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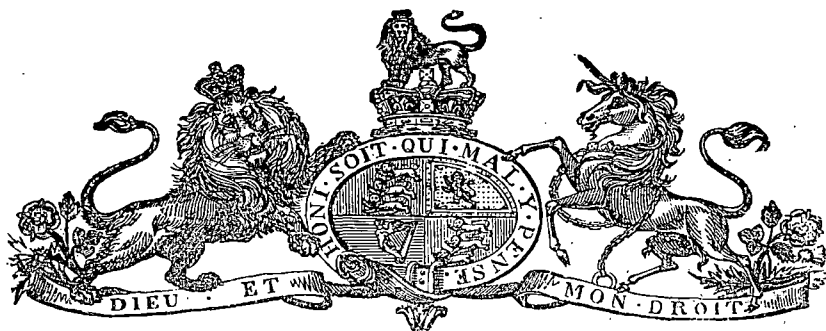
1887.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

FLINDERS' ISLAND:

REPORT BY MR. JOHN BROWN.

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



REPORT on Flinders' Island, by JOHN W. BROWN, Surveyor.

Hobart, 12th January, 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acquaint you that, in obedience to your instructions of the 22nd July, 1886, I proceeded by steamer to Bass' Straits, landing on Clarke's Island to await an opportunity of transport to Flinders' Island, where I was subsequently landed by the police boat placed at my disposal through the courtesy of the Inspector of Police.

Fixing my head camp at Tanner's Bay (locally known as Marshall Bay, named after the ill-fated ship lost there some years ago), I decided to examine the more distant parts of this very extensive island; and leaving Tanner's Bay, proceeded in a north-easterly direction, intending to cross the country from coast to coast.

Finding the country very wet (the heaviest rain known these seven years having recently fallen), passed through and close to innumerable lagoons with the unvarying fringe of tea-tree, gum, and pine, and the open thickly dotted with grass-tree. After proceeding about five miles I came upon a change of country, passing through a plain of about 300 acres of good land, deep black soil, free from scrub, and covered between the tussocks with a native grass resembling twitch. Continuing in the same direction without any very remarkable alteration in the country, clumps of tea-tree and pine fringing shallow lagoons, an occasional patch of good land, but very wet, and no chance of drainage except at considerable outlay, the country right through to the coast and down to the Patriarchs being of the same flat character. Satisfied that good country did not occur in this direction I returned to camp, after an absence of four days, with a feeling of dissatisfaction that I had traversed a considerable area of poor land, much of it that could, however, be made capable of growing artificial grasses by cultivation, and now abounding in kangaroo.

On my next trip from camp I proceeded to the north end of the island, where I found the largest area of fairly good land on the island. After leaving camp our course lay slightly west of north, passing over many small streams running into Killicrankie Bay, and forming the heads of that watershed. Catch-dams could be economically constructed of sod, thereby making the main stream permanent, which runs underground in summer until approaching the sea. Continuing on, at a distance of about six miles from Killicrankie passed through about two miles of poor country,—viz., grass-tree, stunted tea-tree, and heath. After this a great change occurred, the granite country suddenly changing to limestone country, with a fine growth of scrub, high tea-tree—"swamp variety"—dogwood, prickly-box, cherry-tree, and fairly large blue-gum (*eucalyptus globulus*), the limestone, in ridges, occasionally appearing on surface. Continued through the scrub for four miles, but altered the course somewhat, going more westerly. From information received from the brothers Collis, who accompanied me, and from my own observation afterwards, the same country extends from She-oak Point easterly to the west bank of the North-East River, a distance of about eight miles of undulating country, well sheltered from the prevailing winds. Camped on a fine stream running into the Bay under She-oak Point, and locally known as Pratt's River. This stream ceases to flow in dry seasons, but water can be had by digging in the bed. It is now a grand stream of twelve feet in width by five feet in depth. The land all along this stream is of excellent quality, black soil, clay subsoil, resting on limestone.

