

REPORT OF EXPLORATION SURVEYS FOR EXTENSION OF NORTH-EAST DUNDAS TRAMWAY TOWARDS THE WESTERN DISTRICT.

SHEFFIELD TO ROSEBERY ROUTE.

June 13th, 1899.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to submit the following Report on Exploration Survey, Sheffield to Rosebery.

I arrived at Sheffield November 3rd, having sent my assistant, Mr. Marsden, on about a week ahead of me to erect camp and gain what knowledge he could of the district around Sheffield. I found camp pitched at Forth Bridge, near Mr. Luttrell's property, in a good central position for commencing examination of country around Forth River.

After examining country east of Forth River, and taking barometrical heights on saddles, &c., at head of Don River, Dasher River, and along what is known as Staverton Road, two saddles were found in the Staverton Hill, either of which could be reached by easy grades and good country from Sheffield.

I decided to ride out *via* Mount Claude Road, over Forth Bridge at Sloane's house, up the Three-Mile Rise into the Middlesex Country and back through the Wilmot District to camp again, in order to gain a knowledge of the country ahead.

On November 9th I made this trip, noting on my way that the Forth River ran flatly for some miles up its course, being only 540 feet above sea at Bridge (Sloane's), and that the Middlesex country, through which I must go ahead, was 2,500 feet: showing clearly that considerable length would be required to mount from the Forth River up into this high tableland. The most feasible route appeared to be over the Dasher Saddle, around Mount Claude, and up Dove River or Camp Creek Valley.

Camp was moved, on November 14th, to Middlesex Plains, to examine thoroughly this route; but after two weeks spent in exploring the Dove River and adjacent country, I found the western slopes of Mount Claude were very rough; the Dove was a frightful gorge, with cliffs 500 to 600 feet high for some miles along its course; and also, that Camp Creek was nearly as rough, making routes in this direction far too expensive and out of the question.

The Forth and Wilmot Rivers proved also to be deep, rough gorges, with high cliffs on both slopes of Wilmot District, with only small patches of fair country here and there, very expensive for routes up these rivers.

This decided me to accept Hope's Saddle as the most feasible, and after spending a week or two examining Wilmot District, Forth and Wilmot Valleys, I succeeded in obtaining a fairly good route, crossing Forth River about four miles above bridge (Luttrell's), doubling back down River, rising over cliffs in Falls Creek, and up this stream (which flows through a low gap) into the Wilmot country, with a grade of about 1 in 40.

From the southern end of the Wilmot the country is rather easy for railway purposes until the low saddle on the Range, dividing the head waters of the Iris and Vale Rivers, is reached. Here I thought it advisable to commence a prismatic compass and chain traverse from the end of Hall's Track (fixed survey) right through to mineral surveys near Rosebery, in order to map in country, fix mountains, &c., on route, as I found the only charts of the Mackintosh country were mere sketches, and too unreliable to make a proper estimate of direction and distances along exploration.

This traverse formed a reliable base for me to sketch in country as I went ahead, and although passing through very thick timber, requiring a good deal of labour to cut through, yet has enabled me to make far more accurate estimates and maps, which will be valuable in correcting existing maps of Tasmania.

The Iris Vale Divide, mentioned above, is the main divide between the rivers flowing east and west. To the south it rises gradually across Hounslow Heath for 8 miles to the foot of Cradle Mountains, and away past Barns Bluff for miles, probably to Mount Pelion, and also rises in a northerly direction from Mount May Day, about 9 miles to Black Bluff, being a formidable obstacle, much too high to be practically crossed, except at a saddle 2896 feet (43 mile-peg highest point on route), close to the head waters of the Mackintosh, which is here called the Vale River.

The Vale River Gorge at the foot of May Day Mountain proved very rough, with precipitous sides, showing rock, but being the only and lowest valley towards the West Coast, I was forced to accept it. I made choice of the southern slope of gorge, it being not nearly so rough as the northern slope, where the foot of May Day Mountain ends abruptly in great cliffs some hundreds of feet high.

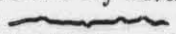
I spent a week about this time, December 30th, cutting a pack track *via* Hounslow Heath, Mounts Back and Remus, down into Mackintosh Valley, to facilitate progress, and get pack horses ahead still a little further, with provisions. This track, marked brown on map (dotted thus on accompanying lithograph), will help future Surveys in this locality, besides being a good channel for prospectors to enter the mineral country around Fury River.

