

(No. 45.)



1880.

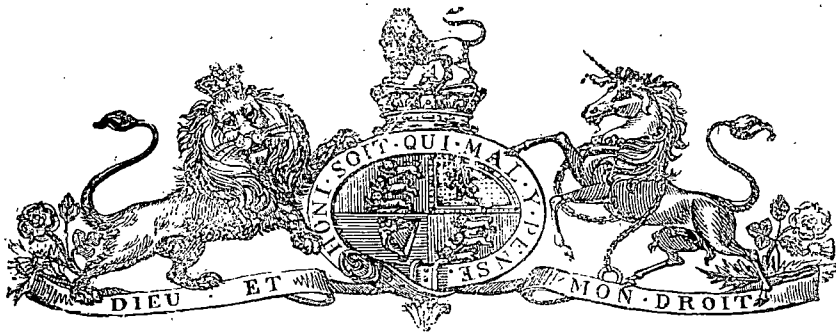
T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

CURRIE HARBOUR LIGHT:

REPORT OF THE MASTER WARDEN OF THE HOBART
TOWN MARINE BOARD.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 10, 1880.



REPORT on the King's Island Light-houses, presented to the Board by the Master Warden July 2, 1880.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honor to report to you that, in accordance with the resolution passed by the Board on the 23rd April, I left Hobart Town on the 12th May, and arrived at Melbourne on the 14th. On the following day I called on Capt. Payne, the Chief Harbour Master, and it was then agreed that we should start for King's Island on the following Tuesday, the 18th.

On the evening of that day we proceeded by rail to Queenscliff, embarked in the *Pharos* at 8.30, and cleared the Heads at 9 o'clock P.M., the weather then being wet and unpromising. As we drew off the land, however, it cleared, and at 5.30 A.M. (19th) the Cape Wickham Light was observed by Capt. Anderson, of the *Pharos*, whom I had specially requested to keep a look out for it, at a distance of 20 miles. At 8.30 we arrived off the Light-house, and with some difficulty succeeded in landing in the steamer's boat. The beach at this place being entirely exposed to all westerly winds, a heavy surf rolls in, rendering landing often altogether impossible, and at all times more or less precarious.

The boat-house on the beach appeared to be in good order, and the two boats in serviceable condition—strong, and well adapted for the difficult work of landing stores in such a locality. On arriving at the Light-house, a distance of about a mile, I made a thorough inspection of the Light-house itself and the buildings attached thereto. The tower is a very fine example of Light-house architecture: rising to the height of 145 feet from the ground and 280 feet from the sea, it is entirely built of granite, in the most substantial manner, and has an appearance of massive strength, calculated to last for ages to come. The mortar in the joints of the mason-work appeared to be perfectly sound, and I could see no necessity for the coat of paint which the Superintendent desires to give it. The hard nature of the granite renders it impervious to the weather, and the inside showed no signs whatever of damp, whilst the light colour of the stone itself would always render the tower conspicuous without the addition of paint. I am of opinion that there is certainly no urgency in the proposed painting, and that the considerable expense attendant upon it may for the present be spared. An ascent of 228 steps leads to the lantern, and there I found everything in clean and satisfactory order. The lighting apparatus, of the first class catadioptric order, is of French construction, bearing the brand of a Paris firm, and seems to be in excellent preservation. The lenses and prisms, with the exception of a few slight chips on the edges of the latter of no importance, showed no signs of improper usage, and were bright and clean; and indeed the view we had of the light on three consecutive nights from different points of view showed a steady brilliancy of the first order. From the Light-house we proceeded to the oil store, which we found neat, clean, and well arranged. The oil on being tested was clear and bright; the stock in hand is sufficient for 12 months consumption, and the supply of wicks and chimney-glasses for burners is also ample for the same period. There are seven spare burners in store. The Superintendent complains that the wicks are too thin, and certainly, on comparison, those supplied by Messrs. Chance, of Birmingham, for use at Currie Harbour, a sample of which I now lay on the table, appear to be of much superior quality; I would therefore recommend that a supply of the same description be ordered from that firm direct. The Superintendent's house and other buildings appeared to be in fair condition, and the only defect was a leak in the roof at the east end of the Assistant Superintendent's quarters, rendering the gable wall very damp. With the use of a little cement and a covering of lead, which I have sent by the *Starling*, this will be easily remedied. One of the assistants had been taken ill on the morning of our arrival, but not seriously, and the general health and conduct of those employed at the Light-house was reported by the Superintendent to be very good. The horse belonging to the Board, a fine powerful animal, was in very good condition. The Superintendent has a considerable number of cattle and pigs running in the neighbourhood, which seemed to be doing well. It is curious that whilst cattle thrive at King's Island neither sheep nor goats succeed, but after two or three years die off from what is called the "coast disease." Horses also, Mr. Spong informed me, have to be kept stabled during a certain time of the year to prevent them from eating a wild pea which induces a species of madness. The soil in the neighbourhood of Cape Wickham is good, and in places rich, and all sorts of grain and vegetables are easily grown. In the Superintendent's store we saw fine potatoes and onions; and in the garden, which is of considerable extent, there were carrots, turnips, and mangolds growing to a large size.