Next morning started out for North-East River, and, avoiding the scrub, made along the coast hills. The open land here is covered with tussocky grass, clumps of she-oak, boobyalla, mangrove, and wild currant. All this country would carry cattle, as it is all of a limestone formation, whilst the abrupt slopes of the coast are covered with fine she-oaks of a large size, and the country fairly well grassed. Sighted the Sisters Islands lying off the north-east corner of this island, the homestead and cultivated paddocks being distinctly visible. I then struck east over a saddle dividing the north-east part of the island, passing through high ferns and fairly good blue-gums, until striking the west bank of the inlet—all fair light land with clay subsoil, well adapted for

potato growing, with a beautiful easterly aspect. I continued south for about three miles along the west branch of the inlet, where very large quantities of oyster shells were observed on a raised beach, apparently upheaved. If ever this part of the island is occupied, this inlet should be the shipping-place, as vessels of six feet draught can enter when the wind is not too strong from the eastward; in fact, a craft of 12 tons was lying there at the time of my visit.

Proceeding north from this homewards, through blue-gum forest—light land resting on limestone formation, with undergrowth of high ferns—came out on to my former track on the open grassed coast hills, well pleased with my journey, having walked over the largest area of good and improvable land yet seen on Flinders' Island, and estimated to contain an area of at least 11,000 acres. (See Plan.)

Starting again from Camp No. 3, struck the north coast of the island; continued down Pratt's River to the sea. The stream cuts its way through a deep soil, clay underlying it, resting on limestone, extensive open flat, well grassed, to confluence of stream with the sea. Ascended the spurs of She-oak Point, also well grassed, and passed through several beautiful glades—quite picturesque slopes—and on arrival at the southern end of Killierankie Bay observed several deep cuttings made by Charles Gould, F.G.S., the Geologist, when searching for tin some years ago for the Tasmanian Mineral Exploration Company. To avoid a very thick belt of currant bush and mangrove scrub made the beach, and had good opportunity of noticing the peculiar formation—half sand, half lime—resting upon the granite.

Next struck south east to get round Ben Nevis—as the southern end of the Killierankie Range is called—and after a good struggle getting the swags through the closely growing she-oaks, came out into open heathy ground; but as soon as the head of the stream running into Killierankie was struck, came on nicely grassed country, which continues down to land of a superior character, capable of cultivation, and lying between the small streams that unite below, swelling the creek to considerable size.

The grass country continues round the south side of the bay, except where the she-oak forest cuts in at the point about half a mile, and then the grass land continues three miles, fringed to the west by the protecting she-oak. Next struck for main camp, Tanner's Bay.

From Tanner's Bay walked over to Cape Frankland to examine the pine scrub, which I found to consist of as much she-oak as pine; good land with limestone formation, and possessing an area of 1000 acres. Beyond this the grass comes in again, and extends abreast of Roydon Island. I have no hesitation in stating that eleven thousand (11,000) acres are fit for cultivation, and could be classed as first-rate land, and, in addition, about thirty thousand (30,000) acres would grow grasses.

I will now draw attention to the land south of Tanner's Bay and along the Marshall Beach. A heavy tea-tree scrub runs up both banks of the main creek, coming in from the tin sections, about 500 acres in extent, and most of which is of good quality, although somewhat flat and liable to flood. Still going south east met with what are known as the "Banks." These are long rolling ridges running parallel with the coast, and at one time sand-banks, but now covered with coarse herbage and tussocky grass. This country is not of much value, being very much exposed to the prevailing westerly wind. Coming down to the south-easterly extremity of Marshall Bay the good land commences again, and extends inland a considerable distance—about five miles—and then south to Settlement Point, an area of at least twelve thousand (12,000) acres; it is covered with a dense under-scrub of tea-tree, pine, and ferns, and is the best forest of blue-gum on the island.

Leaving Tanner's Bay, proceeded by boat to Green Island for provisions, and from thence to the old Imperial establishment for the aborigines, known as Settlement Point. This is the next portion to which I would draw attention. It was originally of no better quality than thousands of acres on the Island, but cultivation and cropping, and the introduction of artificial grasses, have achieved much. It carries at the present time 30 head of cattle, in prime condition, belonging to the late lessee, Mr. Robert Gardiner, and they never seem to leave the old buildings; whilst in the small garden at Willett's cottage vegetables are growing luxuriantly. I should estimate about three thousand (3000) acres of land equally good, and extending south, fronting on Sawyer's Bay. Rough feeding country brings us down to Long Point, at which a good home could be made, a farm of at least 200 acres fit for the plough, and the bay is full of fish. Good land now extends along both banks of Pat's River for some miles. A family by the name of Vereaux are occupying it, and are applicants for leases. There are two branches to this stream from which water could be taken.