Up to January 24th, all hands were employed examining and mapping country for some miles north and south, and continuing traverse down Vale River on an approximate grade of 1 in 50.

The gorge in Vale River, although very rough and difficult country to negotiate, proved to be much better than it looked; and, after an exhaustive examination, extending over one or two weeks, it was apparent that it only amounted to a little skill being required in setting out a Permanent Railway Survey, for a couple of miles of rather expensive work, to overcome the difficulty.

Continuing down Vale River for six or seven miles, a tributary, Back's Creek, is headed and crossed, after which the country becomes much easier, being mostly fairly steep sidelong country, until the Fury River is neared.

On January 24th, Camp was moved to within 3½ miles of Fury River; and soon afterwards we received our last supplies from eastern end—our pack-horses being unable to get ahead beyond this point. Our progress so far was through country partly open, except in Vale and Mackintosh valleys, but after nearing Fury River the country became densely wooded with myrtle, horizontal scrub, &c., delaying our progress considerably, especially as we had to cut out a pack-track and carry all our provisions, tents, &c., along on our backs. Coming down the Mackintosh Valley, at about 14 miles from summit, we strike a rather rough choppy gully, the Devil's Ravine, which would cause a short break of about 30 chains of rough work in an otherwise good line from Back's Creek. A few miles further on the Fury River is crossed, having fairly easy slopes of its valley, but running very deep into the country for some miles up from its junction with Mackintosh River, which junction is only 680 feet above sea. The small rise in Fury River causes the line to lengthen more than it otherwise should.

I show an alternate route in green (No. 3) on plan from Back's Creek to Fury River Crossing: this is a little steeper grade than route chosen (marked red), shown thus  on accompanying lithograph, but not too steep for a 2-ft. gauge, and has a great advantage of shortening length up Fury River by four or five miles, and also missing the rough cliffs in the Devil's Ravine.

From the Fury River the line mounts again to a saddle on a spur of Mount Romulus, passing through fairly good sidelong country, then falls again gently to saddle at 70 miles, and on to Sophia River Crossing at 72½ miles.

Both the Sophia and Fury Rivers are subject to heavy floods, carrying down timber, &c., but good bridge sites have been obtained, as they are shallow rivers about 60 to 70 feet wide only.

An alternate route (dotted red) from Fury to Sophia River is marked No. 4 on plan. This is a splendid route, with level grades and easy country; its only disadvantage being that it is a little longer than route chosen.

Traversing around the northern slopes of Mount Farrell, with level grades, some steep sidelong and a little rough country is met with for two or three miles, when again we come into easy country, falling, with a short grade, to Suspension Bridge (track) over Murchison. The pack track made from Rosebery to Mole Creek was touched near Sophia River Crossing, thus allowing us to again get supplies by horses. A splendid site for bridge over Murchison River was found alongside the present Suspension Bridge; and from here to Rosebery the route follows the Pieman Valley.

The country between Murchison River and Rosebery Terminus is steep in places, with an occasional choppy gully, but, on the whole, not expensive country for a 2-feet gauge.

About 3½ miles from Murchison River I show my route passing over a saddle: this shortens the line a little, and lifts it up clear of the Emu Bay Railway Works, alongside which we pass from Pieman Bridge to Rosebery.

I spent a week examining a saddle between Mounts Black and Murchison, which appeared to be a more direct route from Murchison to Rosebery, but this saddle proved far too high to be of

much use, as it would require a long length of heavy up and down grades to get over, whilst easy grades and fair country can be obtained by following the valley of the Pieman.

A good track was made from the end of Horse Pack-track, at foot of Mount Remus to junction with Innis Track at northern end of Mount Farrell, this track was necessary to pack our own provisions along, and should in the future be a good base of operations for prospectors into the belt of mineral country near Fury River, &c.

The route explored on the whole, is very favourable for railway construction, especially such a line as a 2ft. gauge light railway: and with exception of one or two short lengths of very rough country in vicinity of Forth and Vale Rivers, would be a cheap route, with grades good enough for any traffic that may be brought to it. It would act as a good trunk line for branch lines into the large mineral belt, running for 50 miles east to west from Forth River to Zeehan and south to Eldon Peak. For the first 25 miles from Sheffield this route traverses the districts of Promised Land, West Kentish, Paradise, Wilmot country, &c., being one of the most prosperous agricultural districts of the whole of Tasmania; and which, if opened up by a railway, would in my opinion return considerable revenue to the Tasmanian Government.

