

Monday 17 September 1860.

Started from the township of Balranald at noon leaving Mr Burke, Brahe, Ferguson, Langan, McIllwaine and a hindoo with four Camels one horse and some stores. proceeded on the track to Lake Paika with the object in view of finding a short road to Lake Meninda. Rested at 2h 25m pm with the Camels to allow the waggons to overtake us; the country travelled up to that time was chiefly salt bush plains intersected with hills of blown sand, the latter being generally covered with mallee scrub and Porcupine grass, or pines, melaleuca and broom. The more open country supports various kinds of fine salt-bush, Exocarpus, Boree and several other acacias, the ground is throughout very level, the sandhills although very loose and soft seldom exceed 10 or 12 feet in altitude. the soil is all of a sandy nature and the only trace of stone to be seen was a few nodules of limestone cement cropping out on some of the rises. there is at present plenty of graß on all the plains and water in most of the crabholes. the great variety of Salsolaceous plants is very remarkable. Started again at 3h 25m pm passed through a narrow strip of casuarina forest and at 3h 40m came on an extensive plain covered with stunted salt bush and having the soil incrustated with salts (in) which had the taste of common salt greatly preponderated. in the midst of the plain, near the road, is a bank of soft, spongy, white substance, apparently an infusorial calcareous deposit; in this substance not the slightest trace of a saline flavour could be detected; nor did the particles feel gritty in the mouth, Specimen No 1 on Dr Beckler's collection was obtained from near the top of the rise. We camped at 4h 20m pm on a flat about one mile from Lake Paika. There was rainwater in a crabhole, plenty of feed for the horses and camels. the night was rather cold and windy with a few showers of rain.

Tuesday 18 September 1860.

Left camp shortly after 9 o'clock and after passing over a sand rise, came on the SE bank of Lake Paika. Stayed a few minutes at the Paddock fence (Morris' Station) to inquire about the road, and then struck off in a westerly direction round the south side of Lake Paika, under the guidance of a black fellow who had been sent to show us the way to Mr Ross' out-station. The lake appears to be very shallow although we were informed to the contrary; the banks slope very gradually up from the edge of the water to a distance of about 700 links (140 metres - DGP). They are composed of a whitish, firm sand, and are very low except on the E & SE side. After passing Lake Paika we found the country much the same as before, for about eight miles, the only great difference being in the extent of the plains, two of which were very large, the ground throughout was not quite as sandy as that on the south side of Lake Paika. We rested from 11h 14m am to 2h 3m pm to allow the camels to feed and the waggons to up to us. I then took the opportunity of making some circum-meridian altitudes of $34^{\circ} 26' S$, this spot being about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles NWbyW (303.75° -DGP) from the Lake. At 3h 15m being about 8 miles NW of Paika, we came to a belt of dense Box Forest with an underwood of Salsolaceous plants, the soil was here very sandy and of a grey appearance looking very much like the detritus of Granite rocks that I looked about for some further indication of their proximity, but without success. I must say that from the general appearance of the country, the presence would have much surprised me in spite of the look of the sand above mentioned. This belt of timber was five or six chains wide (100-120m -DGP), and there was a slight inclination in the sandy ground from the plain we had been traversing towards that one to which we were approaching. After passing through the above mentioned belt we came to a vary large plain, which appeared to be 6 or 10 feet below the one we had just crossed, this plain contrasted remarkably with the features of the surrounding country. The soil is rather hard and white with a great many holes and crevices through which the water apparently drained away, it would seem to be a perfect quick sand in wet weather, in some places, judging from the marks of cattle hoofs visible here and there. It probably contained a large per centage of Gypsum and I noticed several places where the "Blacks" appear to have been digging for crystals of selenite which they use for making their white paint. On the NW side of the Plain we found the ground to rise again about 8 feet the whole plain had much the appearance of a large dry lake. The vegetation on this plain was not less remarkable than its other characteristics, of Salsolaceous plants there were very few but Marsh Mallows were plentiful, also wild Geraniums mixed with a few heaths and grasses. Scarcely a tree could be seen on the plain, but there were few dead sticks standing here and there. Beyond this we found fine plains of Salt-Bush lightly timbered with Box. At 4h 54m we camped near some water holes called by the "Blacks - Tinn" - where there is an out station of Mr Ross'.