

(No. 8.)



1860.

T A S M A N I A.

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LANDS IN THE VICINITY OF THE PATTERSONIA, PIPER'S,  
AND RINGAROOMA RIVERS.

REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL.

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Laid on the Table by Mr. Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be  
printed, 25 July, 1860.



Launceston, 2nd July, 1860.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor of reporting that since my return from the Mersey River, on the 11th ultimo, I have made three excursions to several tracts of good land that lie in the County of Dorset; the same being chiefly the property of the Crown; namely,—

- 1st. To the head of the Pattersonia River, occupying 3 days.
- 2nd. To the Piper River, occupying 1 day.
- 3rd. To the Ringarooma River, occupying 10 days.

In each of which journeys I was accompanied by Messrs. Scott and Hall, Surveyors.

2. In the following letter I will give you as brief an account of each of these journeys as possible, restricting myself in each instance to a bare description of the soil, and its timber, in addition to such remarks as it may be essential to introduce on the subject of such Road lines as it may be necessary presently to form, to secure the speedy occupation of the districts they will traverse.

3. In the first-named journey we started on the 13th ultimo, with one pack horse to carry our tents, provisions, &c., in addition to those that we rode, four in all; the route being to the fine lands lying around the Pattersonia River. The surface traversed by the road is generally rather hilly and somewhat infertile as far as the river (15 miles hence),—though even here there are some hundreds of acres of very fair land, which will doubtlessly be rapidly taken now that it is becoming known that the lessee, Mr. R. C. Gunn, is more inclined to facilitate than oppose their occupation. Approaching the Pattersonia, the land sensibly improves, and is of a blackish red colour; although a little stony, not sufficiently so to oppose any obstacle to its occupation. The growing timber is the White Gum chiefly, with an undergrowth of Wattle trees. We crossed the smaller rivulet by swimming our horses over it. This point of the journey is 15 miles from Launceston according to the existing route, but which may be reduced to about 12, by firstly taking it through the Killafaddy property, (this it is said may shorten it two miles); and secondly by a proper survey of the remainder. The first-named step will meet with no opposition from the proprietor, Mr. James Scott, who not only offers the land required, but, as I understand, a handsome subscription as well.

4. On the eastern side of the river is a Village Reserve where some very fair allotments may be found. Leaving which reserve in our rear, we crossed over a very inferior tract whose entire width is not much less than seven miles, and on which we encamped.

5. Leaving our horses in charge of a man, we started next morning a-foot along a part of the newly opened line to the Ringarooma. The first three miles of our morning's walk was on the barren land noticed in the preceding paragraph, which may be described as coarse, stony, and eminently inferior. The surface of the same is strewed with vast quantities of broken slate, that generally resembles that of the auriferous lands of Victoria, mixed with considerable quantities of quartz, but which occurs as fragments only.

6. It may be expected from the above that I am about to revive the tiresome subject of Gold in Tasmania, but I have no such intention. It is impossible, however, in a Report like the present, to overlook the fact that those rocks which are always associated with the precious metal are very prevalent in many parts of the County of Dorset which I have lately visited, and bear a closer resemblance to Ballarat than anything that I have seen elsewhere: this is especially the case on many parts of the tract that lies between Mount Direction and the Ringarooma, which I shall have to describe hereafter.

7. Having crossed the wretched belt before spoken of, we enter on an undulating surface as widely different from that last crossed as day is from night; the soil being a rich and deep chocolate-colored loam, but mixed in many places with not a little broken slate. The forests here are of the usual kind found in such soils, namely, very heavy, and mixed abundantly with scrub. Approaching Mr. Blackman's location the land is very excellent, and a considerable breadth of the same is found around this spot. In continuing our onward walk we crossed no less than three miles of it, when we

found it again degenerate; and we had to push on two and a half miles over a sterile country before we reached the good land again, which we walked along for another mile, when it was thought prudent to return homeward; the shortness of the days not allowing a close examination of more than 8 or 9 miles a day, with the return journey to be made into the bargain.