If the Bismuth and Devon Mines, a few miles ahead of Wilmot Country, should turn out payable mines, probably the further extension of this line to Middlesex Plains to tap these mines might prove necessary. From Middlesex Plains, 33½ miles, to end of Mount Farrell, 73 miles, the Route examined passes through, practically speaking, unexplored mineral country, until the splendid Mount Farrell Mineral Belt is met with. From northern end of Farrell to Rosebery the Route passes close by mineral claims, many of which are being opened up with very good prospects. If this Mount Farrell, Murchison district, turns out up to expectations as regards present known existing mineral deposits, it is likely that in the near future an extension of North-East Dundas Tram from Rosebery to Mount Farrell would be guaranteed. To connect Sheffield to Railton, a point on the Western Railway, a line has already been permanently pegged, doing the distance over fair country in 8 miles.

On May 1st, having completed field work of this exploration, I returned to Hobart to prepare plans and report, which are now just completed.

I have the honour to be,

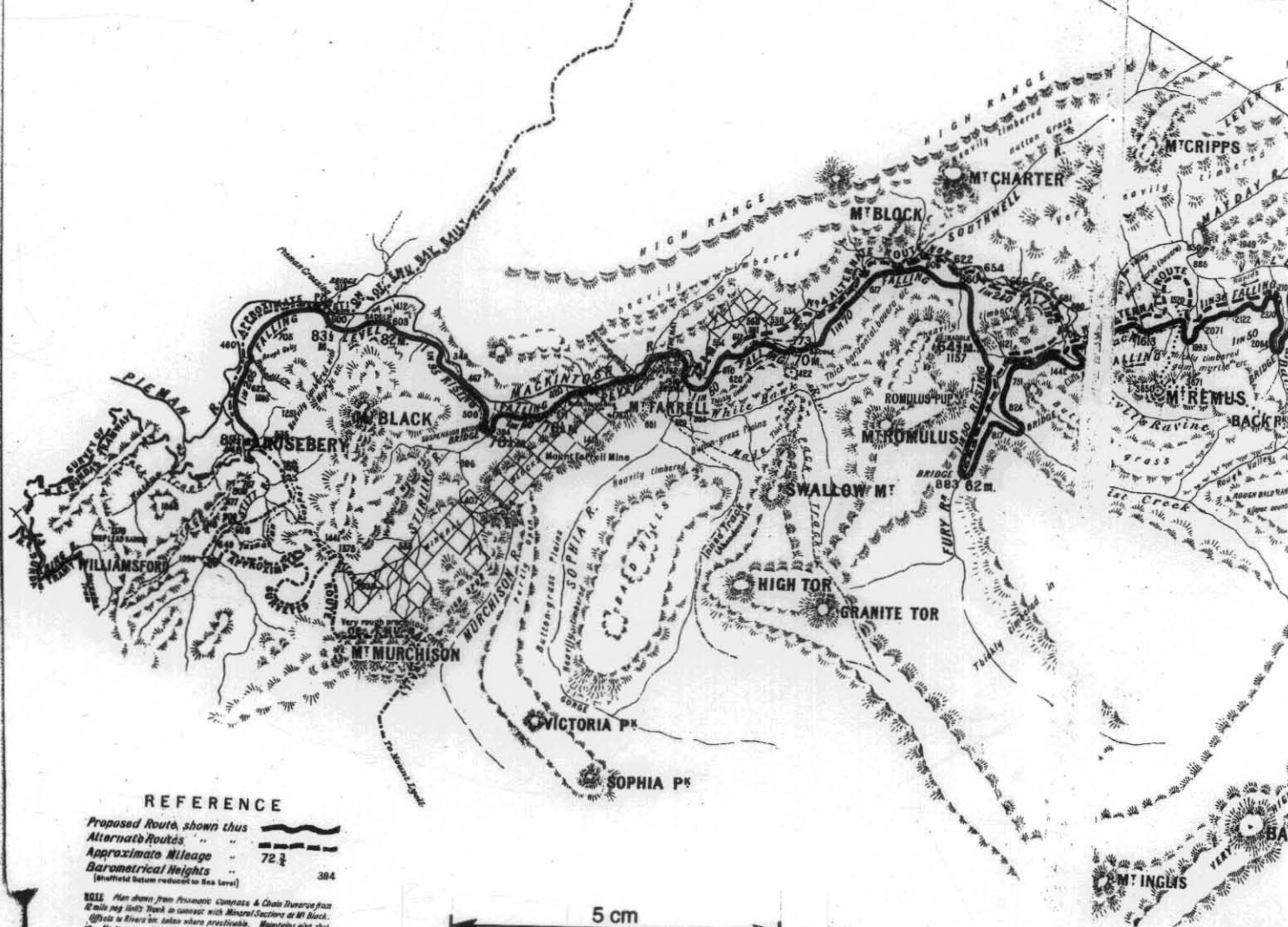
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. ROSS REYNOLDS, *Engineer-in-charge.*

