



NEW ZEALAND
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE
(PROVINCE OF NELSON).

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By His Honor's command,

J. C. RICHMOND, Provincial Secretary.

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Provincial Secretary's Office, Nelson,
May 4, 1863.

HIS Honor the Superintendent directs the publication of the following Report, for general information.

J. C. RICHMOND,
Provincial Secretary.

NELSON, April 27th, 1863.

To the PROVINCIAL SECRETARY,
Nelson :

SIR,—I have the honor to announce my return to Nelson from the West Coast, by the inland route, through the valley of the Buller, and to lay before you, for the information of his Honor the Superintendent, the following report :

I left the mouth of the Buller on the afternoon of the 8th April, and arrived in Nelson at middle day on the 26th, making eighteen days in all ; of these, however, seven days were consumed in cutting a line through the bush, in the gorge between the Lyell and Maruia rivers, a distance of about nine miles on the map, increased to about twelve by the peculiar, rough, and irregular formation of the ground.

This distance could now be travelled in three days instead of seven, by means of the line we have cut, being a saving of four days, which added to one day

employed in examining the road work, makes five days ; this being deducted from the whole time, leaves thirteen days of actual travelling, from the West Coast to Nelson.

From the Port to the diggings at the Lyell, a distance of about 35 miles, we ascended the river by means of a canoe, as I had previously examined the proposed line of road between these places, wherever it was necessary to do so.

We were peculiarly favoured with weather, experiencing only the light rains common in hilly and wooded districts nearly every night and morning, which rendered the journey sufficiently wet and disagreeable, but we found all the rivers low and fordable, and were not incommoded with freshes, except in our passage up to the Lyell in the canoe, during a fresh rather heavier than it is customary to travel in.

In my estimation the real difficulties of this canoe travelling have been much over-rated, both in the ascent and descent of the river, and I believe that careful men of ordinary courage, and with some knowledge of boating, could always accomplish the passage with safety, either up or down.

Of course like all navigation, it requires a knowledge of the channel and its peculiarities, to enable men to navigate it at all times with confidence and certainty, and the occupation is at best, wet, toilsome, and disagreeable.

As long as the diggings are confined to the Lyell, and the Buller below that point, the river must form the best highway for the transmission of goods,

at least in mild and temperate weather, how far it may be available in the cold of winter it is difficult to say.

It is quite probable that, as soon as the bullock-track is complete, a system of packing, either by bullocks or horses, will be established, and that goods will then be delivered regularly at the diggings, without being influenced by the uncertainty of river transit, caused by freshes and floods.

Above the Lyell, the passage of the river is not safe for canoes, the falls becoming much heavier and more dangerous.

The canoes, which always ascend in company, say eight or ten at a time, are worked by natives, and will carry, according to their size, from ten or twelve cwt. up to two tons, occupying about three days in the passage.

The charge for a passage up the river is £2 per man, the price of flour at the diggings is £3 per 100lbs. and other stores in proportion.

When the question of a Road to the West Coast was under consideration, and it became necessary to determine on some particular route on which to commence operations, it was decided, on such information as was then available on the subject, to commence the road at a point in the Big Bush, to which a very fair road was then open, and to pursue, if practicable, the following route, viz.—Through the Black Valley, past the Rotoiti, through the Lake run, then by the river Howard, and round the hill to Roto-roa, up the Leader saddle, into and down the Mangles Valley to its junction with the Buller, and thence along the southern bank of the latter river to the Coast.

The reasons for making choice of this line will be made fully apparent in the latter portion of this report.

I have accordingly examined this line of road, devoting my attention more particularly to the most difficult portions of it, and am happy to be able to state that it is practicable to form a good serviceable road, for pack-bullocks or horses, for the whole distance.

The fact of the country being covered for the most part with dense and tangled bush and much fallen and dead timber, and in places with loose rocks, renders the exploration for road lines, in many places, excessively slow, tedious, and fatiguing, but the real difficulties in the way, though formidable enough, are not so great as I had been led to anticipate.

The road, consisting partly of flat, and partly of side-cutting, will be practicably level, and the work easy of execution from the port to the first difficulty of any consequence, which occurs at a distance of about twelve miles from port, beyond the river Ohika-iti—and the next at about two miles further on; these consist mostly of craggy hill-sides, which will necessitate some patches of heavy side-cutting with rock at intervals, at a considerable elevation, but forming no serious obstacle, and capable of being worked with moderate gradients.

The next difficulty occurs in that portion of the country lying between the Lyell and Maruia rivers, and consists mostly of a gorge, with steep hills on both sides, rugged and broken, but with flat land at intervals (already referred to in this report.)