8. The extent of good land about the head of the Pattersonia is variously estimated by Surveyors, Mr. Scott thinking that it covers 10,000 acres, and Mr. Hall a lesser quantity; it may, however, be most safely taken at 5000 acres,—whereof, however, 2000 are already taken up.

The distance from Launceston to the fine land about the head of the Pattersonia may be 22 miles, but which is reducible to about 19.

9. The following estimate of cost would open and improve this road sufficiently for all purposes of settlement for seven years at least; after which it may be presumed that its occupation will be entirely effected, when future repairs must be provided for under the usual process of assessment:—

	£
Improving and shortening line on the first seven miles	300
Clearing, shortening, and draining other parts of road near Pattersonia	300
Altering and widening the road about Bulman's, 15 feet wide, at £15 a mile, for 8 miles	120
Scrubbing half a chain wide on each side of line, additional, at 30s. the acre (12s. a mile for 8 miles)	96
Bridge over Pattersonia	100
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	£916
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10. The immediate advantages which I have reason to believe will result from the improvements for which I have set down the above sum may be pretty fairly stated as follows:—

	£
Sell by auction 350 acres near Mr. Gee's, which, with credit added, worth	420
Privately about same place 200 acres	240
By auction on Gunn's leased land 400 acres	480
Town Lots	110
1000 acres about Bulman's	1200
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	£2450
Prospective sale of about 2000 acres about Bulman's	2400
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	£4850
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Probable balance in favour of the public	£4850 — 916 = £3934

*Launceston to Piper's River.*

11. On the 16th June I started for Mr. Hall's Camp on the Piper's River, accompanied by Messieurs Scott and Hall. The first  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles of our journey lay along the George Town Road. We then turned off to the right, passing over a very indifferent surface (often absolutely worthless) for nearly the entire remaining distance. The chief difficulties of reaching the good land on the Piper are at the two hills called the Finger-post and Holloway's Hills. The first of these is reached in a mile after leaving the George Town Road, the surface of which, though not steep, is excessively stony. It is not only strewed with enormous boulders, but the fixed rock that lies beneath often protrudes through them (trap). The ascent of this hill, which is one of the two great difficulties of this road, occupies about three quarters of a mile; and until this be repaired the fine tract of land on the Piper can only be reached with excessive difficulty, which must be removed if we would bring about its occupation. Holloway's Hill is a little further on, and is the next place that will require repairing. It much resembles the Finger-post hill, but is not quite so formidable. The entire distance from Launceston to the Piper is only 13 miles; and yet, though there are some 5000 acres of rich land so very near the metropolis of the north, it continues in our possession just as though it were valueless, so much have roads to do with occupation.

The rich land about the Piper is more patchy than is general with the soils of the County of Dorset, which, be they bad or be they good, usually lie together in very large tracts. The fine soil about the Piper is therefore more suited for small farms.

The following is an estimate of the cost of improving the road from Launceston to the Piper, sufficiently to bring about the occupation of the fine lands of the Piper:—

Expense of moving rocks, fixed or rolling, on Finger-post and Holloway's Hills	£300
Clearing and widening other parts	100
Bridge over the Piper	50
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	£450
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The immediate advantages which I have reason to expect will flow from the above expenditure are the sales of about—

3000 acres (with credit added)	-	-	-	-	£3600
Leaving a balance in favour of the public of	-	-	£3600	-	450 = £3150

It is further stated by Mr. Scott that there are about 20,000 acres between the Piper and the Little Forester, of which, however, very little is known at present. Our acquaintance with this large tract must, however, be perfected next summer, as the Colony cannot afford to have these places kept out of sight indefinitely now-a-days.