Having completed our inspection we returned to the *Pharos* at 1 P.M., and as it was then too late to reach Currie Harbour that day we steamed down to New Year's Island, about 8 miles distant, and there anchored for the night.

The anchorage lies between the two islands and is well sheltered from most winds, and the water consequently smooth. On the northern island there are two parties collecting crayfish, which abound, for shipment to Melbourne by two small craft which trade regularly for the purpose. The southern island is unoccupied, and the men told me is so infested with snakes as to make landing on it dangerous. In the evening the Currie Harbour light was clearly visible, distant from the anchorage by the chart about 15 miles. We took several observations of the appearance of the flashes, and found them correct to time, 1 in 12 seconds or 5 per minute.

On the 20th we left New Year's Island at 9 A.M., and steamed southwards. On our way down we had a good opportunity of seeing a considerable portion of the coast which has been the scene of so many wrecks. A more uninviting or more dangerous one it is not easy to conceive. Barren hillocks and ridges of white sand driven up by the western gales are only broken here and there by rocky points and headlands from which reefs extend far out and upon which even in fine weather the sea breaks heavily. Inland the ground rises slightly, but nowhere to any considerable elevation; and thus even in daylight the land could not be made out in thick weather from any great distance, and on a dark night it would not be visible to an approaching ship until such time as she had arrived at a proximity from which, in the fearful sea which runs in heavy westerly weather, it would be impossible for her to escape. Truly the mariner here needs all the warnings which humanity and science can afford him, and should the new light be the means of saving even an occasional ship from the perils of this dangerous island, it will be a subject of legitimate congratulation to those who have promoted its erection.

At 11:30 we arrived at Currie Harbour, and, the wind being from N.E. and light, we fortunately found the sea quite smooth, and the *Pharos* was able to anchor outside whilst we pulled in in her boat. The channel is winding and narrow, and lies between very ugly rocks and reefs, but there is 9 feet of water throughout, and when once well inside there is perfect shelter from all winds. On the northern side of the entrance lies the hull of a schooner belonging to the North Coast of Tasmania, high and dry on the rocks.

We landed at a substantial jetty with comfortable steps, and being received by Mr. Howard, the Superintendent, went at once to the Light-house. The tower of this is a light and elegant looking iron structure, 70 feet in height, and erected at an elevation of 70 feet from the sea level. It shows towards the base some slight signs of rust and will need painting without delay. For this purpose a sufficient quantity of oxide of iron and white lead have been sent down by the *Starling*.

The lantern and lighting apparatus of the first class dioptric holophotal order, made by Messrs. Chance, Bros. & Co., of Birmingham, appear to be in excellent order; the whole of the glasses were clean and bright, without chips or scratches of any consequence; and the machinery, which we caused to be set in motion, worked smoothly, and without apparent jar or hindrance of any kind. We again timed the revolutions and found them correct. The Superintendent indeed reported that during the course of the night of 12 hours the error in time only amounted to a few seconds, a variation of no moment, not affecting in the slightest appreciable degree the intervals between the flashes of the light. On testing the pressure lamp it appeared to act satisfactorily, and the machinery for regulating the flow and overflow of oil to work well and efficiently: the whole of the lighting arrangements seemed in fact to be really of a first class description, and worthy of the high reputation of the firm by which they were supplied. The oil store was next visited, and there we found everything in good order: the Superintendent has on hand a three months supply of colza oil, and besides that a quantity of mineral oil sufficient for the same period: of wicks, lamp-glasses, &c. he has also an ample number in store. The oil then in use, a mixture of colza and kerosene, appeared bright and clear when run off from the tanks.

