

**Helicopter Flight to Port Davey by Members of the
Mines Department.**

Date and Time:

On Sunday 20th May, members of the staff of Mines Department made a flight by Helicopter to the Port Davey Area. The reason the trip was made on a Sunday was because of a favourable weather report for that day, and the possibility of bad weather on the next day, which was really the day scheduled for the flight. The helicopter left Cambridge Aerodrome at 10.35 a.m. reached Geeveston for refuelling at 11 a.m., left Geeveston at 11.55 and reached the Port Davey area at 12.35 p.m. A landing was made at the Mines Department house at Melaleuca where another geologist was picked up. A reconnaissance of the Port Davey area occupied from 12.40 to 1.15 p.m. and the flight back to Geeveston from 1.20 to 2.10 p.m. Geeveston was left on return at 2.30 and Cambridge reached at 3.05 p.m.

Personnel:

The officers of the Department taking part in the trip were:-

J. G. Symons, Director of Mines
T. D. Hughes, Senior Geologist
F. Blake, Geologist
M. Z. Stefanski, Regional Geologist took part in the Port Davey reconnaissance.

Objects:

The object of the trip was threefold

(1) To gain a general idea of the travelling conditions and capabilities of a helicopter. If a plan is to be formulated for the forthcoming field season, it was felt that some idea of the performance of the vehicle should be gained.

(2) To investigate possible landing grounds in the Iron Bound Range Area for the proposed survey next season. A close look at this area showed that possible landing spots, even by winch, were much fewer than that suggested by an examination of the aerial photographs. One probable landing spot on the western end of the range top was hovered over. It would thus appear that fewer field parties can be used than was at first anticipated.

(3) To map the granite boundaries and other geological features north of the South West Cape, including some of the Islands. It was thought by the Regional Geologist that the granite of South West Cape might extend further north than was previously thought. Because of precipitous cliffs it was impossible to examine this area by land. The helicopter flew slowly along the face of the cliff and over certain islands allowing the geologist to note the structure etc. of the rocks.

Route:

The helicopter flew a straight course from Cambridge to Geeveston. From Geeveston it flew westerly over the Arve and south of the Hartz Mountains to the Picton Valley, followed this South to the south of Mt. Bobs

and then flew south westerly to the Iron Bound Range. From there it flew westerly, close to the coast, to Cox Bight, and then northerly to Melaleuca Inlet. It was intended on the return trip to follow the coast line back to Geeveston but, on examining the petrol supply, it was decided to take a shorter route. The Old River was first followed then a deviation made round Federation Peak, the Craycroft crossed south of Mt. Picton, and Geeveston reached by flying over the Harts. On the return trip to Cambridge, Cygnet, and Woodbridge were passed and the Channel coast followed up to Hobart.

Costs:

The total cost of the trip was £336. At this stage it is difficult to make a comparison between this and the cost of ground parties. In the first place much of this trip was simply a reconnaissance which would not have been done from the ground; secondly it was an isolated trip compared with a season's programme; and thirdly it had several objects. Some comparisons may be made however on various aspects of the trip. Early in the year, three officers of this Department walked to Port Davey over the Arthur Saddle to see if a track that way could be opened up. It took them eight days to do the trip which could have been done in 40 minutes by helicopter. The time spent crossing the saddle itself on foot through thick scrub with a lot of horizontal and baurea - was four days: this was flown in about 8 minutes. The reconnaissance near Port Davey took 35 minutes flying time. Had it been attempted by boat it might have taken two weeks mainly conditioned of course by weather and this Cape has about the roughest weather in Australia.

Criticisms:

All members of the party were full of praise for this method of investigation, and very impressed with the capabilities of the machine. Indeed the only criticism was the lack of organisation and delay in the refuelling operation at Geeveston. The ground party were over thirty minutes late arriving at the location and twenty minutes either way were spent in refuelling. However as this was the initial trip of the machine, these operations will doubtless become more efficient. It is also recommended that a government representative be present at these major refuelling centres so that times can be more carefully checked. The times taken by the pilot and members of the Department on the return trip differed by ten minutes.