Still further south, down the coast below Double Corner, are some large flats extending from Pat's River to the peaks of Flinders, a distance of 7 miles with a width of 2 miles, and containing an area of some eight thousand (8000) acres, one thousand of which are open land and partly grassed, with the Scotch thistle, wild dock, and dandelion. This land lies along the lagoons, which

could be drained and vastly improved thereby. Passing the north-western flank of the Peaks, and west of the Darling Range, is well timbered with blue gum, extending inland and along the hill sides, and following the numerous gullies and watersheds.

On the eastern side of Broughton's Sugar Loaf lies an area of, say, 2000 acres of fairly good land resting on a schistose formation, good clay bottom, well suited for cultivation, and sheltered from the westerly winds. A nice stream runs out from under the Sugar Loaf, but loses itself in the plain towards the Patriarchs.

Leaving Double Bay we now come to the small stream running out from the granite peaks of Flinders to the coast, along the banks of which are to be found small areas of improvable land, from 500 acres down to 20 acres, the largest of which can be found on the Big River, extending from Franklin Sound to Mount Eliza, and along the Sampher River on both banks; and up between the peaks is an area of five or six thousand acres, all more or less of fair quality. About 1000 acres under the peaks is of first-class quality, timbered with gum, blackwood, musk, and tree-ferns.

The land beyond this, out of the Patriarchs and fronting on the East Coast and Pot-boil Lagoons, is comparatively worthless, consisting as it does of innumerable lagoons, swamps, and dense tea-tree scrub, lying too low to be drained, and practically worthless.

I have now particularised the land on the island worth examining, but my time being limited I could not examine the country south of the Patriarchs, but availed myself of information supplied by hunters who have known the Island for years.

Having arranged to be taken off the Island by Mr. Allan Smith, whose arrival I was daily expecting with the *Lady Franklin*, I discontinued my observations on the west side of Mount Eliza, and employed the available time at my disposal in examining the country to the eastward, consisting of fairly good land.

Seaweed can be had in any quantity along the whole coast of the Island, and when decayed is said to be a fairly good fertilizer. Fish are plentiful in all the inlets at certain seasons,—the flounder and mullet particularly so. Kangaroo and wallaby, as a food supply (if the wholesale destruction with dogs merely for the sake of the skins was stopped), would be inexhaustible. A few wild cattle and pigs, with aquatic game in great variety and numbers, make living in this out-of-the-way place comparatively easy.

Flinders Island, as you are aware, embraces an area of 530,000 acres, and I could not be expected to traverse such an extent of country in the limited time and for the amount placed at my disposal.

I may unhesitatingly assert that this Report conveys an accurate description of three-fourths of the Island and its resources, and is not exaggerated. Although much of the land on it is of good quality, allowances must be made for the difficulties of transport in an out-of-the-way place like this. Its distance from the mainland is over 100 miles from Low Head, and the uncertainty of communication is a positive drawback to the development of this fairly good Island: but I am informed that it is not improbable that regular steam communication will ere long be established, and the Islands in the Straits will, as the result, become more widely known. Should the right class of colonists be induced to reside on favourable terms on this Island, they could hardly fail to establish an enterprising settlement. By the right class I mean the sturdy dwellers on the coast of the United Kingdom, accustomed to boating and fishing, having the pluck and energy essential to success in settling down in a new country. But the absence of regular communication to enable the producer to make certain of a market, so far as agricultural products are concerned, is a necessity which no doubt may be fairly left to private enterprise as settlement progresses.

My thanks are due to Mr. MacLaine, of Clarke's Island, whose knowledge of this Island materially assisted me; and I cannot close this Report without speaking highly of Mr. Allan Smith, in charge of the police boat, but for whose aid and kind assistance it would have been impossible to have traversed so much country as was explored, and to whom I am very much indebted for the cheerful assistance rendered, as well as to other residents of the Island.

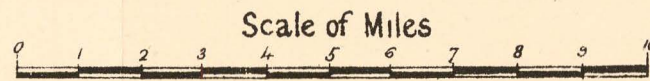
I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN W. BROWN, *Surveyor*

CHAS. P. SPRENT, *Esq.*, *Deputy Commissioner Crown Lands.*

FLINDERS ISLAND



— NOTE —
Plan illustrating the Report made by
Mr John Brown, Surveyor, Jan^y 14th 1887.