

Report from Van Diemen's Land Company, Hobart Town

Report by Jorgen Jorgensen of a
journey undertaken for discovery a
~~safe~~ practicable route from Hobart Town
to Circular Head. Nov 8th 1826.

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On the 2nd Sept. Mark Logan,
Andrew Colbert (a black man) & myself
departed from Hobart Town, &
conformably to the instructions you
supplied me with we proceeded
direct for Dr. Ross's farm on
the Shannon where we arrived
on the 6th. We found it totally
impracticable to cross the river
thereabout, & were therefore obliged
to move on to Mr. Patterson's farm
3 mls farther up the river.
We had experienced nothing
but bad weather, & incessant
rain, since our departure
from Hobart Town; we found
it equally impossible to cross
the river at Mr. Patterson's.
We were informed that the river
had never been known to be so
high

as during the present season.

Finding all our attempts to effect a crossing ineffectual, we thought it most advisable to proceed to

Patrick's plains 16 miles farther up where we were told the Shannon was more shallow than lower down.

After having procured two dogs, & filled our knapsacks with as much provisions as they would contain we set out on the 11th. The rain continued to pour down in torrents the whole of the day; & having to walk over high marshes covered with water, & over rocky hills, it was late before we arrived at Patrick's plains, where we found shelter in a stock-keepers hut. We soon discovered that the Shannon had risen to an unprecedented height; the water was cold & the whole country around covered with snow.

I do not attempt here to supply a description of those parts we had already traversed, nor of the country adjacent to Patricks plains, as these are matters sufficiently known to many of the inhabitants of this colony. The river having somewhat subsided, I determined if possible to cross on the 16th; & for that purpose, we left the hut in the morning with our knapsacks on our shoulders well stored with provisions. Owing to some erroneous information I had acquired, I was led to believe that the Shannon was deepest on that side where we were now; & consequently more shallow in the middle & towards the opposite bank. I soon discovered my mistake; for I had scarcely reached the middle, before I got suddenly into deep water, & as the current ran with great impetuosity

+ being encumbered with a heavy knapsack
on my back, I lost my equilibrium
it was not without difficulty that I
was extricated from my perilous
situation. Seeing that for the
present every attempt to cross would
be in vain, I despatched Park
Logan, & the Stock-keeper Andrew
Martin, to Mr Patterson's for a fresh
supply of provisions, that we might
keep up our stock, as I could obtain
none at Rabucto's plains. On their
return ~~journey~~ the following day,
I learned that the river at Mr Patterson's
was a complete sea, & that the inter-
course between various parts of the
country was at a stand. Even at
the Clyde, which is generally fordable,
the Government cart was detained,
not being able to cross. We now pro-
ceeded about nine miles higher up
the river, to a place where we were
informed that the Bushrangers

had fallen a tree sometime previously, but when arriving there, we observed that the rapidity of the stream had given the tree a direction parallel with the Eastern bank, & we had to retrace our steps disappointed. On the 20th after having carefully examined the R. & remarking that it had subsided about 9 inches, we came to a determination to endeavour to cross it in a place which was very wide, but appeared more free of stone at the bottom, than lower down where I had attempted it before. Thus, the 21st the weather being fine, which I had observed to be generally the case with the wind from Southward to Eastward, we proceeded on our journey, & succeeded in crossing the Shannon. During the day we passed over some good land marshes not more than ankle deep in water & the country well wooded tho' not super-abundantly. We saw numerous Cider trees which I was told afford an excellent beverage in summer. White Gum, very tall straight & of good size appeared here in great quantity. Kangaroo were plentiful

we killed some bats for ourselves & the dogs. Towards evening, we arrived at the South-west extremity of the Great Lake, where we constructed a hut for the night. The wind shortly veered round to the N.W. which as well as the wind from the S. W. invariably brings cold weather, frost, rain or sleet; & these had been the prevailing winds since we left Hobart Town. Friday the 22nd, in the morning we set out early in the direction pointed out in our instructions; & after having walked over 4 or 5 miles of marshes & seemingly good land, we were suddenly & 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 R. was the Ouse, or more commonly termed the Big R. The depth, magnitude, & rapidity of the current of this R. far exceeded the Shannon in those particulars. We followed its banks downward for about one mile, & upwards for 3 miles.

