

D7919/3(L)

DIARY OF
DR. FREDERICK EMIL PENNER.

(One of the Medical Officers of the
Overland Telegraph Construction
parties).

April 4 to June 6, 1871.

1.

Tuesday, 4th April. Left Peake Station. Distance 14 miles to Albeguckina on the Neales Creek. Plenty water.

Wednesday 5th - 6th. Dist. 14 miles to Hanns Creek. Remained shoeing horses.

Friday 7th. Good Friday. Dist. 13m from Hanns Creek to North Creek and Cecilia Creek. Plenty water.

Saturday 8th. Distance 14m. From Cecilia Creek to Mt Hamilton Otcallora. Very little water on the road. Plenty in the Neales $1\frac{1}{2}$ dist of this road. Mr Both took his horses to water there.

Sunday 9th April. Easter Sunday. Dist. 7m to Swallow Creek (Rocky waterhole). Heavy thunderstorm. Rain all night. (Mr Both).

Monday 10th April. Dist. 11m to Hawards Creek, (Storm Cr - Christmas Creek. Plenty water.

Tuesday 11th April. Dist. 10m to Boxwood flat. Rainwater on the road. (Nor)ton lame). Good country. 3 emus on the road. Cold night towards morning.

Wednesday 12th April. Started 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ o'cl am travelled to a waterhole on the road under a sandhill. Distance 18 miles. Crossed the Treuer. Large waterholes full of it. Plenty ducks and waterfowls, fired at dingo and missed. Beautiful country through valley of the Treuer. Road very bad after the rain. Passed a camp along a fine waterhole. Changed horses on the road.

Thursday 13th April, 1871. Distance 14 miles. Awakened by a chorus of singing birds. Started 9o/cl. Passed up the creek a beautiful large waterhole full of water. Heavy sand but beautiful grass.

2.

Passed 10 miles from starting, 3 drays and a flock of sheep belonging to Mr Rounsevell. Went 4 miles further on. Plenty bushes and high grass around us. Travelled from 9 o'clock am to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pm.

Friday 14th April. Started 9 o'clock am, cool morning with strong breeze from the east. Most beautiful country for pasture. Plenty green feed. Meet a turkey. After one hours travelling came to a creek, with a fine waterhole (head of Stevenson), 3 hours more travelling, sandy but over the most beautiful grass country with bushes and trees, came to a large swamp where we turned onto camp. Distance travelled 12 miles. A bullock team carrying wire was also in camp there. Two brothers, one suffering from feb. bil. Gave him medecines. (£1.10).

Saturday, 15th April. Started 8 $\frac{1}{2}$. Cold night. Plenty dingoes. Beautiful morning. After 3 hours travelling came to Mt Kingston. A fine waterhole, full where the road crosses the creek. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours later we passed Edith Springs over a rough road, (limestone) and by 3 o'clock we came to a creek in sight of a fine hill, (Mount Crispe). On a small waterhole we camped. Travelled distance 17 miles. Last 9 miles over stony and poor country. Another waterhole a little further up the creek.

Sunday 16th April. Remained in camp. Very hot in the afternoon. Clouds low, NW.

Monday 17th April. Dist. 15 miles. Fine clear morning, cool. Started 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ am. Rough stony road. Came by 12 o'clock to a creek. A fair waterhole along side the crossing, (Upossum waterhole). Came on good road. Across splended grass country to a creek with plenty water. By 2 o'clock turned onto camp. Shoeing. W.S.E.

3.

Tuesday 18th April. Started by 8 $\frac{1}{2}$. Cool wind from east. Rough stony road, only now and then good sandy or loamy country. Splendidly grassed. Passed a camp where was a mark that there was water nearby. Came by 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pm to Abminga Creek, crossed it on the road and turned onto camp close to a waterhole where there is a blacksmith's forge left. Very hot in the afternoon. Distance 18 miles. Arrived by 3 o'clock.

Wednesday, 19th April. Cool morning. Started 9 o'clock am. Very bad road, overtook a horseteam of Mr Rousevell, travelled to 12 o'clock when we camped close to a waterhole within a mile of Abminga Creek. Distance 8 miles. We had to cross several creeks with steep banks. Splendid grass around camp. Rousevell's men camping close to us.

