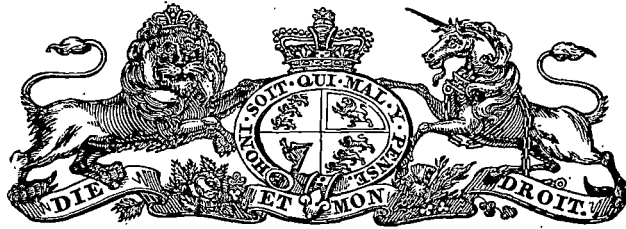


(No. 58.)



1887.

---

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

---

HOUSE TO MOUNT LYELL AND MACQUARIE  
HARBOUR :

REPORT BY DEPUTY-SURVEYOR GENERAL.

---

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



*Crown Lands Office, Hobart, 8th March, 1887.*

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit to you the following Report upon a recent visit to the West Coast.

The objects of this expedition were somewhat varied. In the first place, I was desirous of becoming personally acquainted with the country between Lake St. Clair and Macquarie Harbour, both with regard to its mineral resources and its adaptability for settlement. I was also desirous of ascertaining the value of the reported pine forests of that region. Thirdly, I wished to be in a position to advise the Government as to the tracks and roads required to open up the Western country, in continuation of a work to which I personally devoted some years of hard struggle.

Originally, the party was planned to consist of myself, Mr. R. M. Johnston, and Mr. Perrin; but a number of gentlemen applying to be allowed to go with us, the party ultimately swelled to eight members; the others being Colonel Legge, J. B. Walker, A. L. Giblin, W. C. Piguénit, and H. V. Bayly.

We left Hobart on the 17th, proceeding *via* New Norfolk to the Ouse. On the 18th we travelled in chaise carts as far as Bronté. On the 19th, one cart, drawn by two horses, conveyed our baggage to the Derwent—the party walking. The day was squally, with frequent snow storms. In the afternoon we visited Lake St. Clair, three miles above the Derwent Bridge. On the 20th we reached the Iron Store under Mount King William, and dismissed our cart. During the afternoon we visited Lake Dixon. On the 21st we put our knapsacks on one of the Government pack-horses, and travelled on foot as far as the cleared road extends, a distance of about 26 miles from the Iron Store. The scenery on this part of the route is magnificent, including views of Mount Gell, Mount King William, Frenchman's Cap, Mount Olympus, Mount Ida, and Mount Byron. The region is well worth opening up for tourists and lovers of the picturesque.

On the 22nd we shouldered our loads and proceeded through the bush along a roughly cut track; the travelling was very heavy, and the majority of our party unused to "swag carrying;" we camped during a perfect torrent of rain and hail. On the 23rd we dried our drenched camp and journeyed gaily on, reaching the King River early in the forenoon. The day was beautifully fine, and the scenery grand in the extreme. Crossing the King, we climbed steadily up the Linda Valley, reaching the Iron Blow at Mount Lyell about five o'clock. The 24th was devoted to visiting the Tasma mine on Mount Sedgwick, and in examining the features of the surrounding country. On the 25th we examined the Iron Blow, and then journeyed as far as Lynch's Creek. Examined the King River Company's claim, and on the 26th walked to Long Bay, Macquarie Harbour, a distance of about 24 miles. The 27th being Sunday, was a welcome day of rest. The morning of the 28th was ushered in with a heavy thunder-storm, accompanied by violent showers of rain, and we were unable to make a start before eleven o'clock, when the weather improved. We reached the Henty that night, and were glad of the shelter afforded us by Mr. and Mrs. Osborne. A heavy gale from the west blew all night. On the 1st March we passed through the burnt-out village of Reminé, and reached St. Dizier's Hut, North Heemskirk. On the 2nd we reached Corinna, and on the 3rd the Fourteen-mile Hut. We arrived at Waratah early on the morning of the 4th, and night saw us at Formby. On the 5th we proceeded to Launceston, and arrived in Hobart the same evening.

The incidents of this trip are of no particular interest, and are therefore omitted. The several days' journeys are mentioned merely as a guide to others who may contemplate a similar trip.

The various matters of public interest are best dealt with under separate headings.