but could find no ¹ place where to cross. We were, therefore reluctantly compelled to take shelter in the Bush for the night, at some distance from the R. for we could observe neither tree nor wood near its banks. Saturday the 23rd the weather continued cold & wet; & it was doubtful whether we would be able to cross the R. for some time to come, we put overhauls on a strict allowance of biscuit, & other provisions we were supplied with. I sent Colbert to hunt Kangaroos. Logan remained to guard the hut; whilst I proceeded along the banks of the R. to endeavour to discover a place to cross. I found it every where deep & rapid, it took a serpentine course & often ran in different & almost opposite directions. After tracing the R. upwards for about 9 mls. I came towards the bottom of a mountain covered with snow, & I now perceived the R. pursued an exact Westerly direction. This induced me to imagine that by following its course I should finally be enabled to proceed in my prescribed route without any material interruption, & I therefore returned

To make preparation^s for setting out early in the morning, Sunday the 24th we took advantage of a clear morning. & proceeded at an early hour towards the mountain mentioned yesterday, but after having traversed the same ground I had done the previous day, & walking about 2 miles farther up, I observed the R to take a direction towards the N. This again disappointed our hopes. I entertained some idea, that ~~as~~ we had advanced nearly towards its source, for we saw two stupendous rocks, between which the water precipitated itself with amazing impetuosity & great roaring, which led me to form that conclusion. We ascended a high hill & constructed a hut. I lost no time in examining the country beyond the two high rocks alluded to. & now found that the R flows in a direction from the North-north-west, as far as the eye can reach from the lofty summit whence I saw it. Sept 25th we set out early in defiance of the wet & stormy weather to cross the R about 4 mls higher up where I had observed a number of rocks above the water, & where I imagined we might be able to make our way from one rock

to another, but after having reached one of considerable size, we found the current so rapid & the water so deep, that we were under the necessity of returning to our hut. I have hitherto refrained from giving any particular description of those parts of the country which I had lately traversed that I might avoid tedious repetitions. I shall now endeavour to furnish you with a general description. 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 Sept. Our distance from the middle part of the Large Lake was then 12 mls, & the exact bearing of it East. The country appeared to be vast plains, (certainly the most extensive in Van Diemen's Land) encompassed by ranges of mountains, & divided by numerous rivulets those to the Westward of the Ouse abounding with lakes & Pagoons. The large plain on the Eastern side takes a range as far as the Great Lake to the Eastward; enclosing to the bottom of the Northern mountains. & to the

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Southward is again terminated by the Ouse,
which there takes an easterly direction. The
extent of the plains may be more easily estimated
when I mention the bearings & distances of all
the places I marked down at the time. The
Frenchman's Cap bore S.W. by W. 35 miles;
Mt Dundas, W. 36 miles; The Parson's Hood,
W $\frac{1}{2}$ N. 34 miles; other mountains apparently
of the same range, from W by N. to N.W. & so
on without interruption, till they join one,
the bearing of which was, where we stood,
exactly N. about 7 miles distant. Thus to the
eye it would appear nearly as if the great
western range of mountains extended to the
eastward of the Great Lake; the Northern
mountains, the range marked in Scott's map
adjacent to the Peak like a Volcano,
taking a N.E. & S.W. direction till the same
range joins the Frenchman's Cap, & other
mountains all form a vast circular sweep
& the plains I am describing, sheltered to the
bases of all these mountains. But as the