Thursday 20th April, 1871. Beautiful morning. Started 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ am. Left the main road and went on a new track across to the first road formed there. By 11am, came in sight of telegraph party and met also a Mr Knuckey who came out to meet us. By 2 o'clock arrived at Charlotte Waters (Lady Bacon) where the depot is, another mail had arrived from Adelaide the day before. Very hot in the afternoon. Mr Knuckey told us that the blacks were troublesome. Distance 15 miles. Evening cloudy and westerly wind.

Friday 21st April 1871. This morning started at 8 $\frac{1}{2}$. Heavy sand. Camped Breakfast Plain by 1 o'clock to change horses. Very hot in the afternoon. Saw a horse on the plain belonging to Rousevell. After 3 hours travelling over stony, hilly ground, arrived at Mr Knuckey's camp by 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ pm. Distance 24 miles. Mount Daniel.

Saturday 22nd April. In camp. Water very muddy and scarce. Compared route with Stuart's route. The latter seems is westward to the former. Stuart did not see Charlotte Waters.

Sunday, 23rd April. In camp. Mrs Renner's birthday. Cloudy, hot, warm night. Mr Aldridge and Mr Giles at the camp.

4.

Monday, 24th April. Started 9 o'clock. Went along the line for 5 miles, heavy sand road. Had tea at the camp. Afterwards left the line and followed general road. Beautiful grass country. Thick scrub, red sand. Passed over a sand hill by 2¹/₂ between 2 hills and came in a flat where we camped about 1 mile south of a waterhole in the Finke. Plenty birds. Distance 14 miles. (Mr Knuckey 12 miles), (from 9-30 o'clock travelling). A man Sandy, went along with us for Mr McMin's Camp.

Tuesday, 25th April. Thunder and lightning all night. No rain, clear and cool in the morning. Wind east. Started 8¹/₂ am first part of road good. Afterwards fearful sandy. Had to unload to get over a sandhill. Came past some sandrocks where the telegraph line goes between 2 rocks and got in the bed of the Finke. No water there. Over a fearful sandy road with two sandhills, came to another Sandrock in the Finke and found water. The Sandrocks are dotted here and there in peculiar shapes all over the plain and produce a peculiar appearance. Some look like chapels others like crowns etc. Came to camp by 3 o'clock. Distance 14 miles.

Wednesday, 26th April, 1871. Cool morning started by 8¹/₂ am. Along a plain with good road. To our right the Finke coming through a gorge. The rocks steep and high tabletopped. The road went along winding and ascending.



5.

Came over a stony rise and descended in the valley of the Finke. Fearful heavy sand all along the Finke. By 1 o'clock pm crossed the same and camped on the N.S. Water brackish. The men tell me there are fresh tracks of natives. We passed today, Mt Musgrave. Our camp is N.W. of Mt Musgrave. We passed through beautiful timber and the country is well grassed. Plenty birds of all kinds, parrots, pigeons, black cockatoos.

Thursday, 27th April. Bitter cold morning. A blackfellow made his appearance with sunrise; he remained at 100 yards, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting. Started 8¹⁵ am. Heavy sand for a mile. Good road, through well grassed country, the Finke to our left all along the telegraph posts. Left the road to follow the line and travelled through sandhills covered with scrub and porcupine grass towards north till 4³⁰ o'clock pm. Came again on the road when descended through a gorge winding towards S.W. Came to water just at sunset, about 6 o'clock pm. Distance 25 miles.

Friday, 28th April. Cool night. Plenty dingoes. Started 9 o'clock. Kept to the valley bed of the Finke, crossing and recrossing. Passed beautiful timber, given mark for telegraph posts. Some very ancient trees. Plenty bushes belonging to the Darling country. Spinifex, acacia, polygonum, saltbush, etc. etc. Water brackish and not in abundance. There being plenty grass and everything still in bloom with the rain. This country looks well. Came to camp after crossing to the left, (west) bank by 3 o'clock. Plenty black cockatoos. Sandy got a kick from his horse early in the morning, luckily, no bones broken.

Saturday, 29th April. Cold night. Started by 9 o'clock am. following the Finke to the junction with the Hugh. The road follows the creek only now and then cutting off a bend. The telegraph line is to the East of the Finke through the sandhills. Entering the valley of the Hugh, we saw the Camel Camp and close by, the Depot, arrived by 11 o'clock.

Sat. 29th April and May 17th. Ammonia could have been given as smelling salts. Ammonia injections were also given for snake bite.

