

Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club.

No. 3.

THE CLUB'S CAMP-OUT AT BREAM CREEK.

By the Hon. Secretary.

Reprinted from *The Tasmanian Mail*, May 20th, 1905.

This club has had many pleasant outings, and it was decided to have a camp-out during the Easter holidays. Bream Creek was the spot decided on, and the Thursday before the holiday a party of seven left in the Nubeena for Dunalley, arriving early in the morning. From Dunalley the members walked to the Bream Creek Beach. A cart with the tents, etc., had previously arrived, so the tents were at once pitched within sound of the breakers. Later in the day two more members arrived at the camp on bicycles.

The chief places to view were the East Bay Neck Canal, the landslip, and the beach. Bream Creek Beach is one of the most celebrated beaches in Tasmania, and is about eight miles in length, with an average breadth of 150 yards; and with row after row of breakers rolling in from the Pacific Ocean it is a magnificent sight. After easterly gales it is covered from end to end with shells; but the members of the club were disappointed in this respect as the beach during their visit was almost bare. At the back of the beach Bream Creek runs for miles, and on Saturday morning the members explored the river on both sides for some distance. Several of the party tried to catch some of the bream, which give their name to the creek, but without result. The creek was once noted for its bream, but years ago some poachers destroyed so many of the fish by means of poison that it has never recovered itself.

On Saturday afternoon the whole party walked about four miles to the scene of the landslide. After the slide had been photographed, a rough examination was made of it; it is on a long, steep, cultivated slope, capped by an acre or so of bush. The ground above the landslide is without a channel to carry off the rain water quickly to the creek below, so that the ground gets thoroughly saturated down to the bed of clay on which it rests, and since the landslip started (about two years ago) the result has been that with every heavy rain the superincumbent mass creeps downwards; this mass is about 10ft. in thickness, and consists of black earth, clay, and decomposed volcanic boulders. The area affected is some four hundred yards long by eighty to one hundred yards broad. There is a curious structure resembling a "kame" of a glacier here. The head of the slip is some

twenty or thirty yards wider than is 150 yards lower down, so as the mass descended it forced the walls at the narrowest portion to bulge up, just like a kame in miniature. It may be stated that the slide has covered the main road, so that it became necessary to make a fresh road below it.

East Bay Neck Canal was examined several times. The canal proper is, roughly, a quarter of a mile long, with a channel dredged far out into the bays at either end. From bank to bank it is about one chain, while it might be fifteen or twenty feet across the bottom. The water is ten feet deep at low tide, while the greatest distance from the water level to the top of the bank is about twelve feet. On each occasion when it was viewed, the tide was rising, and a stream was running swiftly, with more than sufficient velocity to keep the channel clear. From the bed of the canal up to 3ft. or 4ft. above water-level, the ground is pipe clay. The clay is quite clean, and kneads very easily, so there is no reason why it should not be of considerable commercial value.

On Monday fishing was the order of the day, and the results obtained can support the reputation the waters of that district have justly won. Lines were no sooner down than vigorous tugs told that one, or perhaps two, unhappy victims had been secured. The varieties obtained were flathead nearly 2ft. long, rock cod, and colonial salmon. What with the glorious day, magnificent scenery, and numerous birds, the members were only too sorry when the day came to an end.

As to birds: the Flame-breasted Robin was to be seen in great numbers, often a dozen or more were visible at the one time perched on fences or stumps about the fields, flying to the ground every now and then in search of food. They were in splendid dress, and it would indeed be hard to find brighter breasts of red than theirs. The Scarlet-breasted and Dusky Robins were also seen, but not so frequently. The Whistling Shrike Thrush was very noticeable, both in body and song, and might often be heard perched low down on a dead branch, whistling at its best. Many Magpies were about, and their merry warbling could be heard from early morn till close of day. The harsh, far sounding notes of the Black Magpie (*Strepera fuliginosa*) made their presence known as one was approaching them through the bush, and soon the birds would be seen flying from tree to tree.

The heath appeared in full bloom, and was frequented by numbers of honey-eating birds, of which the Spine Bill was by far the prettiest; its graceful form,

chocolate-coloured body, and black and white throat rendering it very conspicuous.

On the way from Dunalley to the camp a solitary swallow was observed. As the migratory birds left in their great streams about six weeks ago, it would be interesting to know what would become of this forsaken wanderer.

The large Yellow-bellied Parrakeet was the sole representative of the parrots that was seen. Some of them were very shy, keeping to the highest gum tops; others would fly just ahead as one was going along.

One evening a couple of Man-faced Owls were heard calling each other in the darkness, but they did not stay long, and soon passed on their way. The Boo-Book Owl was also heard uttering its uncanny cry, "More pork," a sound once attributed to the Frogmouth, and in early days the latter was considered a bird of ill-omen, partly on account of its peculiar shape, but chiefly because of the cry, which, however, is now known not to belong to it.