## TRACKS.

### 1. *Bronté to Mount Lyell.*

A dray-road to Bronté has existed for many years. It is now in fairly good order, but in winter must be boggy, especially through the Dee Scrub. The elevation of this part of the road reaches 2500 feet, being considerably higher than Lake St. Clair. From Bronté the track passes over sound ground for some miles, crossing the Nive upon a substantial bridge. This bridge

should be tarred and screwed up afresh; it has shrunk from long exposure to the dry weather. From the Nive to the Derwent the country is open, varying from stony banks to soft button-grass marshes. These latter are very soft, and the line will require stripping before a road fit for winter travelling is obtained. I am inclined to think that it would be better to make the road longer by keeping in the timber where the ground is stony. In the vicinity of the Clarence River the ground is very soft for some distance. At Mount Charles, about 12 miles from Bronté, Mr. Orr has a hut where he resides, and from his place it is about three miles to the Derwent. The approach to the Derwent is rather soft, but the gravel is close to the surface. The Derwent Bridge is about three miles south of Lake St. Clair, and I would strongly recommend that a branch cart road be made to the Lake. Leaving the Derwent the road passes over sound ground until it emerges on the Navarre Plains. Here it will be necessary to form some four miles across the marshes. These plains must be very wet in winter and subject to snow. After crossing the Navarre River the road passes over sound ground approaching the north end of Mount King William, under which is situated the Iron Store. Here the cart road terminates, although it would be possible in summer to take carts about five miles further on, and I noticed that the road party had done so. About four miles beyond the Iron Store the road approaches the edge of the great plateau forming what is known as the Lake Country. The greenstone rocks here give place to metamorphic slates, and the aspect of the country completely changes. Mount Arrowsmith may be regarded as part of the rim of the Lake Country. The ascent on the east side is not noticeable, although the summit is upwards of 2700 feet above sea level. On the west side the road descends a long grade, falling about 1400 feet. The grade is well managed, and is well cut, although much of it is heavy rock work. At the bottom of Mount Arrowsmith the road crosses a soft button-grass marsh for some ten chains, and then enters the forest through which the River Franklin runs. This river is crossed on a new bridge just finished. The work, in my opinion, requires strengthening to resist the tremendous force of water which pours down this gorge when the snow melts on Mount Gell. The track follows the course of the Franklin for a couple of miles or so, and then crossing a low divide reaches the Collingwood River, where I noticed preparations for the construction of a suspension bridge. The Collingwood is a large and rapid stream, quite impassable in winter if not bridged. From the crossing on the Collingwood the road follows up the course of that river for upwards of seven miles. The ground is generally sound, and much of the soft ground has been either stripped or logged. At the time of my visit the road party were at work about 25 miles beyond the Iron Store, and were cutting along the bank of the Collingwood River—a small stream at that point. From their camp to the King River is about 14 miles, most of it scrub. Here the work will be heavy,—much more so than anything yet encountered. At intervals button-rush plains occur; these are all very soft and will require stripping and logging. The one near the King River will always prove troublesome, as it must be subject to inundation. The King River is a wide stream, but not very rapid, and at the time of our visit was very low; but I noticed that it rises above the low flats, and must be crossed by a high bridge. I presume a wire suspension bridge will be employed. From the King River to the “Iron Blow” the track passes up the Linda Valley for a distance of three miles. The ground is mostly sound.

The overseer on the road hopes to finish in about three months, but I am not so sanguine. I anticipate trouble in packing out provisions as the distances increase and the daylight shortens, besides delay in crossing streams when the rainy weather comes on. However, if he can succeed in cutting the track through to the King River he will have done very well, and the improvement of bad places may be left to next season.

From this description it will be gathered that, besides the untouched portion yet remaining, there is a considerable amount of work yet required upon this road before it will be fit for horse traffic. In its present state it would cut up so badly as to be impassable eight months out of the year. The heaviest work will be to form a sound road across the numerous marshes between Bronté and Mount Arrowsmith.