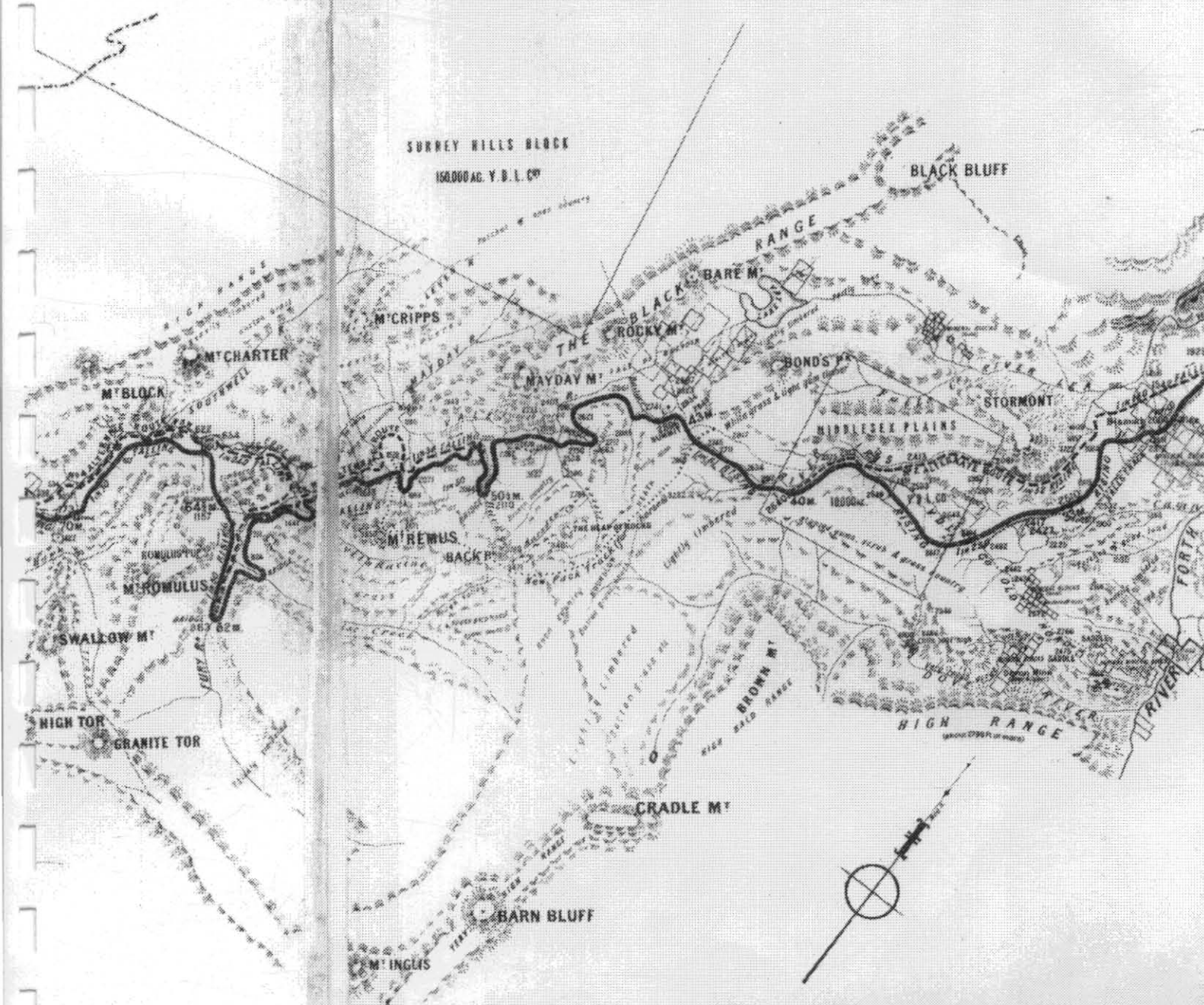
J. M. McCORMICK, *Esq., Engineer of Existing Railways, Hobart.*