Among the reeds of the lagoon a Swamp Hawk was now and then disturbed, only to fly a hundred yards or so, and then settle. It was evidently disinclined for soaring to any height as it usually does when roused. On the beach the graceful little Black-headed Dotterel was hunting for food in pairs or parties of half a dozen. Both kinds of Oyster Catcher were there on the same quest. Out in the bay two flocks of Black Swan were seen, but these birds kept at a great distance, as they naturally would after having seen such great numbers of their kin shot down. The black duck was often heard and sometimes seen, but like the swans, they kept at a respectable distance. Of the sea birds, the Pacific and little gulls,

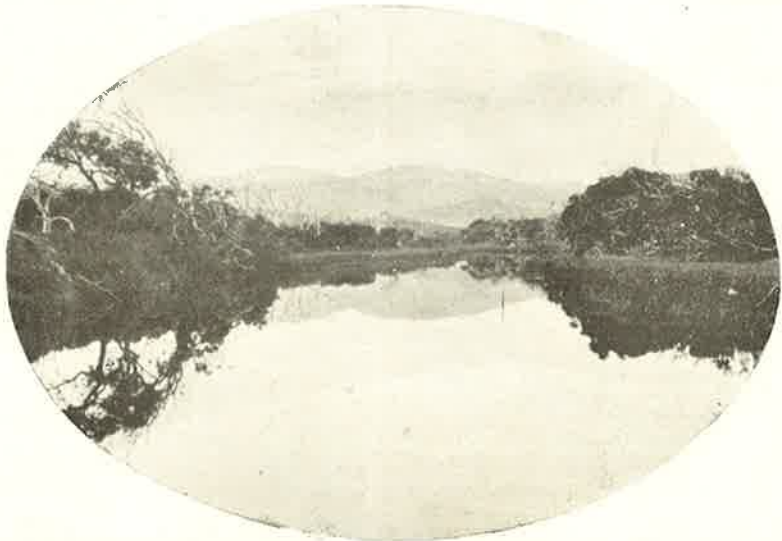
several kinds of petrels, the Australian gannet, and others were observed. Altogether, over fifty different kinds of birds were noted, but it is somewhat remarkable that wattle birds cannot be included, as ordinarily they would have been very numerous.

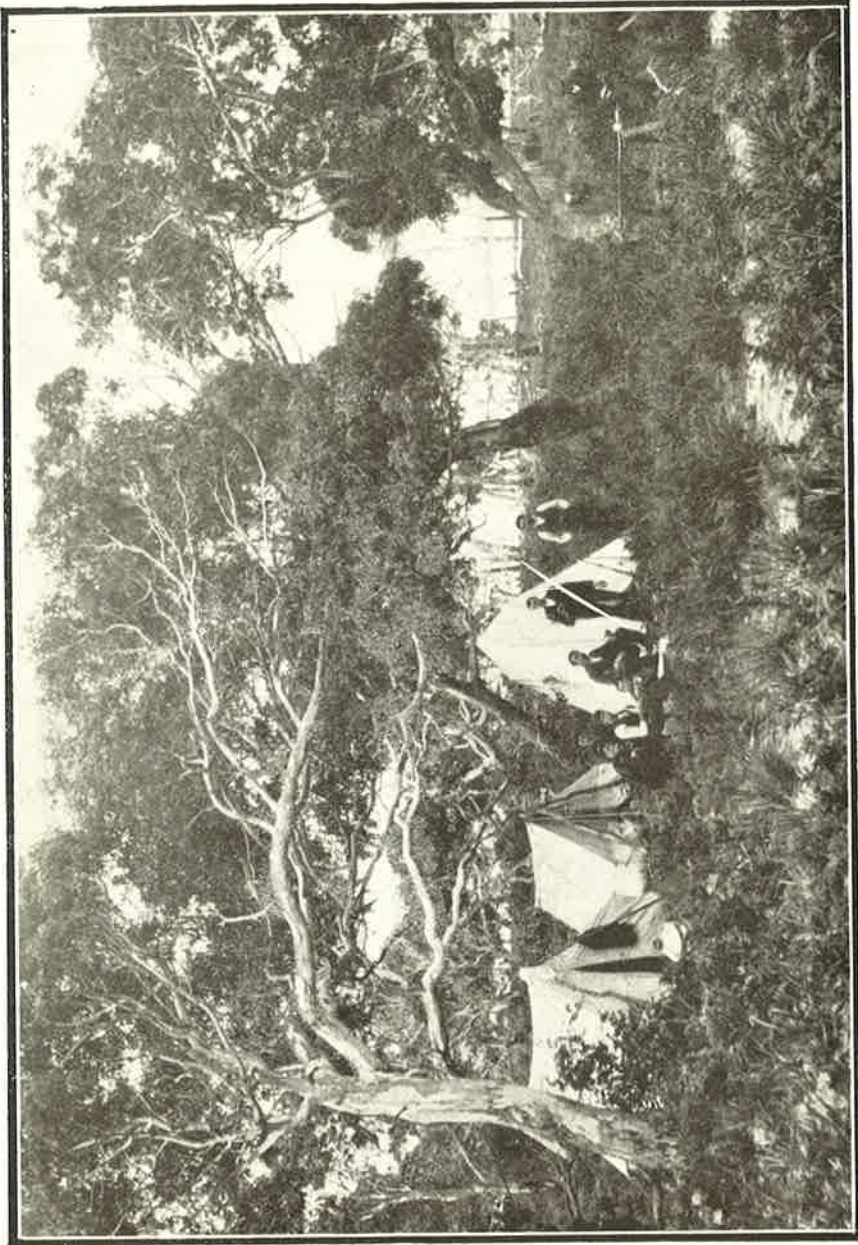
It was unfortunate that no botanist accompanied the party, although it is doubtful if he would have found much. The low-lying ground seemed very barren, and the hills, of the richest soil, were all cultivated.