6.

Delivered mail. Attended on an Afghanistan camel driver who had been bitten by a snake, gave him Ammonia, injected, (illegible ? Antimon) subcutaneous and in a vein. Washing my clothes, I lost a gold ring.

Sunday 30th April, 1871. In camp. Beautiful waterhole round the Depot. Good water. Cloudy and warm. Cold towards morning.

Monday, 1st May, 1871. My patient very much better. Bill to Mr Hart (£2.2.-.). Adv. and medicine to Mr Bacon and his cook. Started 10 o'clock am. Road heavy and sandy over some steep hills. Beautiful timber. Plenty big sheoak. A new tree, fine shrubs, saw all the Darling and Murray shrubs only no (illegible). Crossed the Hugh twice, camped on the East bank about 11 miles from Depot. Not much water but good.

Tuesday, 2nd May. Cloudy morning after cool night. Magpies round the camp. We have seen none on the road before. Started 8 $\frac{1}{2}$. Camels arrive. Kept on road on the Eastside of Hugh, heavy and sandy. Porcupine country. Crossed the Hugh twice, the last time returning to the Eastside. Met at our last crossing, Mr Musgrave. Came to camp of Mr McMinn on Hugh by 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ o'clock, pm. Hot, sultry, cloudy. Sandhills well timbered. (The Ov.) Telegraph Line along road, without crossing creek.

Wednesday, 3rd May. Had a long chat to Mr Musgrave and then late to bed. Mr McMinn sends a man to show the road to his camp. Very cloudy in the morning. Started by 9 o'clock am. Bad start, heavy sand and steep sandhill. After an hour's delay got over it. Travelled for two hours through red sandhills with porcupine and sheoak trees. Beautiful shrubs on the road. We came in sight of a beautiful landscape formed by rugged conical hills, pretty high and steep. We rounded them and came through splendend valleys down to the Hugh to Mr McMinn's camp by 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pm.

Thursday, 4th May. Cloudy, gentle rain through night. Remained in camp. Very cloudy all day.

7.

Friday, 5th May. Cloudy, but no rain in the morning. Wrote letter to Mr Todd. Rain set in about 10 o.cl. pm., wind N.E.

Saturday, 6th May. Heavy thunderstorms through the night with heavy showers. Showers in the morning. Clearing up after sunset. Wind W. I did not feel well, very bilious.

Sunday, 7th May. Beautiful day. Wrote letter to Mrs Rr.

Monday, 8th May. Bitter cold night. Bright morning. Started by 10am. Good road through hilly country, most part over loamy flats. High hills to our left. Met one big kangaroo. Passed through a pass and came down to the creek. Came to camp by 3 o.cl. pm. Distance 15 miles. Peculiar rocky country. Mr Musgrave joined us in camp, a good waterhole. Mt Birrell, W side of Hugh.

Tuesday, 9th May. Cold night, bright morning. Beautiful weather. Started by 9 o.cl over good road through a hilly country. Ranges to eastside of road. Over hills and across well grassed plains between peculiar shaped rocks, over sandhills with porcupine. Our track nth of a big bend of the Hugh. By 1 o.cl we crossed the same and kept on travelling through good country, now and then over beautiful flats, now and then over porcupine grass hills, for a while through thick scrub till we came to a mark on the road indicating water. We came to camp by 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ pm. Distance 18 miles (?). The water we passed crossing the Creek, is brackish. Good water here in a small creek. Plenty kangaroo grass.

Wednesday, 10th May. Cold night, bright morning. Started by 9 o.cl. Good road over hills for a few miles afterwards in the valley of the Hugh, crossing the same several times. Came to camel camp by 1 o.cl. No water, travelled on till 3 o.cl. All day we had a rocky range on the Eastside of the creek. The road passing through those, we found a beautiful waterhole under an overhanging rock.

8.

Saw a mob of kangaroos in the morning. Noticed the track of a native. Distance 15 miles.

Thursday, 11th May. Cold night. Started by 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ o.cl. Beautiful morning, good road through fine country. Ranges on our right closer to the road. Beautiful grass, flowering shrubs, good timber. Passed a camp, with a mark for water. Rocks like 2 pillars to the left. Following a beautiful grassed flat we entered a pass (through the James Ranges), two natives sitting on the rocks, addressing us, balancing and gesticulating. Addressed plain in white fellow. Through a pass over a stony rise and again in good country. By 1 o.cl we came again to the Hugh, crossed and followed a flat when we crossed again the Creek by 3 o.cl came to a waterhole and camped. Distance 17 miles.