This part will require careful examination, in order to secure the best line, the chief obstacles being the numerous deep gullies or ravines of all characters and sizes, which furrow the sides of the hills, and the rocky shoulders or corners which almost always occur, where these gullies commence to fall back from the face of the range.

Some of these gullies are very deep, and, in consequence, will materially lengthen the line of road; this, however, is unavoidable.

Large slips also occur in places, and these will give more trouble than almost any other kind of obstacle, from the difficulty of getting a solid track across the face of them, or of rising to such a height as to head them altogether. They are, however, not numerous, and can all be mastered.

From the Maruia to the Mangles River, and up that valley, to its second or upper portion, (some open land intervening between) the country is all favourable for road making. The Upper Mangles, where the valley is narrow, will give some little trouble from the soft nature of the upper soil, which will require ditching and other works, to lay it dry, and render it fit for a road; but the substratum is good, being composed of gravel, and the distance through this description of country is not great.

The gradient up this valley will be easy all the way to the top of the saddle, from which to the Lake Roto-roa is a very easy descent the whole way.

From the Roto-roa to the Howard we have to ascend a range, at a considerable elevation, but with good gradients at both sides, and a favorable soil to work in, with patches of rock at intervals.

From the Howard through the Lake Run, across the Buller, and through the Black Valley, the road is of a level character and mostly on sound ground; the last few miles being through bush, which though necessarily of a softer character is not bad, and is capable of being made a good road.

I may here state that in about a week's time the road will be completed to the Roto-roa, and that drays can now be taken within about six miles of that place.

The works here I am glad to say are progressing satisfactorily.

At the western end of the road, a length of about six miles from the Port was completed on my departure, and the work was progressing at the rate of about two miles per week—should we be able to keep up this rate at both ends of the road throughout the winter, the whole might be completed right through in about four months from this time; but as the winter will probably retard our operations considerably, this time may be extended to six months.

Long before this, however, the road will be serviceable in a measure, at both the eastern and the western extremity.

Besides the actual road party working up the river from the mouth on the bullock track, I have appointed a second but smaller number of men under another foreman, to precede them, and to cut a walking track from three to four feet wide, so as to enable diggers and others to get up and down the river, without the aid of canoes.

This party has also directions to cut all towing paths along the river banks wherever necessary, to facilitate the passage of the canoes up the river.

The overseer of works there, is himself again in advance of the second party, and is employed in searching for, and blazing the best line, as to gradients, fords, cuttings, &c., &c.

The walking track, I calculate, should be finished as far as the Lyell in about four weeks.

I annex a table of the approximate distances be-

tween the mouth of the Buller and Nelson, by the road we are now making.

SOUTH BANK.		O	NORTH BANK.	
	Miles.			Miles.
Inangahua ..	25		35 Lyell River	
Maruia ..	44		42 Newton "	
Matakitaki ..	52		50 Matiri	
Mangles Junction ..	55			
Tutaki ..	60		63 Owen, by Devil's Grip Road	
Roto-roa ..	70		71 Hope	
Roto-iti ..	88		88 Roto-iti	
Entrance of Black Valley Road in Big Bush ..	92			
NELSON ..	138		138 NELSON	

From what observations I have made, the South bank of the Buller, as far as the Lyell, appears to be in every way better suited for the purposes of road making than the North bank.

It is also to be observed that a road on the South bank, will communicate, directly, with much larger tracts of rich and available land, auriferous or otherwise, than occurs on the North side; lying in the valleys of the Inangahua, Maruia, Matakitaki, Mangles, Tutaki, and Tiraumea.

Each of these valleys will require, and must have a road of its own, and each of these roads must join some common line of communication, which will be furnished by the road now in progress.

This brings me to the consideration of another part of this subject. I am not unaware of what has been done, during my absence, to find out a direct road to the Buller, or more precisely, to the Lyell diggings.

However desirable this may be, it will be at once evident, that even if this could be accomplished, it would form but a very small portion of the works necessary to thoroughly lay open the very large and extensive district of the Buller and those connected with it, as besides involving the necessity of having a bridge or large ferry on the Buller, we should still require the road along the river, as just described. To make the system of roads complete, we may probably find a necessity for another line, a continuation of one already commenced, on the north bank of the Buller, by way of the Devil's Grip, to extend as far as the Lyell, or nearly so; this would open the valleys on the north side, the Hope, the Owen, the Matiri, and another considerable wooded valley, named by me the "Newton," and about a mile or two westward of the Maruia, flowing into the Buller, with a general north and south course, apparently 10 to 12 miles long at least, and from five to six miles eastward of what is generally known by the name of the Lyell.

I have every reason to believe that this is the river to the head of which Mr. Rochfort has penetrated, under the impression that he was in the valley of the Lyell.

