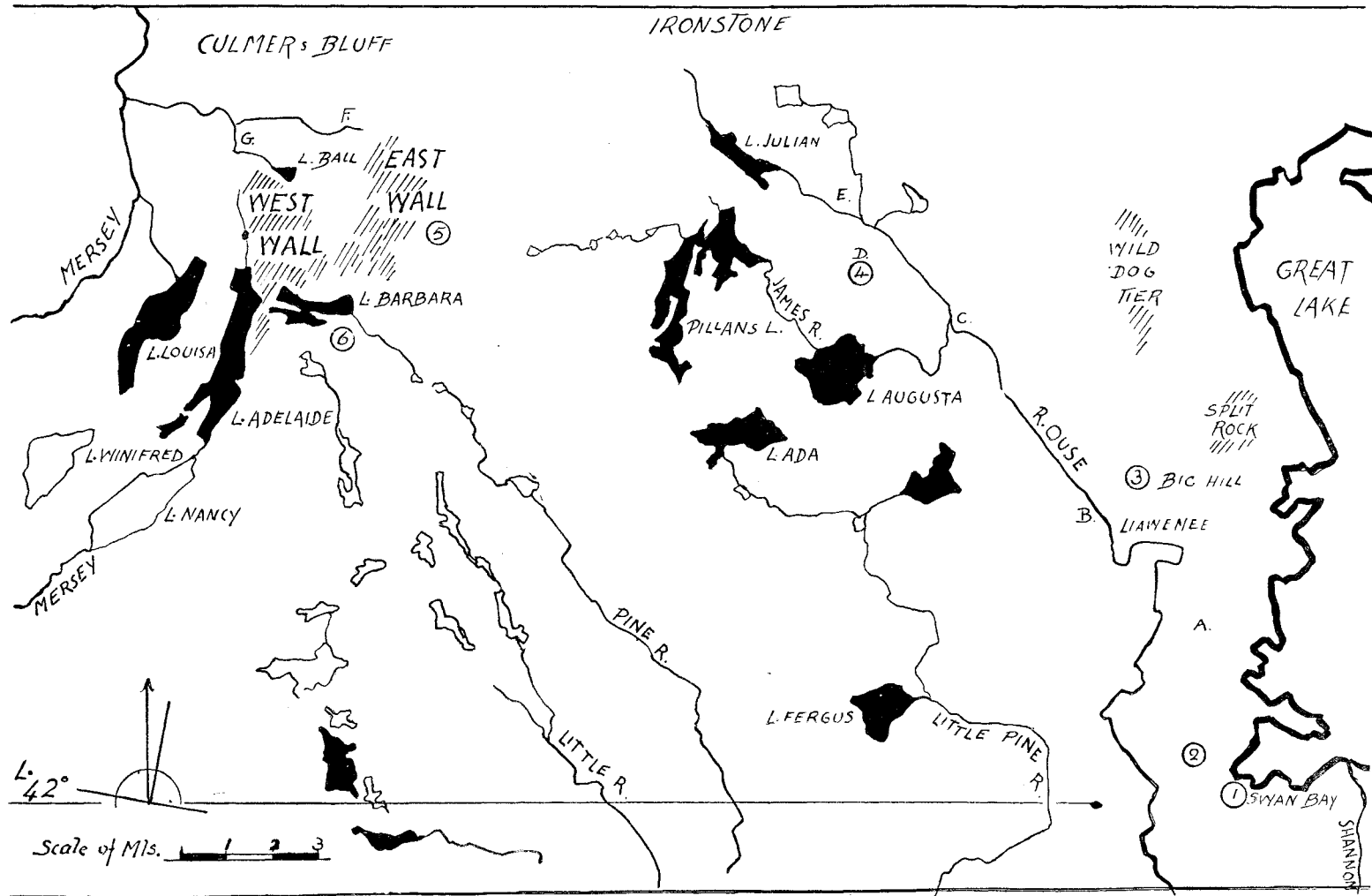
SATURDAY 23RD SEPT. In the night the weather was intensely cold and very cloudy. In the morning wind N. West. Moderate breeze . . . I went about 4 miles down the river to see whether I could discover a place where to cross. It was everywhere deep and rapid . . . These plains, without a shadow of a doubt the most extensive in the country, bounded by hills, a river flowing in the middle of them, and adjacent to the lakes, furnish a fine and, in many parts, a luxuriant prospect, and it is therefore I have taken the liberty to call them Arthur's Plains in honour of our esteemed Governor and Chief Commander, Colonel Arthur. At noon the wind North West, fresh and cloudy. I now set out to trace the windings to the North-East . . . We do not find a single trace that ever a white man was here.

