

IT WAS LONG WAY TO EAGLEHAWK

This is the first of several articles written especially for "The Bendigo Advertiser" by Mr H. J. Biggs, author of the Eaglehawk Centenary Book.

On October 17, 1857, a small group of pioneers, Jane Biss and her son, Charles (10 years), and Mrs. Harris and her three sons, George (11 years), Oliver (10 years), and James (8 years) — embarked from Bristol, England, in the small sailing ship "Chesterholm."

The voyage was to carry them over countless miles of sea and culminate in an arduous journey to the newly discovered mining fields of Eaglehawk.

The little ship was registered at only 738 tons so the voyage could not have been a very pleasant one. In addition, circumstances forced them to travel third class and the combined fare of the whole group for the journey was £67/10/.

For this princely sum.

the master of the ship contracted to supply this weekly food allowance:—

- Biscuits, 3 lb.; beef, 1 lb.; preserved meats and soups, ½ lb.; flour, 1¼ lb.; oatmeal, 1 lb.; rice, ½ lb.; preserved potatoes, ¼ lb.; pickles or vinegar, 1 gill; fish (salt), ¼ lb.; raisins, 2 oz.; tea, 1 oz.; coffee, 1 oz.; sugar, ½ lb.; treacle, ½ lb.; mustard, ¼ oz.; salt, 2 oz.; peas, ¾ pint; water, 21 quarts.

This ration was allowed for each adult although Mrs Harris' sons were only rated in total as one-and-a-half adults.

They must have known considerable hunger as the salt air sharpened their appetites.

Some allowance was made if a delay was caused by an unfavorable wind as in this case no further subsistence money was payable and rations

were continued just the same.

Provision was also made on the contract ticket for premature departure because a master would sail immediately the wind were favorable, whether all were aboard or not.

These arduous conditions must have seemed rather attractive if compared with those obtaining on early convict transports, but it would still require considerable spirit on the part of Mrs Harris and Mrs Biss to bring their little families into such a great unknown land.

Some of these early pioneers actually walked to Eaglehawk from Williamstown and were plagued by bushrangers for most of the journey.

The ticket this little group used on the journey has been preserved and is on display at the Mechanics Institute, Eaglehawk, during the Centenary week beginning today.

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