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distance at which we were placed from the ranges in the West, rendered it impossible for us to ascertain with precision, whether there might not be at the bottom of them & to some extent from them, Lower ridges & forest land, we can not calculate with accuracy the limits of the plains to the Westward of the Quee. In Scott's map, no notice is taken of the mountains which form a junction between the range in the N.W. & the Frenchman's Cap; the most conspicuous of those are one of great height far softer than any I have yet seen in this country, which we named Mt Dundas; another we marked Parsons' Hood. From the same circumstance whence I took my observations, I found the bearing & distance of Table Mt to be S.S.W. 12 miles this mountain which is situated not far distant from Lake Fergus must ever afford an excellent guide to travellers coming from the N.W. part 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

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In the plains we found such red clay, partly overspread with small stones & producing feed for sheep. These were dry in all sorts of weather. On the banks of the R. but not farther than 1 mile from it in any place, we observed some fine black & deep soil, well adapted for cultivation. Closer to the woods, & in a manner sheltered by them, we found ~~great~~^{large} quantities of good marsh-land & surrounding hills covered with trees, but of no very large dimensions, offering good shelter for sheep & cattle. Could we form an estimate of the goodness of the feed from the amazing flocks of Kangaroos which are here swarming about here. I might feel inclined to pronounce this part of the country well calculated for the purpose of farming. The extent, including the marshes & good land we had traversed, from Patucto's plains to the extreme limits of our present excursion cannot be estimated at less than 200,000 acres. Yet I feel diffident in pronouncing absolutely on a point which more competent judges might decide differently upon. The sau-

Signs of wild cattle, & a number of native huts, but deserted at this season of the year. We could not trace any, even the slightest indication of those parts having ever been visited by white man before. Had they been so, the nature of the country the numerous rivers, & great number of lakes & lagoons in the Western plains, could not have escaped notice; but all these cannot be seen from the high plains, nor from any other part of the Great Lake; & it is only by ascending high summits much farther to the N. that a perfect view of them can be obtained. Any one travelling some small distance to the Southward of the plains over somewhat N of Lake Fergus, will completely miss sight of them. The climate is generally cold, & the mornings are attended with frost; but, when the sun occasionally breaks out the weather becomes mild & warm. The range of high mountains in the NW which partly encompass the plains are covered with deep snow & therefore the winds from those quarters are accompanied with cold, rain or sleet.

But the Table Mt though Lofby is free of snow
from the height it very clearly appeared to us
that there existed a practical opening into the
extreme West country, immediately to the south
ward of Mt Dundas; & we intended could
we succeed in crossing its R to shape our course
directly for that place. By instruction pointed
out a route a little farther to the Northward;
but the impracticable character of the country
in that direction left us little room to hope
that we should find a road by pursuing that
track. So far as we had hitherto proceeded,
& for 20 mls farther, a cart & oxcen may be
driven without much difficulty. During my
continuance in those parts, I one day shaffled
over towards the ~~Great~~^{large} Lake, & proceeded a
considerable way to the Northward; & to me
it seems not improbable, that an opening
might be found to the Northward of the West
mountains, leading onto the N. E. country.

What is here meant by the western range of mountains, is that range stretching N & S. & situated immediately to the eastward of the Lough Lake. The weather had from the commencement of our journey, proved highly unfavourable to our views; scarcely a day passed without heavy rains, snow & boisterous winds; so the sun would sometimes appear for a few hrs or minutes then a clear sky. We made every attempt in our power to cross the R. in various parts, but no human art or contrivance could assist us. The depth of the R. & its impetuosity rapidly of the stream, proved insurmountable obstacles in our way & frustrated all our endeavours. Finding it useless to waste more time in an impracticable pursuit, & judging it might be of some service to convey to you, as far as possible the information I had acquired (as I had reason to believe that I had in part crossed Mr Kelly's intended tract) I was induced to fall back on the Shannon, & to despatch one of my