The latter is a comparatively small stream, from six to eight miles long, with a winding, narrow, rocky bed; the hills rising very steep on each side, and not such a valley as would be chosen for a line of road, nor indeed would it be visible, from its small size, as compared with the stream above mentioned.

From the information I have gained since my return to Nelson, as to the route followed by Mr. Rochfort in his explorations in the Wangapeka

district towards the Lyell, coupled with my previous knowledge of the Wangapeka and Tadmor districts, I have been led to the conclusion that the saving in length of road, by way of Wangapeka, has been much overstated, and that it cannot be more than two or three miles shorter than the road we are now making. It will however be of immense importance, opening out a district hitherto comparatively unknown, apparently rich in mineral treasures, and facilitating that movement of population so necessary thoroughly to make known the resources of a country.

Before leaving this part of the subject I should advert to the claims for consideration of another line of road, viz. a continuation of that already partly made up the Tadmor valley; which presents an easy slope and considerable facilities for road-making, and which was observed and noted for exploration during my first visit to the Wangapeka district, with his Honor the Superintendent, 15th January, 1861.

Beyond the saddle at the head of the Tadmor, the valley either of the Hope or the Owen would offer a practicable line to the Buller.

This was considered in comparison with the one now in hand by the Black Valley, but the latter passing through so much open land, besides having already better communication with Nelson, was, in consequence, preferred, the distance from Nelson by each route being about the same to a given point on the Buller.

GENERAL REMARKS.

I have every reason to believe that as soon as the country is laid open by a road, the diggings instead of being confined to the Lyell, and a few spots on the banks of the Buller nearer port, will be extended at once to the Maruia, Matakitaki, Mangles, and other rivers and creeks, as well as the most workable parts of the Buller itself, for its whole length.

From its small size, the Lyell, should any great number of men gain access to it, must soon be worked out, although it is still yielding gold in abundance, and of the finest description.

The greatest expectations are formed of the Maruia, as a gold producing river.

Supposing these expectations to be realised, and that a large population will be located along the Buller next spring and summer, it will be necessary to consider what will be required to provide for the wants of such a community, and to induce settlers to locate themselves permanently in the country, and I think there are numerous localities sufficiently attractive which might, with that end in view, be surveyed and offered for sale.

On my arrival at the Buller by the steamer "Lyttelton," I was altogether surprised and delighted at the extent and apparent capabilities of the district.

With a broad and deep river, having on both sides a large area of level land, mostly in bush, between the beach and the hills, it appeared to me the very place for a large and industrious working population.

Those engaged in digging and mining must be fed, and here is room abundant for farming operations; the bush is dense, but not heavily timbered, and could be cleared roughly, and grassed down at a comparatively moderate cost. The soil, as far as I can judge, will be well suited for the growth of dairy and other produce, and the pastures on it will be rich and luxuriant.

I believe that a well laid off township, backed by rural sections of various sizes, would meet with ready sale, and that many such as have been driven from their hardly earned farms in the North Island would here find a fresh and congenial field for their labors.

There are other promising districts available for settlement along the Buller, the first of which in point of distance would be the Owika, a fine flat country from 16 to 20 miles from the port.

The Inangahua, 25 miles from port, which is a most attractive looking and extensive district, and splendidly timbered. The Maruia valley and the magnificent stretch of flat land at the junction of the Matakitaiki, Matiri, and Buller rivers, where the land and timber appear to be of excellent quality. These are the principal and most extensive districts, but there are other and smaller valleys along the whole course of the Buller, in all of which some good and available land will be found.

I must now enter into a few details as to what will be required on the line of road along the Buller, in order to give every facility to travellers, and to provide for their safety.

Commencing at the Port I have to make the following suggestions:—

The appointment of a Harbor Master, and the arrangement by him of a set of signals, &c., for the guidance of vessels frequenting the Port.

A good whale boat, or life boat, to be always in readiness, and in full equipment, in case of accident, to be under the charge of the Harbor Master, and kept in a proper shed built for the purpose.

The establishment of a Ferry Boat, to convey passengers across the river, the same to be placed under strict regulations, and in charge of some capable and responsible person, the charges and rules being of course fixed by Government.

The laying out of a Township, on the north side of the river, larger and extending more up the river than by the present plan, and the survey of the back land into suburban and rural sections, a broad line of road being first laid out, leading to the coal districts.

It appears also, that it would be desirable to reserve a breadth of road between the river and the town and other sections, as the necessity for a long Wharf or Quay for shipping purposes, will be felt as the settlement progresses.

The reserve of the island lying a short distance from the mouth of the river for public purposes.

The laying out of a township at the commencement of the road on the South Side, above the Maori Reserve, proper reserves being made for the ferry and other purposes.