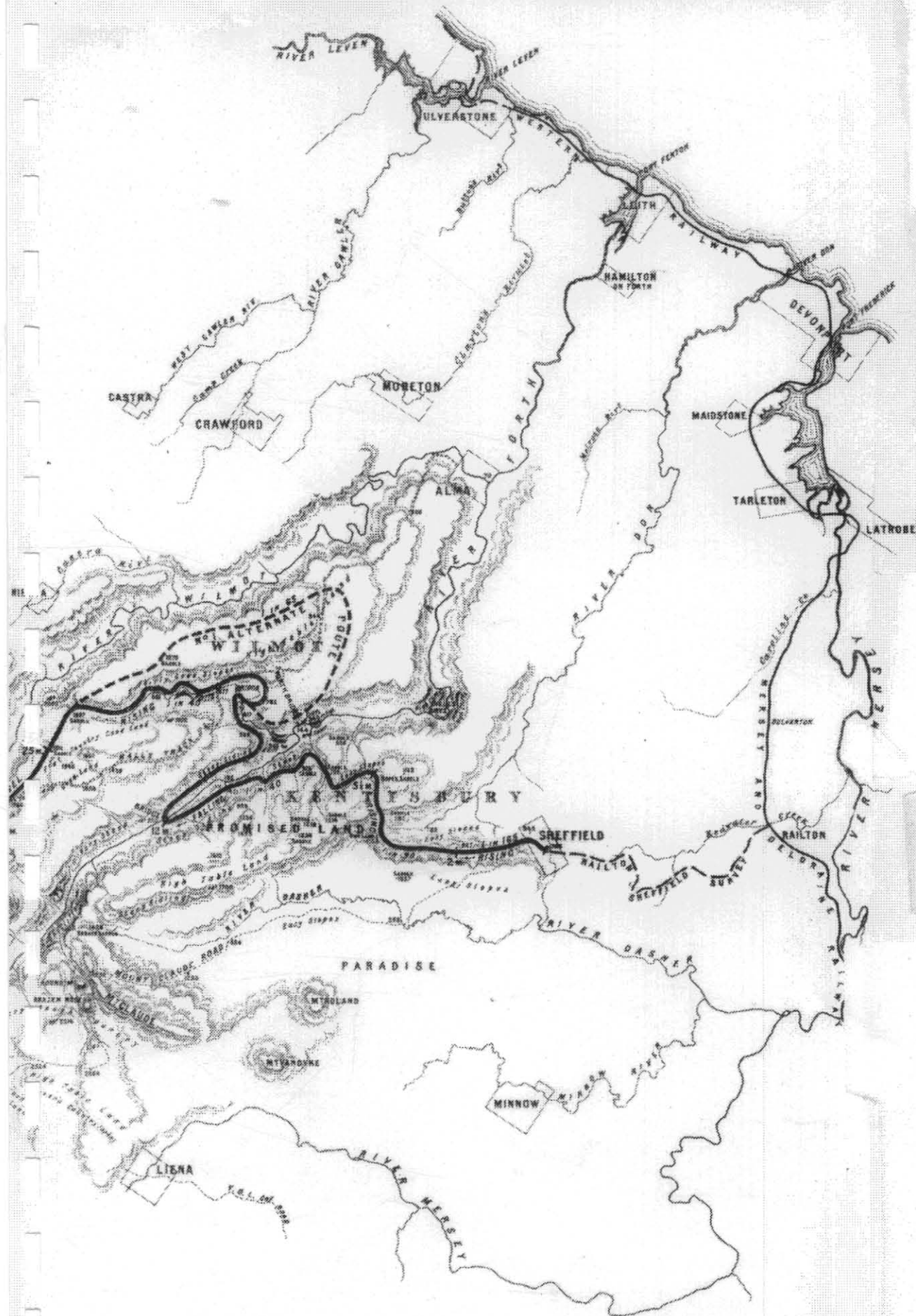
SURREY I
150,000 A



Scale.—Three miles to an inch.

5 cm





Liquid. Rose. Reproducts
46. Sugar in orange
June 13th 1899