SUNDAY 24TH SEPT. The sun rose in great splendour with a strong breeze from the West. Found the river every way is deep and so rapid that we could not cross. We therefore traced it further up and proceeded in a North to West direction for upward of 6 miles and a half. We then observed Table Mount bearing S.S. West distant 12 or 14 miles, a mountain covered with snow N. 1/2 E. and the high mountain seen a little to the Northward and Eastward of the lake bearing East-North-East. Between these two mountains it may not be improbable but that a passage, or ravine, exists, communicating with the North directly to Port Sorell . . . The river now took a westerly direction for two or three miles when again it ran North by West to South by East. We now observed it pouring down with a tremendous roaring, precipitating itself between two stupendous rocks. We ascended a high hill and took shelter for the night. We had traversed fine portions of fine land and had we not been so near Mt. Hellyers track should certainly have returned

MAP OF THE CENTRAL PLATEAU

With acknowledgments of assistance from the surveys of the Hydro-Electric Commission and from the photographs of the Aerial Survey.

- (1) Sept. 21st 1826; Jorgensen camped on the S.W. corner of the Great Lake.
 - (2) Sept. 22nd.
 - (3) Sept. 23rd; Hut built on Big Hill near Liawenee.
Oct. 18th and 19th: Jorgensen camped again in this hut.
 - (4) Oct. 20th. Camped under Little Split Rock.
 - (5) Oct. 21st. Camp on the spurs of the East Wall.
 - (6) Oct. 22nd. Hut built after crossing river, S. of the Peak. Farthest point reached.
- A. Basalt Plains.
 - B. Gorge of the Ouse.
 - C. Crossing-place; junction of James and Ouse rivers.
 - D. Little Split Rock.
 - E. The Throne.
 - F. Officers Marsh.
 - G. Wild Dog Creek.



W. WESTON AND R. A. V. MCCULLOCH

with the information already acquired. I lost no time in tracing the river farther up above the rocks and could trace it in a N.N. West direction till we lost sight of it in the mountains . . . From our heights we could see the main body of the large Lake bearing direct East distant 12 miles. Consequently the plain on this side runs upwards of 12 miles in width and from 12 to 6 in depth being bounded in the East by the large lake on the West by the river and the North by mountains over which no passage can be found. The land on the opposite side seems to be of the same description as on the river. Abundant feed for sheep and cattle and a considerable portion adapted for cultivation. Even on the top of the heights good feed is found and everywhere the kangaroos are swarming in flocks and are large and excellent eating.

TUESDAY 26TH. The night was stormy beyond conception . . . we proceeded 4 miles up the river . . . where the falls pour over the rocks. We plunged into the water middle deep when we succeeded with much struggling to reach a rock, but we then found the water so deep and the current so rapid that we could venture no further . . . I now endeavoured to follow the fall upwards (that is up the river bed through the gorge.—Ed.). I had to ascend perpendicular rocks and one which I held by gave way and precipitated me several fathoms down . . . The weather cleared and we could observe the Frenchman's Cap bearing W.S. West distant 35 miles, which corresponds to a nicety with our reckoning. We can see about 20 miles forward over the river . . . the river certainly runs more to the southward and northward than I have marked on the chart.

MONDAY 25TH SEPT. We had spent a very uncomfortable night; at early daybreak . . . went to examine the river . . . but found every place unfit. The chart can no longer be depended on as the position of the mountains not as marked on the chart. We have not seen a single kangaroo this day. I now write my letter to Mr. Hellyer which we shall fix tomorrow on a pole on the large plain on the opposite side with a white flag. We shall cross his track tomorrow within a few miles of this place.

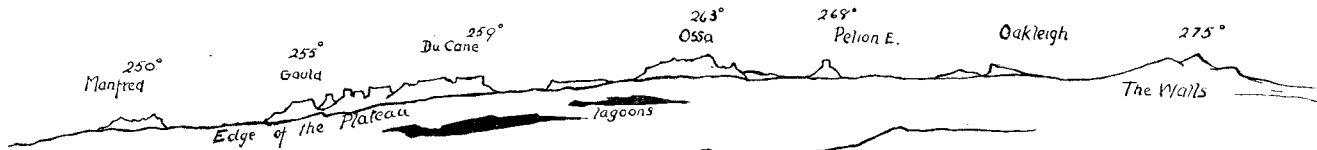
The Lofty Eminence Whence Jorgensen took his Observations.

Jorgensen had walked approximately seven miles up the Ouse parallel to the Great Lake, passed a right-angled bend in the river to the bottom of a high mountain covered with snow, to a place where the river pouring between two stupendous rocks which later cost him days to negotiate. This leads him plainly and unmistakably to the Gorge of the Ouse at Liawenee.