Several good geological illustrations were to be seen in the immediate vicinity of the camp. The combined effects of the prevailing north-easterly winds, the tides the general shape of the land, and, above all, the East Australian current, have produced two examples on one strand of what is geologically known as a "traveling beach." This movement, which is southward, has pushed the mouth of Bream Creek further and further south, till it now runs three or four miles along the beach, and its waters soak through to the sea, so that Bream Creek now has no mouth. Again, Blackman's Bay was once a very broad-mouthed inlet. Now its entrance is all but choked by this beach, and it is a triangular sheet of water, almost a lake, or lagoon.

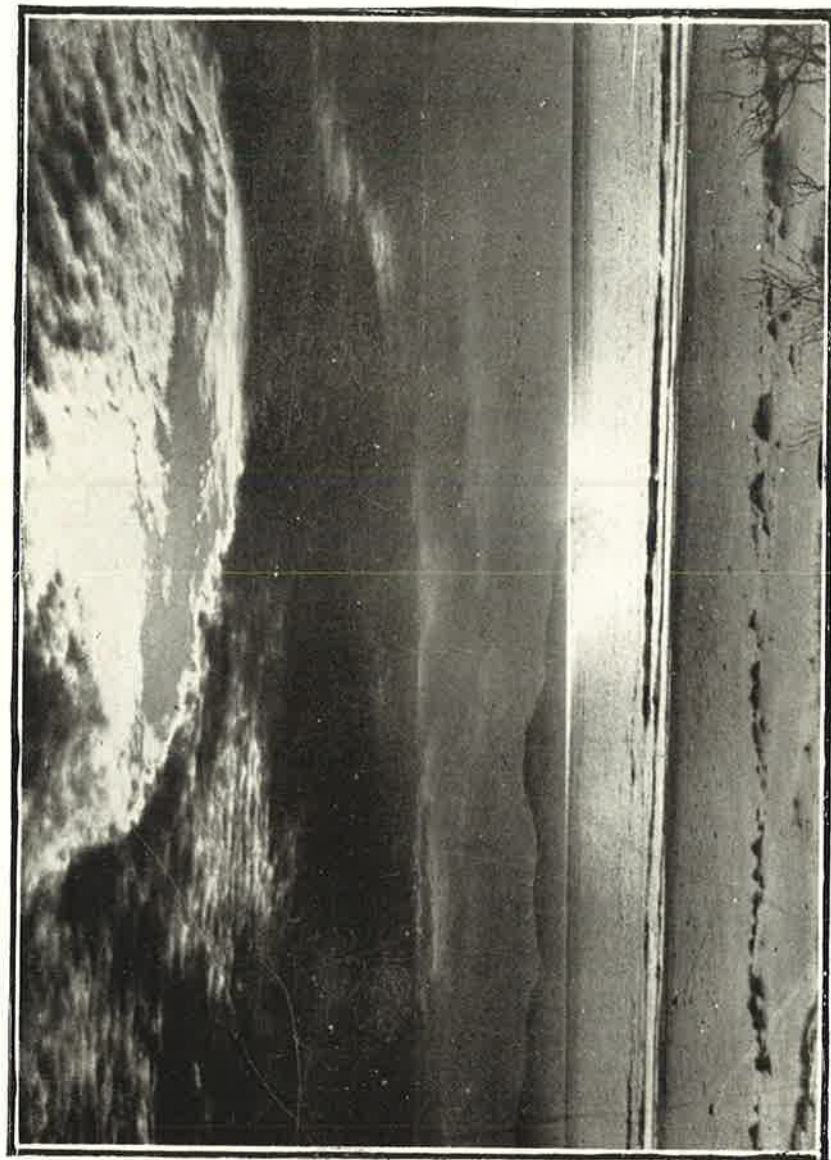
At midday on Tuesday tents were struck, and a cart arrived to take the party to Dunalley. The trip was a most enjoyable one, and the views given herewith will show that the scenery left little to be desired. They were taken by Mr. F. W. Page, of Glenorchy, one of the members of the camp, and it is believed that the views of the landslide are the first that have ever been published.