The route is certainly a good one, and, as far as my knowledge goes, it is the best possible approach to the Western country, and there are many reasons why a good road should be constructed. No part of Tasmania offers such attractions in the way of beautiful scenery, and were a passable road constructed, these lakes and mountains would be to Tasmania what the lakes are to New Zealand. At present few people have seen the wondrous beauty of Lake St. Clair; still fewer have seen the majestic mountains surrounding the lake and barring the approach to the West Coast; and I know of no grander sight in Tasmania than the views of Mount Gell and the Frenchman's Cap as seen from the road descending Mount Arrowsmith. On the west side of the Derwent there are some ten thousand acres of good marsh land fit for grazing and for dairy farming if population springs up on the West Coast. I strongly recommend, therefore, that the eastern end of this road be made good year by year until a good macadamised road reaches as far as Mount Arrowsmith; then with a good horse track to connect the West Coast series of roads, the country will be opened up for prospecting. The road should be better marked: in fine weather the wheel tracks and formings are good guides, but when the snow obliterates these marks travellers will often be at a loss to follow the route. I would suggest that cairns of stones be built on the low eminences near the track, and substantial posts put at intervals across the marshes.

*Mount Lyell to Lynch's Creek.*

About nine miles. This track has been scrubbed, and about one mile at the south end formed. The route selected is very bad indeed; much of it is very steep, rocky sidling, and would cost very much to cut out so as to make it safe for packhorses. A great blunder has been made by the diggers who laid out this track, and I recommend that it be abandoned; in this opinion Mr. Dean, the present Inspector of Roads, agrees. The mile already formed can be made use of, but a new road should be set out at once, commencing at the end of the formation. Probably it will be found that there is no necessity to cross so high on the saddle between Mount Owen and the Iron Blow ridge. The road might be kept lower down on the western side of the ridge so as to be continued to the Sedgwick Gap without much of a hill. A branch road from the Iron Blow could be made down to the main track.

It is of the utmost importance to the people at Mt. Lyell that the track be pushed on with all possible speed. They look forward with dread to the fast approaching winter, and fear that they will be driven away. At present their flour costs them £60 a ton for carriage, and all other stores at the rate of 2*d.* a pound carriage. They are of the opinion that more energy might have been shown in getting their road through, and complain that their prospects have been made of secondary importance to those of the King River Company. They point out that whilst the cart-road to the latter company was being pushed on, a pack-horse road was always available,—whereas they were condemned to the dreadful foot-track described. They state that if tenders had been invited for their track they would have got it through before this. On talking these matters over with Mr. Dean, that officer informed me that had it not been for a “strike” he would have completed the road to Lynch's by this time, and would have been able to put his whole party upon the Mt. Lyell road. Had the “strike” not taken place, no doubt Mr. Dean could have removed all cause for complaining. I advise that Mr. Dean be instructed to mark out a new road at once, and call for tenders for clearing it. As soon as possible he should have his plans and specifications ready to call for tenders for forming; and if this be done promptly, the road could be got ready by the middle of May, before the worst weather sets in.

*Lynch's Creek to Macquarie Harbour.*

Another three weeks' work would have completed this track fit for dray traffic. Unfortunately the men struck for ten shillings a day wages, alleging as a reason the high cost of provisions. However, Mr. Dean anticipated most of the men would return to work in a few days. This part of the road is in good order, and is a very good piece of road-making.

*Macquarie to Trial Harbour.*

The road near the Little Henty is very much obscured with young scrub. About a mile and a-half requires reopening and some guide-posts erected to indicate the road off the beach. The boat at the Little Henty is very leaky and dilapidated: the hauling-lines will shortly require renewal. Several culverts near Trial Harbour have been burnt, and require renewal.

*Trial Harbour to Corinna.*

Road in good order as far as the Pieman timber. Portion of the road through the timber has not been formed. This should be done, and all fallen trees cleared away. Some repairs are necessary about three miles south of the Pieman, where the running water has cut into the road.

*Corinna to Waratah.*

From Corinna to Brown's Plain the track is very much overgrown; the young scrub should be cut down at once. Portions of Long Plain are very soft, requiring stripping. Much young scrub has grown up on the slopes of the Magnet Range. The Government huts at 14, 18, and 25 miles are tumbling to pieces.