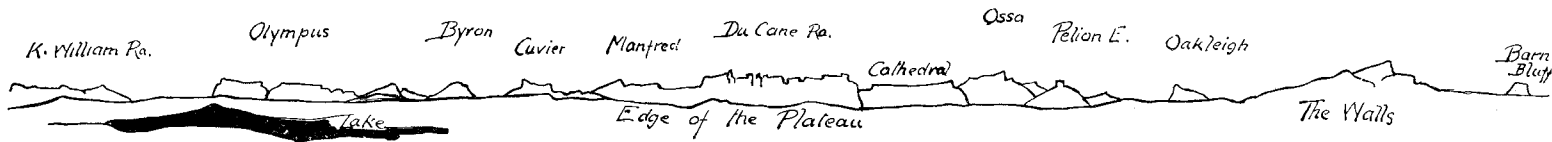
His estimated seven miles tracing of the river, his "stupendous rocks" and his latitude all agree to place him on the high broken ground a little above the old bridge leading to the Banks homestead, on the right hand side of the H.E.C.'s present road. This indeed would be the first sheltered camping ground after leaving the Swan-bay corner. The broken ground piles up in successive steps to the summit of Split Rock some three or four miles back from the river. One of the first of these steps is known as Big Hill. From this summit Jorgensen took his bearings. From this summit only does the sky-line coincide with his description (see Skyline No. 1). From the lower hills, the lakes and river-bed are not yet discernable. The possibility of Split Rock itself being his look-out-post was considered for some time, but Jorgensen says nothing about *CLIMBING* his snow-covered mountain and indeed, in weather such as he describes the proposition would be uninviting. An

SKYLINE

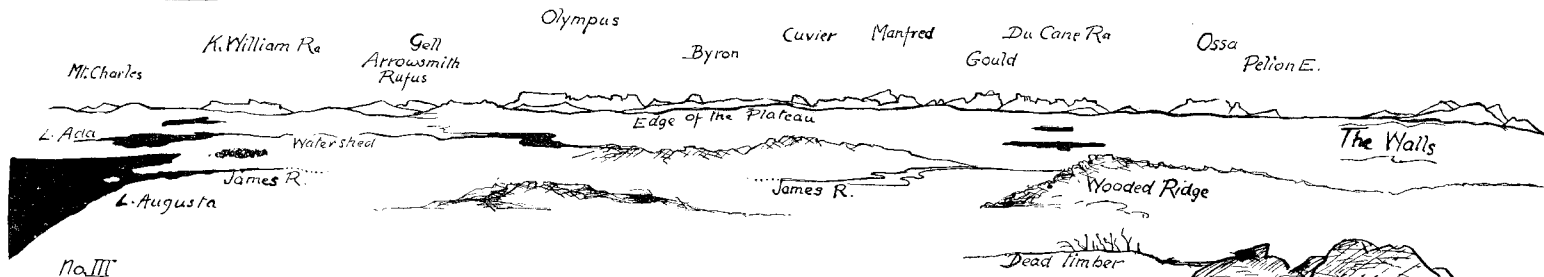
- (1) Western horizon from Big Hill near Liawenee.
- (2) Western horizon from Split Rock.
- (3) Western horizon from Little Split Rock.



Skyline No. I.



No. II.



No. III.

W. MESTON AND R. A. V. MCCULLOCH

actual reconnoitre from the top of Split Rock makes it plain that Jørgensen never saw the mountains from that point. Cradle Mtn. and Barn Bluff become dominant in the N. West; the gaps close as further peaks are raised to view, and the whole western sky-line alters out of any similarity to that described in the journal, forming a continuous wall boundary which encircles the plain without gap or break. (See fig. (Skyline) No. 2.)

Big Hill

There is a certain method apparent in Jørgensen's classification of mountains, lofty eminences, &c. His "mount" is snow-covered, as were the tops of Wild Dog Tier to the north, similar in height. His Table Mt., clear of snow, obviously must be considered a lesser eminence. This is the one place and the sole occasion on which he records a clear view and fixes his latitudes and on the strength of this he laid out his course and orientated himself in the country. Here in the N. West quarter rises the higher and nearer mass of the Walls approximating reasonably enough to the bearing on which he expected the appearance of his "Peak". This group of mountains converges in a crag-and-tail formation which could tolerably well accommodate itself to the anticipated reverse of the "remarkable flat-topped peak" which Flinders described as having "the appearance of an extinct volcano".

Once this is accepted the rest of the deductions become inevitable. Jørgensen, faced with an enormous circular sweep of open moor, identified it with the blank amphitheatre on Scott's map, and fitted Scott's arbitrary mountain ranges to the circumscribing horizon of peaks visible to him.