A Reserve for an Accommodation House, about 12 miles from Port, say at the first river Oluika.

The laying out of a township on the Inangahua River where the line of road crosses it, a ferry being established, and a reserve made for it. (The present ford is ordinarily about knee-deep and 100 yards wide, with fine flat shingle; a good site for a ferry exists just above.)

This I anticipate will be a most important station, as any road leading from the Buller to the Grey, must be taken from this point up the Inangahua valley, and down the Mawhera-iti to the Grey. I should strongly recommend that at least a foot-track be made between these important rivers.

The establishment of a ferry on the Buller as near the Lyell as possible; the river is not adapted for a ferry at that point, being rapid and dangerous; but a safe part of the river could be chosen, say a little above, and a track cut along the banks to the Lyell. This suggestion would apply to any other portion of the river where diggings might be established on the north banks, and to which a road was not made.

A ferry and reserve at the Maruia; in this, however, we have choice, as a favorable site exists for a bridge, a little above its mouth, and I believe a bridge could be built as cheaply or nearly so, as the additional length of road could be made to the fordable part of the river, where the ford is in two branches, with an island between, each 100 yards wide and two feet deep; a place for a ferry could be found close by.

A foot-track up the Maruia (this has already been blazed for some distance,) to communicate with the road from Hammer Plain to the Grey.

At the Matakitaiki, a ferry to be established; a very good place exists for it just above the present ford, which is in two branches, each about 60 yards wide, and two to two and half feet deep; (also a foot road up the valley.)

I may remark that just above this river, the Buller is fordable in ordinary weather, the Matiri valley lying opposite, of considerable breadth and extent, and apparently offering facilities for a road being made up it. Above this we come to the Mangles, which we do not cross, except where it is very small, and arrive next at the Roto-roa, or Big Lake. Here we have a good ford, eight to ten chains wide, and two feet deep when low, but ordinarily much higher. A ferry should be established here with a good large reserve.

A bridge will, I think, be needed on the Buller, somewhere just below Roto-iti, where the banks appear to be high and favorable for its erection, and the river of no great breadth. I should remark, however, that this part of the river is easily passable in ordinary times, and is neither deep nor broad.

At the junction of the Black Valley and Big Bush roads, a reserve to be made for an Accommodation House.

It is quite probable that I may have neglected to mention many points of interest connected with the Buller district; but should such be the case, they shall all be included in a supplementary report.

My report on the Buller and Grey Coal-fields shall be prepared as soon as possible; and I shall conclude this with a few brief remarks on the subject of railways, which may not be inappropriate here.

Looking to the probability of a railway being at no very distant day required to connect the large and important district of the Buller with Nelson, I have from time to time directed my attention to the subject, and since my last journey, am enabled to state that a line, indicated generally by the course of the main south road, viz., by Wai-iti Valley, Motueka Valley, and Motupiko Valley, thence to the head of the Buller, and down that river by way of the Devil's Grip, could be easily carried out, that the gradients would be favorable, and the works not heavy, at least as far as the Maruia, below which greater difficulties would have to be overcome, but would not be insurmountable.

The bridging of the large rivers and numerous smaller streams and gullies would form considerable items of expense, the more so that the general level of the line would require to be kept high to be clear of the very heavy floods to which the Buller is subject.

The line already described by way of Tadmor Valley to the Buller, would also offer an easy route, but not I think with such favorable gradients as that above described; it would however have this advantage, that should the Wangapeka and Karamea districts be opened by railway, this line could be formed as another branch of the same.

With reference to the practicability of forming a railway from the Wangapeka Valley to Nelson, my acquaintance with the features of the country in and about Wangapeka, as far as the Blue Creek diggings, the Motueka Valley for nearly its whole length, and also with the country intervening between it and Nelson, enable me at once to state that a railway could be formed without any formidable difficulty, from Wangapeka to Nelson, that the average cost would not probably exceed £3,500 per mile, (possibly not £3,000) without including the purchase of land.

There would be a choice of routes, viz., one by way of Wai-iti Valley, over the range into, and down Motueka Valley to the Tadmor range, and over the Tadmor range into the Sherry and Wangapeka plains. Or instead of going into the Tadmor, proceeding further down the Motueka valley, to its junction with

the Wangapeka, up which river a line could be taken to the Wangapeka plains.

Another and perhaps a preferable route would be from the Wangapeka plains, and down that river to its junction with the Motueka river, thence down the Motueka to the flat land at Lower Moutere, and round the shore of Blind Bay, or by the course roughly indicated by the road between Moutere and Nelson.

This last described line would also serve for opening the Batten coal district, should it prove to be of sufficient importance, as reported on by me last year.

I have, &c.,

JOHN BLACKETT.

Provincial Engineer.