The mailman sadly needs a hut at the Heazlewood River, and a stable for his horse. I believe he has applied for these and met with a refusal. As an act of humanity to a very deserving man, I hope the shelter will be provided. The corduroy on the road between the 14th mile hut and Mount Bischoff should be blinded. It is most distressing to walk upon it, and very dangerous for horses.

*Additional Tracks required.*

1. As soon as the main track from Mount Arrowsmith to the Iron Blow is finished, a track should be run from a point east of the King River, to run north as far as the Mackintosh and south as far as the Gordon. This track would open up a large area of promising country.

2. A deviation should be made from the track from Macquarie to Lynch's, and a track carried along the ridge west of the Queen River, and then on to Mount Zeehan, and emerging on the open country round Mount Heemskirk. A branch track to connect this with Mount Lyell.

3. A foot-track from No. 2 to Trial Harbour.

If these tracks were provided, they would thoroughly open up all the country in the vicinity of the present discoveries, and Government would have done all that is necessary pending the proving of these fields.

#### TELEGRAPH.

I strongly advise that the telegraph line be constructed along the Mount Arrowsmith route. The timber is not heavy, and poles are abundant. The coast line, especially between Trial Harbour and Macquarie, will always be in bad repair; between the last-mentioned places the line is carried over shifting sandbanks, and is often buried, poles and all. The existing line between Waratah and Corinna seldom works well; it would work better if the young scrub were cleared away.

#### MEETING OF MINERS.

During our stay at Mount Lyell the miners held a meeting, and requested me to lay before you several matters affecting their interests.

The chief points related to tracks. They urge the speedy completion of the track from Lynch's to Mount Lyell. They also request that as much work as possible be done by contract, and that the Road Officer be instructed to send copies of specifications to Lynch's Creek. They thoroughly agreed with my views as to tracks required. They also brought forward certain points as to postal matters. These were noted by Mr. Bayly, who will bring them under the notice of the Secretary of the Post Office.

Various other matters, relating to the Mines Office, I have already mentioned to the Secretary for Mines.

#### TIMBER.

It had been represented to me that large quantities of King William Pine would be found along the new track. I regret to say that the quantity is very small indeed. The first pine I saw was growing on Mount Arrowsmith, but from there to King River the trees are few and far between. I ascertained that Pines grow about the Cuvier Valley, and amongst the low hills north of the Collingwood; but the number is too small to be of any consequence. By far the largest number of Pines grow upon the Pine Reserve at Queen River. Should the mines at Lynch's and Mount Lyell turn out as expected, every stick of timber will be required.

#### AGRICULTURAL LAND.

There is scarcely any agricultural land between Mount Arrowsmith and the King Valley. Along the banks of the King River there is a narrow slip of alluvial land about a quarter to half a mile wide. This will be of value to the miners in the future for grass land and gardens. Between Mount Lyell and Lynch's Creek there are a few patches of diorite rock, affording some fair soil. On one of these patches a man has commenced a garden. About Lynch's Creek there is a little fair land, sufficient to allow a few paddocks to be cultivated. Around the shores of Macquarie Harbour there are some small patches of good land, and at the head of the Henty Lagoon there is about 1000 acres more. The only large patch of any importance is between Granville Harbour and the Pieman Heads. Here it might be possible to form a farming settlement. The soil is not first-rate, being derived from greenstone, but it would grow grass and fruit, though rather stiff for tillage. This land, and that on the Henty, might be thrown open for selection; other patches might be dealt with under the provisions relating to Mining settlements.

In conclusion, I must state that I have refrained from noticing the various mines, because Mr. Thureau has already reported on them, and I did not devote sufficient attention to them to warrant me in forming any conclusions. Mr. Johnston and myself obtained a large amount of valuable geological information, but it relates more to science than to mining; the facts will be worked out by Mr. Johnston and made public in due course.

The trip was an exceedingly interesting one, and enabled me to obtain much useful information, and, at the same time, I think the miners were glad of the opportunity of seeing me and discussing matters in which I have always taken an interest. Many of these miners are old friends,—men who have ever been foremost in exploring the country,—and it gave me peculiar pleasure to renew their acquaintance.

Various minor matters I will bring under your notice shortly.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

CHARLES P. SPRENT, *Deputy Surveyor-General.*