The course of the Ouse can be traced north-westward as far as little Split Rock which forms the next landmark in the vast expanse of moor. The numerous lakes are identifiable as Lakes Ada and Augusta, the Bar, Double, and Little Split Rock Lagoons. On the S. western horizon Jørgensen saw, as one may see to-day, first the summit of Mt. Cuvier, then Manfred—a gap—Mt. Gould and the Ducane range—a gap—then Ossa, probably snow-capped, and finally the tips of Pelion East and Oakleigh. The apparent gaps provide his promised road to the West Coast. The Ducane mass, "*higher than anything he had seen in this country*" received the name of his patron Dundas, and Ossa he named the Parson's Hood.

The summit of Cuvier is Jørgensen's most probable identification of the Frenchman's Cap. The real Frenchman's is not visible at any of those points of Jørgensen's Route from which he describes it. It is of course obvious that the mountains we know to-day as Dundas (3920) and Parson's Hood (2850) can by no possibility be seen from the Central Plateau, because of the greater height of the intervening ranges. This applies also to St. Valentine's Peak (3637).

Note, however, that in Scott's map the "*Peak*" is placed considerably to the south of its actual position. A line drawn from the Big Hill to Scott's location of the *Peak* will fall within a few degrees of the skyline position of the West Wall.

JOURNAL—Continued.

WEDNESDAY 27TH I now shall set down the bearing which I took on a hill exactly due West and 12 miles distant from the Great Lake in latitude 41°-42°. From the summit of a lofty eminence I had found an opportunity, in very clear weather, to observe the whole of the surrounding country; I mean very near the two rocks mentioned under the 24th of September. The country appeared to be vast plains (certainly the most extensive in Van Diemen's Land) encompassed by ranges of mountains, divided by numerous rivers, those to the Westward of the Ouse abounding with lakes and lagoons. The extent of the plains may be more easily estimated when I mention the bearings and distances of all places I marked down at the time. The Frenchman's Cap bore S.W. by W. 35 miles; Mt. Dundas, W. 36 miles; the Parsen's Hood, W 1/2 N. 34 miles; other mountains apparently of the same range, from W. by N. to N.W. and so on without interruption, till they join one, the bearing of which was, where we stood, exactly N. about 7 miles distant. In Scott's map no notice is taken of the mountains which form a junction between the range in the N. West and the Frenchman's Cap; the most conspicuous of these is, one of great height far loftier than any I have yet seen in this country, which we named Mt. Dundas; and another we marked Parson's Hood. From the same eminence whence I took my observations, I found the bearing and distance of Table Mt. to be S.S. West 12 miles. This mountain which is situated not far distant from Lake Fergus must ever afford an excellent guide to travellers coming from the North-West parts of the Island. Our greatest distance from Hobart Town was at this time about 100 miles. The country we had traversed exhibited a variety of soils; on the high plains we found rich red clay, partly overspread with small stones and producing feed for sheep. These were dry in all sorts of weather. But all these cannot be seen from the high plains or any other part of the Great Lake . . . Anyone travelling some small distance to the Southward . . . will completely miss sight of them. From the heights it very clearly appeared to us that there existed a practical opening into the extreme West country immediately to the Southward of Lake Dundas and we intended . . . to shape our course directly for that place.

Retreat

For three days snow and rain continued and the river remained unfordable as it was likely to be in such weather and time of year. Logan attempted to swim it with a rope; Jorgensen to climb through the gorge; their hut afforded, he says, little protection from the weather; in spite of an accumulated store of kangaroo tails, provisions needed replenishing. Jorgensen composed a stately letter to Hellyer in case his colleague should come this way, which was to be left on a post set up by the sanguine adventurers in the midst of their expanse of plain, to guide Hellyer towards Hobart. They retraced their steps, reaching the hut at Patrick's Plains on the 27th September and Ross's farm at the Hermitage the next day. At this stage the fragment of Journal ends.

They found the country disrupted by a raid of Dunn's bushrangers, and rivers still in flood; nevertheless, Logan carried Jorgensen's report of progress, up to date, back to Hobart, crossing the flooded Shannon on a fallen tree.

On October 11th they started again with knapsacks refilled, taking time to examine the country between the courses of the Ouse and the Shannon, which Jorgensen describes with considerable accuracy as to timber and soil.

The Crossing

From their previous camp at Liawenee, they pushed up the east bank apparently as far as Thompson's Rivulet. The James River, almost base-level, drains through Lake Augusta and the moors on the western side. Above the junction, the current slackens, shallows, and the stream widens

out. The Ouse diminishes in volume and its course slants N.N. West toward its source in Lake Julian and the Ironstone. Here the crossing was comparatively easy.