The thanks of the Club are due to Mr. T. Dumbabin, on whose estate the camp was situated.

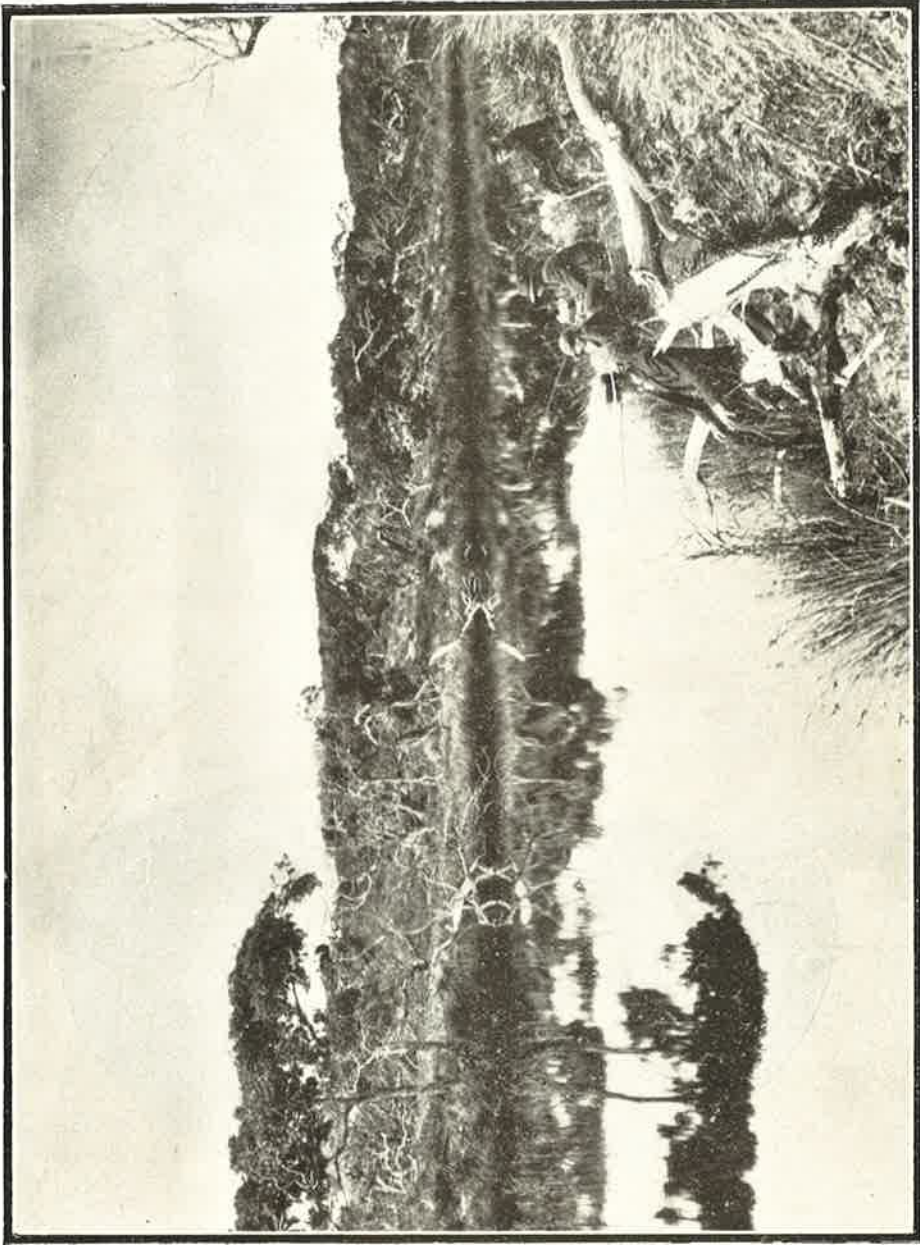




THE SITE OF CAMP.



THE BREAM CREEK BEACH.



THE FISHING PARTY.

1871