Friday, 12th May. Cold night. Started again early 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ am. Followed the Creek which is narrow here. Under the hills, fine grassed flats. Plenty kangaroo grass. Came again out on red sandhills, partly beautiful grassed and timbered, partly spinifex country, the road keeping for some distance on the west side of the Hugh, cutting off a great bend. By one o.cl we crossed again the creek and halted for camp just where the road and the creek passes through the Waterhouse Ranges. Fine sandy flats under the ranges. Very little water. We had not long turned out when two men belonging to Mr Mills' parties came to us, who were bringing the mail down from the Far North, (Allan and Bonney). Had a letter from Mr Mills. Wrote to Mr Todd and to Mrs Ar, to Lizzie Ar to Mr Phillips.

Saturday, 13th May. Cloudy morning. One of the horses missing, a late start, 10 o.cl am. The road enters a gorge through the Waterhouse Ranges. Road very rough over the stones in the narrow bed of the Hugh. Met a fine shrub with large dark green leaves and white flowers, also a Mallow with large purple flowers. Getting out of the creek on the eastside came over a rise by 1 o.cl. pm. and had a beautiful view of the MacDonnell Ranges. It was a grand sight.

9.

These ranges stretching from West to East in a half circle, their lofty bluffs and steep, almost perpendicular rocks forming a fine landscape. We came here on Mr Mills' line and saw the poles to our right. Over hilly country, through scrub and flats we came by 3 o.cl to Mr Milner's camp on this day. Plenty of water in the creek. Pleasant to hear the noise of ewes and lambs. Met Mr Bullock driver Bichels and had a long chat with Mr Milner.

Sunday, 14th May. In camp, general washing. Beautiful day after a very cold night. This camp is not far from Mr Stuart's camp on the Hugh where a fine waterhole is in the rocks. A marked tree there.

Monday, 15th May. Bitter cold night. Started by 10 o.cl. am. followed the Creek (the) for about two miles. After crossing the creek we followed a flat (valley) on both sides rocky hills. Beautiful grassed flat, the timber great deal burnt. The telegraph line follows this flat. By 9 o.cl we came to a gorge. Looking through the same we had a beautiful mountain view. The hills are high, steep and rugged. Passing through a gorge a little farther on we came to the creek. This gorge is called the Toll gate. The line follows through the first gorge. The road took a direction to the East, the gorges on the north side. We found little water a mile from the camp for the horses and dug for it for our own. Came to camp by 4 o.cl. Distance 18 miles.

Tuesday, 16th May. Started by 9 o.cl. Cool day, rather cloudy. A short distance after crossing the creek the road goes through a flat and afterwards over rises, very rocky. I saw there the Gossypium Sturtii in great numbers and also plenty marsh mallows. After about 3 miles over these rocky rises the road west ends and leads along a beautiful flat. Coming down we had a most beautiful view, a large piece of flat country intersected by well timbered creek is surrounded by rocky mountain, to the left, Mount Burt, rising from a gorge almost perpendicular. Two miles travelling brought us across a creek, coming through a gorge on the right, the Temple Bar.

Having the steep rocks close on our right, we crossed over a number of low rises with plenty of other reefs. We left these ranges running to the east and came through another gully down to the Creek, (the Todd) and shortly afterwards we came to the Alice Springs, Mr Mills' camp. Met here Mr Burt and Mr Hart, in the evening, Mr Milner joined us. Arrived at the camp by 3 o.cl. Distance from Tollbar to Temple Bar 6 miles, from there to Alice Springs, 11 miles.

Wednesday, 17th May. Mr Hart took the mail on to Mr Woods' and Mr Harvey's sections. The Afghanistan attended to by me for snakebite had a nasty sore where I had injected the (illegible? Ausonia? unable find this word in
?Ammonia early pharmaceutic book).

Thursday, 18th May. Davis took the men to the construction parties. Cloudy and hot. Thunder.

Friday, 19th May. No rain the sky clearing. Took a ride up the Charles with Mr Burt. Planted seeds of melons. Fine grassy country. A few drops of rain during night.

Saturday, 20th May. Mr Mills came to the camp. Clear night.