REPORT—*Continued.*

OCT. 18. On the morning of the 18th we arrived at that part of the Ouse which we had first seen after leaving the Great Lake on our former journey. We deposited our knapsacks in a safe place amongst some rocks, and immediately set about measuring the depth of the river . . . but to no purpose; we again resumed our knapsacks and set out for the hut we had constructed on the 24th September last, and where our former career had terminated. [That is The Big Hill, Liawenee.—Ed.] After several fruitless attempts to cross the river, we departed on October 20th and with an intention of tracing it along its banks to its source. The weather was stormy, cloudy, and hazy, so that we could see but a little distance before us. I was now interrupted by a river, also falling into the Ouse and running in a N. by E. and S. by W. direction, and apparently taking its source in that ridge of mountains which is marked "supposed ridge" on the map you furnished me with. A little farther up on the opposite side, a river also empties itself into the Ouse, deriving its waters from a Lake in the western plains. We crossed the Little River (7 miles from our last night's station) which was sufficiently deep and rapid; and then proceeded 4 miles higher up in a N.W. direction . . . and here we observed a place that might be forded. We now proceeded in a direct Western course, ascended stony hills of great height and fixed our abode for the night among some rocks. From hence we perceived the river to run in a N.N.W. direction till we lost sight of it in the mountains.

Little Split Rock

Here the country rises in one of its successive steps to the high rocky lightly-wooded mass topped by Little Split Rock, a very definite landmark on the west bank of the Ouse, visible for miles in any direction across the surrounding moors.

On the east bank, two or three miles farther upstream, rises a smaller peak called locally "the Throne" by shepherds and hunters, or "the Devil's Den", by H.E.C. surveyors. Both these rocks resemble nunataks, standing clear above the glacier-levelled moor. The course of the Ouse bends westerly toward its source in Lake Julian. The sheer walls of Little Split Rock face eastward toward the Ouse, and make a dry, sheltered, and obvious camping-place a little above the altitude of Mt. Wellington. Here, as in Jorgensen's experience the compass becomes unserviceable, and in 1940-45-46 all bearings were taken by the sun at midday. Jorgensen took his, apparently, from the level of the moor. This is the first occasion on which he records a bearing for his "Peak like a Volcano" and plots his general course toward it West by North. [Note: Normal compass deviation in this area is 10° East.]

REPORT—*Continued.*

OCT. 20TH. I stood on a lofty and rocky eminence and, to my surprise, perceived, when placing the compass on a rock that its vibration was so quick that I could make no observation by it. I had to descend to lower ground.

I observed Mt. Dundas bearing S.W., the Parson's Hood S.W. by W., the Peak like a Volcano N.W. 1/2 W., Table Mt. S. by E., the Great Lake about S.E. We had been forced a great way farther to the Northward than was consistent with our views. The country presented **nothing** of service to man; it was rocky and thinly wooded.

SUNDAY, THE 21ST OCTOBER. The weather was gloomy and hazy, but as I had yesterday afternoon taken a view of the country, I found no difficulty in shaping our route West by North. A river about 4 miles from our last sleeping place

presently interrupted our progress. It empties itself into one of the lakes in the plains, and we were again forced into a Northern course along its banks. We were impeded by lagoons and large basins of water. After proceeding 7 miles upwards, we at length observed a place where to cross with the aid of a stout line. Our route now lay thro' thick scrub and over high rocks and stony valleys. The country assumed a sterile and desolate appearance and kangaroos not to be obtained. We were all this time steering for the mountain marked Peak Like a Volcano. We found it difficult to fix on some place among the rocks for shelter during the night. We saw few trees hereabouts; chiefly red and white gum of diminutive sizes.

SUNDAY THE 22ND. After a dark and rainy night the sun came out clear in the morning. We proceeded to the Peak but keeping in a course a little to the southward of its summit. It was so deeply covered with snow that it would have been imprudent to have attempted to ascend the top of it. Difficulties of no ordinary description now began to thicken fast upon us. The snow in some places lay 5 feet deep, and we had to step from rock to rock where the least false step would have proved fatal to us. We made little progress tho' we walked quickly having so many winding courses to take to avoid the higher cliffs, rocky summits and deep gullies. We observed from a lofty eminence that the Peak only communicated with the range of mountains before us by means of uneven ridges of rocks, and we beheld a frightful chasm many miles in width, to the view of bottomless gulph. To avoid these we proceeded a little more to the westward, but were again obstructed by a river. This river runs in a North and South direction and issues from a large and magnificent sheet of water, which is formed between the Peak and the large range of mountains already described. The dreary and barren country around us supplies nothing for food; even the crows had deserted this inhospitable region; our dogs were in danger of starving, but we spared them what little we could out of our stock. During the night our hut afforded but a slight defence against the inclemency of the weather, and we were distressed for fuel.