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companions to Town, for the two-fold
object of transmitting you an account of my
proceedings, & procuring a supply of provisions.
On Thursday the 28th, we left our station for
Patrick's Plains & on our return took more par-
ticular notice of the country between the Large Lake
& the Plains than we had done on our route on
the fine marshes I have formerly mentioned may
be said to continue, in an almost uninterrupted
succession, for 10 or 12 miles, stretching to the right
& left; & are well sheltered with trees & wood.
We saw large quantities of stony bark for
building, some 80 to 90 feet in height, &
3 to 4 ft in diameter. When we arrived at
that part of the Shannon where we had on a
former occasion crossed over, we found
the R. to have risen so high that we could not
venture into it, but this caused no less regret
as we could make for Dr Ross's farm, where
we arrived on the evening of the 29th. On our
arrival here we found the country in a state of
alarm; the Natives & even the bushrangers
having lately committed depredations in
the neighbourhood. I have omitted mentioning
that as it was not improbable Mr Bellyer

night descended into the plains during my return to the Shannon. I addressed the gentleman a letter secured from wet, in a proper manner, & exhibited in a conspicuous place, acquainting him with my late movements & supplying such information as I thought might be of use to him, should he find it necessary to visit the inhabited parts in the vicinity of the Shannon. The ensuing morning the 30th Capt Logan proceeded to Hobart Town, & crossed the Shannon on a tree which had been fallen, not far from Mr Patterson's farm since our late departure. The messenger having returned from town with new instructions for me, & being supplied with a proper quantity of provisions & other necessary articles, we again set out from Mr Patterson's on the 11th of Oct., with a view to cross the Ouse either at Thomond's or Ptearn's about 3 mls distant, so to penetrate into the large plain by the way of Lake Fergus; but all our attempts for successive days proved abortive. We therefore finally left on the 15th, with an intention to keep a more

Nestertly course than we had done on our late journey, to shorten our distance if possible, & to observe the nature of the country. We travelled over high, stony, & unprofitable ridges, impracticable for carts. On the 16th we proceeded on our journey, & traversed the country in different directions; & both on the sides of the Shannon & the Curse, as well as in the middle; we saw nothing but stony hills & scrub, intermingled with large quantities of Black-wattle trees.

On the morning of the 18th we arrived at that part of the Curse which we had first seen ~~on~~ after leaving the Great Lake on our former journey. We deposited our knapsacks in a safe place amongst some rocks, & immediately set about measuring the depth of the River. We also traced it down for several mls, & then upwards for a place to cross at, but to no purpose; we again resumed our knapsack & set out for the hut we had constructed on the 24th Sept last, & where our former camp had terminated. After several fruitless attempts

To cross the river in a number of places, we departed on the 20th, with an intention of tracing it along its banks to its source. The weather was stormy, cloudy, & hazy, so that we could see but a little distance before us. The ground we passed over might probably be deemed a tolerably good run for cattle; but the absence of fuel & shelter would render it useless for any other purpose; yet we saw few numbers of Kangaroos. I counted 15 or 16 creeks some of considerable size, emptying themselves into the Ouse. I was now interrupted in my progress by a river, also falling into the Ouse & running in a N by E & S by W direction, apparently taking its source in that ridge of mountains which is marked "supposed ridge" on the map you furnished me with. A little farther upon the opposite side, a river also empties itself into the Ouse, deriving its water from a lake in the Western plains. We crossed the Little River, (7 miles from our last night-station) which wa-

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sufficiently deep & rapid'; & then proceeded 4
mbs higher up, in a NW direction, examining
the Big River with great care as we passed
abovf. The river then took a Westerly direction
for about a mb. & here to our inexpressible
satisfaction we observed a place which might
be forded with some little exertion. We
waded over it far above middle deep. We
now proceeded in a direct Western course
ascended stony hills of great height, & fixed
our abode for the night amongst some rocks.
From hence we perceived the river to run
in a North-north-west direction, till we
lost sight of it in the mountains. I lost
no time in taking a view of the country, & made
various bearings. I stood on a lofty & rocky
eminence, & 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. Most probably iron ore
may be found here in abundance I had
to descend on lower ground & hence