The tanks themselves, which were supplied from Melbourne, and are of the pattern in use at the Victorian Light-houses, appeared to be an improvement on those now employed at our own establishments, being shorter and more manageable, as well as neater looking. When the necessity arises for renewing any of our lights with tanks, I would recommend the adoption of the same pattern.

The houses of the Superintendent and his Assistants are of a first rate order: built of solid stone, and roofed with slates fastened by screws, they are of the most substantial description, and afford roomy and convenient accommodation for the men and their families.

I am bound indeed to say that the whole of the works appear to have been erected under the management of the Victorian Government in a most satisfactory and substantial way, which leaves nothing to find fault with.

The accounts having now been made up, Captain Payne was enabled to furnish me with the following particulars of the cost of the Light-house, &c. :—

	£	s.	d.
Tower.....	1400	0	0
Lantern and Light.....	3677	6	5
Freight.....	152	9	1
Erection of Light-house and Buildings.....	11,511	13	5
Total.....	£16,741	8	11

Of this sum the contributions of the two Colonies are as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Victoria.....	15,769	17	0
Tasmania.....	971	11	11

The charge for erection undoubtedly appears heavy: but it must be remembered that everything, except the rough stone, had to be conveyed to a spot most difficult of access; and if the works have been costly they have certainly been completed in a thoroughly faithful manner and in a substantial style. The amount which Tasmania is called upon to pay is not heavy, and we have ample funds in hand to liquidate our liability. The only requisition the Superintendent made upon me was for a short ladder for cleaning the outside of the lantern windows, and this has been sent to him by the *Starling*.

The soil in the neighbourhood of the Light-house is very similar in character to that at Cape Wickham. A small plot of ground has been cleared, and in due time I have no doubt that an ample supply of hay and vegetables will be produced for the use of the establishment. The Superintendent informed me that two or three miles inland, on the other side of the small hills which lie at the back of the Station, there are good well-grassed plains, but we had no time to examine the country for ourselves. Close to the Station a kangaroo hunter has established himself, and there dwells with a tribe of dogs. It is very undesirable that men of this class, often of very unscrupulous character, should be permitted to reside in the immediate neighbourhood of a Light-house, and as this man is clearly a trespasser on the Light-house Reserve I recommend that the Superintendent should be authorised to give him immediate notice to quit on behalf of the Board. The conduct of the men employed under the Superintendent was reported to have been good. He informed me that his son, who is now one of his assistants, was about to leave; and it was arranged that he should be relieved by the vessel going round with stores in October. With the exception of Mrs. Howard, who seemed to be a confirmed invalid, those living at the establishment were in good health. Close under the Light-house, however, large masses of kelp are washed up by westerly gales, and as they decay throw out an effluvia which in the hot weather must be very offensive, and, I should imagine, prejudicial to health.

Having finished our inspection we went on board the *Pharos* at 2 P.M. and steamed away to the N.W. At 5.30, being then about three miles to the N.W. of the Northern New Year's Island, we saw the flash of the Currie Harbour light distinctly, our distance from it being thus about 19 miles. We then turned the steamer's head to the eastward, and when inside of New Year's Island we again made out the light at about the same distance.

In the Notice issued by the Board on the 27th August last mariners are told that the light will be seen in ordinary weather at a distance of 17 or 18 miles. The result of our test, therefore, may be considered very satisfactory, as our observations were made in showery cloudy weather, and were taken from the deck of a small vessel very few feet above the level of the sea. Having thus completed our work we started back to Victoria, entered the Heads at 6.30 A.M. on the 21st, and arrived at Williamstown at 10.30.

I should be sorry indeed to close this Report without acknowledging in grateful terms my obligations to Captain Payne: not only did he cordially afford me the great benefit of his experienced assistance in the work of inspection, but he also performed the part of host on board his ship with a genial courtesy and a thorough hospitality which, in spite of the eccentric movements of the little *Pharos*, rendered the trip a very pleasant one. To Captain Anderson and the officers of the *Pharos* my thanks are also due for their kindness and polite attention.

I have the honor to be,
Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

W. TARLETON, *Master Warden*.