MONDAY, THE 23RD OCTOBER. The weather continued stormy, wet and cold. We pursued our route in the morning round the South part of the large basin, but, after some painful walking we observed that the lake is the source of at least two rivers; the one is that I have just noticed, the other is broad and rapid flowing towards the S.S. West along the range of mountains and afterwards pursues a S.S. East course. No carts can ever cross in this direction, neither can sheep or cattle be driven across even in the summer season. The snow was falling in a dense shower, our clothes torn to tatters, and we therefore returned over the river. We were about 28 miles distant from the mouth of Pieman's River and 46 from Circular Head. During the night a gale blew hard from the Westward, the snow fell without intermission, and the frost was so severe that the snow on the two ends of the log of wood which was burning in the middle would not melt.

TUESDAY, THE 24TH. The dawning of the morning presented a scene of desolation and terror. The snow had fallen 2 feet during the night. It now became a matter of prudence and of absolute necessity to descend into the lower country without delay. But Andrew Colbert (the black man) seemed to be seized with a species of lethargy and would willingly have remained in the mountain. I was obliged to cut up what flannel I had with me to provide my companions with pieces to cover their feet which were benumbed with cold.

Little Split Rock to the Walls.

The route from Little Split Rock to the "Peak" is not so exactly landmarked but can be placed by elimination. Jorgensen wished to go Westward but was forced North by the lie of the country. This is so to-day. He did not, however, come upon Lake Pillan, whose seven odd miles length seem to lie across any path plotted in that direction, and would have made, with its picturesque chains of inlets and island clumps of pines, almost as imposing a subject for Jorgensen's pen as the Great Lake itself. He crossed a river, the James River, evidently a little below its source, and consequently South of Ginger's Hill. His route, as he says, was a continuous ascent. This is supported by his description of

the country. It places him finally on the highest and most inhospitable area of the Plateau somewhere on the divide between the Pillan and Pine River watersheds, at the foot of the East Wall with the snow-covered "Peak" of the West Wall looking threateningly out of its habitual screen of bad weather ahead. He did not attempt to climb it. He is not to be blamed if it held no attraction for him. He did not penetrate the inner valley containing Lake Ball which lies within the walls, or the outer valley of the Officer's Marsh. He would not have passed without describing the descent of defiles and enclosing saddles or the changed watershed on the Mersey side. He kept to the high and open Southern shoulders of the East Wall or Bluff Point.

The Walls are a nexus of three mountain masses roughly enclosing a triangle with exit or "gates" at the intersections.

The system is placed fortress-like on the tilted northern edge of the Central Plateau with its greatest height facing to the North-West over the Mersey and Forth gorges. From it radiate walls and ridges enclosing several lakes, one of which, Lake Barbara, provides Jorgensen's source of the Derwent and of another unnamed river.

The Lake under the Peak

Lake Barbara lies in an amphitheatre (Jorgensen calls it a basin) between two outlying buttresses to the South-Western side of the converging East and West Walls divided from Lake Adelaide only by a narrow ridge but its outlet falls to the South and its waters eventually join the Derwent drainage system.

This is the lake and it is indeed a considerable sheet of water, which Jorgensen found and believed to be the source of the Derwent. It contains an island and spreads like a star-fish in miniature fiords between the rocks up and down—which under the force of the west wind, the lake water may be seen driven with the appearance of a strongly flowing current.

Here lies the only practicable explanation that has ever presented itself for Jorgensen's description of the lake as the source of at least two rivers. In the scanty shelter of this amphitheatre he made a camp on the night of the 23rd while a gale blew and the snow fell around them and froze on the logs of their fire.

Jorgensen tells a good story. His description of the "bottomless gulph" which barred his way to the Pieman is dramatic enough to justify his turning back.

Actually from the top or shoulder of the East Wall (one more of his "considerable eminences") he looked at the great gorge of the Mersey "miles in width" past Cathedral Mt. and leading into the tangled mass between the Du Canes, the Guardians and the Pelions.

Looking at it in a murky sunset one acknowledges Jorgensen's purplest patches justified.

Considering the weather and the season of the year, a braver man and one more experienced in the country, could reasonably have turned back earlier.

REPORT—*Continued.*

Unwilling to relinquish the object of our expedition, and being desirous of information, I kept to the Westward in my descent, to take a nearer view of the passage I supposed to exist immediately to the Southward of Mt. Dundas. Altho' the weather continued hazy and the snow fell incessantly, we proceeded onwards with great alacrity. The country from Hobart Town to the Peak is one perpetual ascent, and therefore more difficult to travel than when returning.