observed Mt Dundas bearing SW. the Parsons
Hood SW by SW, the Peak like a Volcano
NW & W. Table Mts S by E. The Great Lake aboy
SE. The had been forced a great way farther to the
Northward than was consistent with our views, &
we now observed the plains so covered with water
& that the only practicable route for us to pursue
would be that marked in the instructions for
our first journey. The country presented
nothing of service to man; it was rocky, &
thinly wooded, & Kangaroos scarce. Sunday
the 21st October, in the morning the weather was
gloomy & lazy; but as I had yesterday after
noon taken a view of the country, I found
no difficulty in shaping our route, which
we pursued in the direction of W by N.
A river about 4 mls from our last sleeping place
presently interrupted our progress. It empties
itself into one of the lakes in the plains, &
we found it so deep & so rapid that we

were again forced²² into a northern course along its banks. We were every hour impeded by lagoons, & large basins of water which caused much delay, as we were obliged to walk round them. After proceeding 7 mls upwards, we at length observed a place where to cross, with the aid of a stout line, which we carried with us to assist us in our operations. Two of our dogs had nearly perished, as they were driven by the current into a fall, about 2 or 3 fathoms below the place where we crossed. Our route now lay thro' thick scrub, & over high rocks & stony valleys. The country assumed a sterile & desolate appearance & game was not to be obtained, so that we were obliged to subsist entirely on the provisions in our knapsacks. We now began to see some Pine trees but of small dimensions. We were all this time steering for the mountain marked Peak like a Volcano. The weather being very hazy I seized every opportunity to take

the bearing of such points as were known to me.
We found it difficult to find on some place
among the rocks for shelter during the night,
we saw few trees hereabout, those we saw
were chiefly red & white Gum but of discri-
minate sizes. Our firewood was wet & burned
badly. Sunday the 22nd after a dark & rainy
night the sun came out clear in the morn-
ing, we proceeded towards the Peak, but keep-
ing in a course a little to the Southward
of its summit. It was so deeply covered
with snow, that I would have been impru-
-dent to have attempted to ascend the top of
it. As I concluded that we were in a
direct line with Pieman's River, & at no
very great distance from it, I was sanguine
in my hopes that we should in a few
days be able to reach it. But difficulties of the
ordinary description now began to thicken
fast upon us. The snow in some places lay
5 feet deep, we had to step from rock to rock
where the least false step would have

proved fatal to us. We made little progress
till we walked quietly leaving so many
winding courses to late, to avoid the higher
cliffs, rocky summits, & deep gullies.
We observed from a lofty eminence, that
the Peak only communicated with the range
of mountains before us by means of unbroken
ridges of rocks, & at the same time we beheld
a frightful chasm many miles in width, to
be seen a bottomless gulph. To avoid these
impracticable places, we proceeded a little
more to the Westward, but were again obstructed
by a river, which we found means to
cross on a pine tree. This R runs in a N & S
direction & issues from a large & magnificent
sheet of water, which is formed between the
Peak & the large range of mountains already
described. The dreary & 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

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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, & we were dislodged for Tues. Monday the 23rd October the weather continued stormy, wet, & cold. We pursued our route in the morning, imagining we might make our way round the S. part of the Parje Lake; but, after some painful walking thro' exceedingly thick scrub, we observed that this lake is the source of at least 2 rivers; the one is that I have just noticed; the other is broad & rapid, flowing toward the S. S. W. along the range of mountains, & afterwards pursues a S. S. E. 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 down to latter & we therefore returned over the river with the intention of seeking a less uncomfortable place for shelter, than the previous

night. We were about 28 miles distant from the mouth of Rencanis R. & 46 from Circular Head. During the night a gale blew hard from the Westward, the snow fell without intermission, & 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. TUES. the 21st the dawn of the morning presented a scene of desolation & terror, the snow had fallen 2 feet during the night, & the weather was so foggy that we could only see a short distance before us. It now became a matter of prudence, & of absolute necessity to descend into the lower country without delay. Every moment would increase our danger. But Andrew Colbert (the black man) seemed to be seized with a species of lethargy, & would willingly have remained in the mountain, supposing the weather might clear up. tho' our provisions ran

very short. 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. Unwilling to relinquish the object of our expedition & being desirous of information I kept to the Westward in my descent, so as if possible to get between the large plains & mountains to take a nearer view of the passag^e I supposed to exist immediately to the Southward of Mt Dundas. Altho' the weather continued hazy & the snow fell incessantly, we proceeded onwards with great alacrity. The country from Hobart Town to the Peak is one perpetual ascent, & therefore more difficult to travel than when returning. Until the 25th we continued our course in a S. direction inclining from the Bay of the country a little to the E.

