

Presented to the Royal Society of Tasmania by L.B. Rogers
1953

JAMES BELBIN

James Belbin was transported to N.S.W. in 1791, after conviction at the Old Bailey, London, in 1789. Later he settled on Norfolk Island and received a grant of land. He and his wife, Ann Meredith, had six daughters, Mary Ann, Elizabeth, Sarah, twins Harriott and Catherine, and Susanna, and a son, James, between 1793 and 1803, but in 1805 his wife died in child-birth and the six year old twin, Harriott also died. In 1808 Belbin and his children, with the other Norfolk Islanders, were resettled in Tasmania, receiving supplies from the Government Stores. Belbin may have been employed in the Stores as he noted in his memo.book the issue of stores to various ships and the inspection of the stores. He was twice arrested for remaining loyal to Governor William Bligh, deposed by officers of the New South Wales Corps, and for attempting to send an address to him in spite of Lt.Gov. Col. Patterson's proclamation prohibiting communication with Bligh in 1809. In 1811 Belbin went to London to petition for restoration of his rights as a Norfolk Island settler and was granted a free passage back in 1813, land at Cambridge and Government victuals for eighteen months for himself, son James and his new second wife.

RS.90/

1 Pocket Book 1808 - 1810

Small memorandum book in leather pocket book. In this James Belbin noted his departure from Norfolk Island, arrival in Hobart on 3 October 1808, being victualled from the Government stores after having already received blankets etc. in Norfolk Island. He then noted the arrival and departures of ships, their cargoes and sometimes what provisions, etc were issued from the stores. He noted the arrival of Governor Bligh in the 'Porpoise'. Interspersed a bit haphazardly amongst these regular entries were personal memoranda, such as his arrest for support of Governor Bligh: 24 Apr. 1809 'Was forcibly dragged from my children and my dwelling by Mr Lord and a written address . . . of the loyal settlers . . . to W. Bligh . . . also forcibly taken . . .' He was discharged by Rev. Knopwood and Mr. Lord the next day on condition he did not write letters to W. Bligh, 'Mr Knopwood behaved as a gentlemen . . . Mr Lord turbulent and prejudiced . . .' On 21st May 1809 Mr Knopwood read Col. Paterson's proclamation . . . the same evening sent an address to H. E. Governor Bligh signed by many of the Norfolk settlers'.

The first entries, recording his arrival in 1808, are written on the back page, the regular entries of arrivals and departures of ships begin at the front of the volume. A few miscellaneous memoranda appear to have been entered at the back of the notebook (including a note of from The News of the trial of Governor Ficton of Trinidad in the Court of Kings Bench 1806) or in any odd space, including the leather of the wallet (eg. a note that the Government cow shed built by Mr Lord had fallen down killing 12 cattle).

Inside the cover Belbin entered the dates of birth of himself and children and the death of his wife and a daughter at Norfolk Island

(small notebook in leather pocket book)

RS.90/

- 2 *Copy of victualling order 29 Apr. 1814

Victualling from Government stores for James Belbin 'a new settler' and his wife and son, for 18 months.

- 3 *Letter 12 Sept. 1840

Draft of letter signed by J. Belkin, in answer to an enquiry about taxes and fees for inspecting cattle, and dues for slaughtering at the Government slaughter houses, of which he took charge in 1821.

- 4 *Copies of testimonials Dec. 1843

Paper endorsed: 'memorandum of certificates to my memorial to his excellency Governor Willmott to grant me a pension on my retiring from my situation as superintendent and inspector to Government Slaughter Houses', including: J.L. Pedder, who noted that Belbin's care in entering the marks of animals brought to slaughter were of great value in detecting sheep stealing; A. Montague, M. Forster, W. Fletcher, W. Kermode, C. Swanston, John Kerr, G. Boyes.

(2-4 were enclosed in the pocket book)

- 5 Notes by W. Huaspeth c 1953