WED. THE 25TH. We continued in a Southerly direction inclining by the lay of the country a little to the East, and we hailed with satisfaction the appearance of kangaroos, which relieved us from anxiety on the score of wanting provisions. The land now began to assume a more favourable aspect, well adapted for grazing and cultivation. Abounding in wood, such as Stringy Bark and Gum both for building and fuel and affording shelter for sheep and cattle.

After having passed a river we encamped on its banks for the night.

THURSDAY, THE 26TH OCT. The wind was high and the rain poured down in torrents. Since leaving the Peak the weather had been so hazy we could not discern any object we were acquainted with, we therefore travelled solely by the compass . . . The luxuriance of the vegetation, the size and strength of the trees (stringy bark and gum), innumerable tracks of wild cattle; swamps of brush and forest kangaroos all supplied indications of good country and milder climate than we had lately visited. We made several attempts to veer more towards the W. but the nature of the country impelled us towards the S. After passing a river or two we arrived on the borders of a capacious lake which according to our computations ought to be Lake Fergus, but I could scarcely flatter myself that after having observed no marks to steer by for four days past my reckoning should be so correct. What rendered me more dubious, the sheet of water I saw was scarcely inferior in dimensions to the Great Lake, whereas Lake Fergus is marked on the chart as of very minor extent.

FRIDAY 27TH. Everywhere about the lake we observed land which elevated itself in a species of amphitheatre. After walking for several miles over a fine tract of land, we espied the tableland near the Clyde and the two sugar-loaves not far distant from the Shannon point . . .

On our return (to Hobart Town), we avoided the Shannon and proceeded by way of New Norfolk.

We arrived in Hobart Town on the 1st of November.

(Signed) JORGEN JORGENSEN.

Return

After the retreat from the *Peak*, Jorgensen's narrative becomes much less particular. The river he described on the 23rd, rising from the Lake under the *Peak*, he concludes to be the Derwent and accepts as impassable. He notes a rapid descent in his two days' walking and is justifiably doubtful of his identification of Lake Fergus.

To Lake Fergus, bleak and exposed on the high moor within ten miles of the Great Lake, Jorgensen's description will not apply. He has passed a river or two, but gives us nothing by which to distinguish Pine, Little Pine, or Little Rivers.

From his description of country and estimate of distance, it was almost certainly Lake Echo on which he camped on the night of the 26th and the known landmarks of the Clyde and the Shannon settlements could easily be picked up in the next day's journey.

It was Jorgensen's ill-luck that where he had a fixed point to aim at (as in Flinders' Peak and the Frenchman's Cap) he lacked the means to identify it correctly and consequently mis-orientated his calculations—that where he discovered and named a landmark (as in Mt. Dundas) later generations have shifted his names to features which make nonsense

of his description of them—that his references are often related to data, current at the time, which since have lapsed into obscurity—and that his reports of his findings are so concerned in presenting a picturesque case to his employers that they have discredited the bulk of remarkably accurate observation submerged in their turgid rhetoric.

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NOTES

(1) *Cyder Trees* are mentioned by several early writers but when searched for are so elusive as to appear mythical. It took several years and a number of visits to locate individual trees which could be attested by creditable witnesses to produce or to have at some time produced a flow of sap. Examples were recorded by Mr. Allison and his shepherd, and by Mr. Archibald Wilson of the Steppes. The particular trees are still growing on ridges between the Steppes and Miena and near the Lagoon of Islands. All are in the area where Jorgensen describes them.

(2) *Frenchman's Cap*, though one of the fixed points on which all Jorgensen's reckoning depended, is actually not visible from any part of his route. After a process of exhaustive elimination during 1946-7- and 8, there appears one point (limited to a few yards in each direction) near the Skittleballs Plains, where, in clear weather, the very-distant Frenchman's can be described, aligned in the gap of the Little Pine River. There is no evidence that Jorgensen touched this spot.

The Cap is visible again, in clear weather, from the top of the West Wall, but Jorgensen made no attempt to climb his *Peak*, and recorded only the poorest of visibility while there.

From any other part of the Plateau, the intervening masses of Hugel, Rufus, Arrowsmith, Gell and the King William Ranges block any possible view. Even if the altitude were sufficient, the bearing given is an impossible one and the estimate of distance (usually surprisingly accurate) shows that he was looking at a much nearer landmark, one, in short, on or close to the edge of the Plateau and not far removed from the two new mountains which he named Dundas and Parson's Hood.

(3) *Table Mountain*. Table Mt. (3598) lies in a south-eastward direction across the Great Lake from Jorgensen's given view-point. The bearing he records makes it necessary to find another landmark to fit the description, one within the bounds of the Plateau, and, since it is recorded as free of snow, it must be a lower and smaller feature than Split Rock and Wild Dog Tier which are both described as snow covered.