& we sailed 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, being in some places well adapted for grazing & cultivation abounding in wood such as Stringy Bark & Gum both for building & fuel, affording shelter for sheep & cattle. After having passed a R we encamped on its banks for the night. Thursday the 26th Oct, we proceeded on our journey early in the Morn, the wind was high, & 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. We now enjoyed the gratification of traversing for many miles a country, which presented

much level found excellent for pasture. The luxuriance of the vegetation; the size & strength of the trees (Stringy Bark & Gum) innumerable tracts of wild cattle; swarms of Brush & Forest Kangaroos; all supplied indications of a good country, & a milder climate than we had hitherto visited. We made several attempts to range more towards the W. but the nature of the country impelled us towards the E. After passing a river or two we arrived in the evening on the borders of a capacious lake, which, according to my computation ought to be Lake Fergus but I could scarcely flatter myself, that after having observed no marks to steer by for 4 days past my rest owing should be so correct. What rendered me more dubious was, the sheet of water I saw was ~~extremely~~ inferior in dimensions to the Great Lake whereas Lake Fergus is marked in the

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Chart as of very minor extent. We remained here for the night. Friday the 27th the weather being fine & clear we had a fine opportunity to take a good view of the country. Everywhere about the Lake we observed land, which elevates itself in a species of amphitheatre all around it. We saw many tracks of wild cattle many native huts, & we killed a panther which must have weighed not less than 150 pounds. tho' the night had been wet & the wind high we felt little of cold. The lofty forests, the ridges which run N N W. & S. S. E. in a sloping direction for a great distance back, covering others of less height gradually form a fence against the Northern & Western blast. After walking for several miles over a fine tract of land, we espied the Lake land near the Clyde, & the two sugar

boared not far distant from the Shannon point) this convinced me it was the Lake Fergus we had left in the morning. Reflecting that we were not more than 110 mls from some inhabited place; that the large river I have particularly noticed on the 23rd mist (which I suppose to be the Derwent) could not be forded for the present, nor for some length of time to come; being short of provisions: our clothes & tools-worn out; & considering that a knowledge of the quiet country I had lately traversed ought to be communicated to you without loss of time I determined to return to Hobart Town, there to convey to you my firm conviction, that at a more favorable season of the year, a road for sheep & cattle, (& perhaps also for carts) may certainly be hewed immediately to the Southward of Mt Dundas; & thence to

Pieman's River & Cape Grim. During our journey, we had taken a circular range; approached the Frenchman's Cap within 15 miles, & explored the whole of that part of the country which is marked "unknown" in Scott's map, & situate to the eastward of that range of mountain mentioned under date of the 23rd inst.

We passed the whole of the afternoon over fine green hills, producing excellent feed for sheep. As the country between where we remained during the night & the Shannon point, had been partially explored by others, & as I imagine no portion of it could be granted to the Company, I refrain from swelling my narrative with a description of it. On our return we avoided the Shannon, & proceeded to Town

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by the way of New Norfolk we
arrived in Hobart Town on the
1st of November.

(Signed) Jorgen Jorgensen

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M.11/3 Jorgen Jorgenson

- (1) Correspondence relating to Jorgen Jorgensen.
- (2) Copies of diaries of J. Jorgensen, including Journey to Ouse Plateau, Report of Jorgensen to V.D.L. Co. on route between Hobart and Circular Head, and Journal kept while exploring from Circular Head to the Pieman River, 1826-7.