Sunday 21st May. Cold morning. Wind S.E. Clear. Attempted a rocky hill to get a good view. Clear night. New moon. Attempting the hill I found a very beautiful shrub with shining green leaves.

Monday 22nd May. Bitter cold. Ice in the wash basin. Windy day, S.E. Suffered from sore eyes. Mr Mills left for the other camp. Read Stuart's journal of 1861.

Tuesday, 23rd May. Bitter cold. Wind S.E. After dinner had an excursion south of the camp. Followed the Todd through a gorge. A fine sight, the rocks are rising perpendicular from the bend of the creek. Came across a valley between the ranges, rounded them at the S.E. side and

ascended a low hill, where we had a fine view to the east and south east. You see the uninterrupted of the Todd for a long way as it winds its way through this big plain south of the Ranges. Far to the east the Fergusson Ranges. The plain is thickly timbered. Came home late. Mr Woods' drays arrive.

Wednesday, 24th May. Very cold night. Queen's birthday. Suffered a good deal from sore eyes. Mr Woods' drays started in the morning to return to S.D. Mr Mills' horse teams return to camp. Washing and mending. Wind east.

Thursday 25th May. Fine morning. Wind E, a few clouds towards the E. Horse teams loaded for moving camp. Bullock drays returned.

Friday, 26th May. Fine. Finished loading. Started by 12 o.cl. Passed through the MacDonnell Ranges. Rough road partly, mostly good road. Came by 5 o.cl. to camp on a waterhole, under the north side of the Ranges. Water not good, got better by sinking. Plenty rocks round the camp, a gorge to the east, a hill to the west. Plenty grass. The telegraph line passes here to the east of the road.

Saturday, 27th May. Fine, saw plenty beans on tree, (beantree). In the rocks plenty light blue flowers with fine green leaves. Started by 10 o.cl. am. Followed the line over a plain for 2 miles then for 4 miles through mulga scrub. Country well grassed. Came to the camp of the construction parties by 12 o.cl. Met Dan Davis. Dinner there. Followed the creek for two miles to the east and camped on a long waterhole between the old road and the line. Plain, green timber on the creek and plenty mulga scrub around. Country well grassed, some grasses as high as 5 feet with seeds like oats. The kangaroo grass spread over small plains giving some places the appearance of a wheatfield, shortly before harvest. Pitched tents and partly unloaded the drays.

12.

Sunday, 28th May. New camp. Mr Mills arrives after dinner.

Monday 29th May. Put up tents for stores, for the cook etc. All my horses missing. Tom, our blackfellow, all day, returns without them.

Tuesday, 30th May. Still cold nights and fine days. Mr Mills left by 11 O.cl. Tom went back to last camp for the lost horses. Returned in the evening with them. Mr Mills had met the horses and stopped them. Cloudy and windy. Read Landsborough's rough journal.

Wednesday, 31st May. Blacks fired the country near camp, hunting for rats and other game. There were about 15 natives, they put out again the fires, when requested. Rode over to the Duckpans with Mr Burt, this is a waterhole on the same creek our camp is on. The road passes the waterhole and here is a general camping plain. Wind from East, weather cool, wind cold. Bitter cold in the evening.

Thursday, 1st June. Very cold to 11 o.cl. Mended the tent. Read McKinlay's journal. Cloudy and windy. Wind S.E. Mr Burt rode over to Duckpan. Natives fire the country to the north of our camp.

Friday, 2nd June. Weather continuing the same. A number of natives opposite the creek. Saw one of them with a crippled arm. The arm from the elbow joint to the hand firmly inverted to the arm towards the shoulder, the results after burn. The men were decorated with feathers in bunches on arm, noses and penis. The hair of their head, to a great part cut off close to their skull, which makes them appear bald, only a few (illegible) left (illegible). Rode over to Duckpan in the afternoon to meet Mr Milner. What a pleasure to hear ewes and lambs. Drank success to his enterprises in a glass of my good rum.

13.

Saturday, 3rd June. Weather much the same. Went out with the teamsters. _____ poles. Mr Hart arrives with caravan.

Sunday, 4th June. Weather the same. Beautiful day. Cloudless sky. Made medicines up for the men with the camels.

Monday, 5th June. The same weather.

Tuesday, 6th June. Cloud north and west. Wrote a few lines to Mr McMinn.

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