*Launceston to the Ringarooma by way of Scott's New Country.*

At Mount Direction (which is 18 miles from Launceston on the George Town Road) we turn off to the last-named places; and a further journey of forty miles places the traveller on the confines of the rich and fast settling tract of land called "Scott's New Country." It may be expected that I should give some detailed account of the wide tract that we traversed in reaching it; but I saw so little that is likely to be interesting to the agriculturalist, or even to the general reader of topographical descriptions, that it would be waste of time to go into particulars. A few exceedingly fine tracts do, indeed, occur near the different rivers—the Piper, the Little Piper, and Little Forester, but of small extent compared with the wide wilderness of heaths and scrubs that separate them; and as the same are mostly, if not wholly, private property, it is in no way essential to this report to notice them. Much of the surface, particularly that between Mount Direction and the Piper's River, has far too much the look of a gold-producing country to be of much interest to the farmer; and the traveller through this portion of Tasmania, who has crossed the auriferous regions of Victoria, fancies himself there again. I shall, therefore, pass over the description of the waste lands that intervene between Launceston and Scott's New Country (60 miles by road) with the simple remark that they are almost utterly valueless, at any rate in the present state of the Colony.

Entering Scott's New Country a very agreeable change takes place, and the soil and its forests, heretofore most repulsive, are now highly attractive: their excellence, indeed, has been proved by the comparative rapidity with which they have been taken up; 7000 acres, amounting to about sixty selections, having passed into private hands very speedily, notwithstanding the remoteness of the place, and the utter absence of anything worthy the name of a road into it, either from the Tamar or the nearest shipping place—Bridport (about 16 miles off), a work which I believe would rapidly return a pound for every shilling expended, so cheap would be the road, and so fertile and ready of sale the 15,000 acres it would lay open to selection. Indeed, it may be pretty safely said of most of the fertile lands in the northern counties, where a very strong spirit for *settling down* prevails, that for every shilling judiciously spent on perfecting their communication with the market, they will assuredly give back a pound. In fact, if it were not for the northern counties, our Land Revenue as derived from *selections* would be almost *nil*.

Expense of sixteen miles of road from Scott's Country to Bridport, say about	-	£300
Results—the speedy sale of 15,000 acres	-	£18,000

Having pushed through Scott's New Country, at a point where it is about 4 miles wide, we entered on a very infertile waste, whose breadth was not less than 7 miles; a wretched soil, producing abundance of quartz, but in such a comminuted state as to resemble rice more than anything else. It was on this tract that we crossed the Great Forester. We then commenced crossing the forests of the basin of Ringarooma, where it is estimated that there are 80,000 acres of very rich Crown land, all heavily timbered, and slowly taking up, in spite of the disadvantages of remoteness and want of roads, and which only await a *promise* from the Legislature that the latter want shall be provided for to bring about a rapid occupation of the whole, at a rate of, say, 6000 acres a year.

The opening of this extensive tract might, indeed, be effected by means of a road from Bridport only; but, as the chief county thoroughfare must pass through the Ringarooma in traversing it from Launceston toward Cape Portland, the occupation ought properly *not to precede* the laying out and partial clearing of the same, in order that its reservation may be looked to in time. A portion (28 miles) of this main line has already been treated of in the early part of this letter, in describing the lands about the head of the Patterson Rivulet (see paragraphs 1 to 9), the cost being given at £916. From the point my description reached it is 30 miles more to the Ringarooma, which is the only point from the main line which I shall deal with at present, as the onward route toward the Cape is a work for future study.

The following estimate of the cost of this track was taken from Mr. Scott, who has taken great pains to collect information concerning the Ringarooma country:—

	£
Clearing and side-cutting	1500
Two bridges over the Forester	100
	£1600
Continuation to Bridport 22 miles (whereof 10 is included in the estimate of road from Scott's Country), leaving 12 miles, at £15 per mile	180
1 large bridge over Forester	100
6 small ones over creeks, about	200
	£2080

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In conclusion, I respectfully urge the Honourable the Executive to place on the next Estimates the following sums, for the urgent objects precedingly detailed :—

	£
1. To improving the road from Launceston to the head of the Pattersonia -	916
2. To improving the road from Launceston to the Piper River, over the Finger-post and Holloway's Hills - - -	450
3. To improving road from Bridport to Scott's Country - - -	300
4. To improving road from head of Patersonia to Ringarooma - - -	2080
5. Continuation of main line toward Cape Portland (uncertain) say -	1500
6. Surveys in connection with the above, about 120 miles, at £8 a mile, or say - - - - -	1000
	<u>£6246</u>

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,  
J. E. CALDER.

*The Honourable the Colonial Treasurer.*