The clue lies in the words "to the traveller from the north-west, must ever afford an excellent guide . . ." towards Hobart.

It was from the north, from the height above Pillans' Lake, in January 1947, that a table-topped ridge near Skittleballs Plains took shape in the required position, south of Lake Fergus. A corrupted variant of the name is still in local use.

Reference to "Eastern Table Mt." and "Western Table Mt." as landmarks in Macquarie's itinerary of 1811 give evidence of established familiarity with more than one landmark of that description.

(4) *James Scott's Chart of the Jerusalem Walls Area*, 1846. Even at this early date the names of Lake Adelaide, Lake Ball, Wild Dog Creek, Bluff Point, and Officer's Marsh, were evidently well-established in current use and something over a century's tenure should protect them from displacement.

Lake Louisa is marked "un-named" in the 1846 survey and the names of "Lake Barbara", "Lake Winifred", and "Lake Nancy", were given by A. L. Meston and C. S. King when they first recorded these lakes in 1927.

In some recently published maps, confusion has arisen between Lake Ball within the Walls, source of Wild Dog Creek and draining to the Mersey, and "Lake Barbara" which lies to the south of the Walls and drains toward the Derwent system.

(Editors' Note.)

(5) *References*. In the Clyde Company Papers and in E. T. Emmett's *Short History of Tasmania* the Jorgensen legend is treated with some reserve.

S. H. Roberts' *History of Australian Land Settlement*, however (chapt. VI) has provided the source of many subsequent quotations.

Roberts claims that Jorgensen crossed "the very roof of the island", forestalled Hellyer by five months in the discovery of the Surrey Hills, and consequently reached St. Valentine's Peak five months before Hellyer named it.

Jorgensen's route, as shown on Roberts' map, is totally impossible. He is represented as having left the Central Plateau near the Fish River, passing to the north of Cradle Mt., yet in travelling from the source of the Ouse he did not cross the Mersey. Had he made such a journey, he must have crossed the river where it is of considerable size and runs through a mighty gorge and heavy timber. Jorgensen never failed to give a highly-coloured picture of his adventures, and had he met with this or with the mighty Forth Gorge we should undoubtedly have heard of it. And if the Ouse was impassable after a September's rains on the Central Plateau, what must have been the condition of these two rivers?

When Jorgensen reached his "Peak like a Volcano", he was impeded on one side by the mountains and on the other by the large river he supposed to be the head of the Derwent; that is, the river ran south. To anyone who knows the country (surrounding St. Valentine's Peak) this statement makes the claim ridiculous.

On the return journey Jorgensen must needs have crossed the Fury Gorge—an impossible feat—and travelled far enough south by way of the mountains we know to-day as Parson's Hood and Mt. Dundas to make the necessary approach to the Frenchman's Cap, returning by Lake St. Clair. Lake St. Clair fits none of Jorgensen's descriptions. It has no mountain-mass resembling the known Peak like a Volcano, and lies far south of the latitude and bearings on which Jorgensen plotted his course. The surrounding country is forested, and a thousand feet lower than the Ouse plateau, whereas Jorgensen tells us that he climbed steadily toward a climax of peak, lake, and bad weather, and that he was distressed for fuel. Finally, the route shown would bring Jorgensen to Lake St. Clair from the west instead of from the east, while the country between it and the settled areas shows none of the abrupt descent and changing character described by Jorgensen on his return journey.

Roberts himself admitted—"If the critic . . . can prove that it was a matter of physical impossibility for Jorgensen to have made the journey in the time, then he has me". The country proves this; and Curr in a letter to the Court of Directors clearly states that the map sent by Jorgensen to the V.D.L. Co. (on which Roberts' argument was based) was a fabrication.

(In Chapter 18, p. 263, of "Governor George Arthur", M. C. I. Levy states that Jorgensen "pushed his way in 1826 from the Shannon to Circular Head", a generosity of estimate which out-rivals Jorgensen's own.)

Editors' Note.—Since the preparation of this paper, a popular life of Jorgensen, "The Viking of Van Diemen's Land", has been published by Frank Clune and P. R. Stephenson, and has added considerably to the existing apocrypha. The chapter on Tasmanian exploration is based largely on Roberts' interpretation, but if earlier claims were made without knowledge of the country, this chapter appears to have been written without benefit of a map. In addition to the earlier claims, these writers credit Jorgensen with the discovery of Mt. Bischoff, identifying the rock which deflected his compass as Mt. Magnet. As Jorgensen describes the camp made among the rocks on the night of the 18th directly after the crossing of the Ouse, it is evident that they did not have access to Jorgensen's own record.

