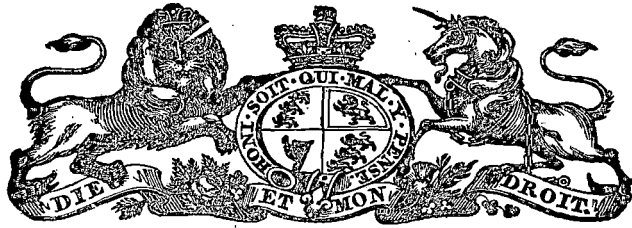


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1873.

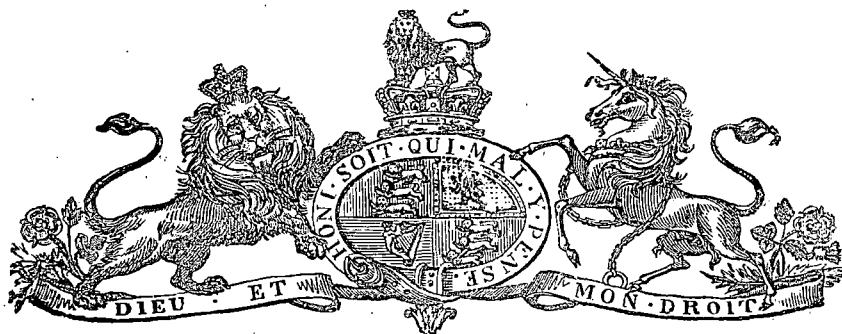
T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

T A S M A N ' S P E N I N S U L A.

M R . S U R V E Y O R B L A C K W O O D ' S R E P O R T.

Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands and Works, and ordered by the House to be printed, July 11, 1873.



INSTRUCTION to Mr. BLACKWOOD to view Tasman's Peninsula, with Mr. Blackwood's Report thereon.

MEMO.

UNDER the authority of the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Blackwood will proceed to Port Arthur, and is hereby instructed to furnish me with a Report on the areas fit for pastoral or agricultural purposes at the various places indicated in the Memorandum attached, which is furnished on my recollections of Tasman's Peninsula, extending as far back as the time when "Port Arthur" was known as "Steward's Harbour," and before the establishment of a Penal Settlement.

Mr. Blackwood will also report on the nature of the forests of growing timber that may be fit for commercial purposes, and the various capabilities of the harbour of Wedge Bay and Fortescue as site for fishermen's villages.

Mr. Blackwood will not confine his observations to the localities named in my Memorandum, but extend them to such other spots as he may deem desirable, or may be suggested by the Civil Commandant or other competent authorities.

CHARLES MEREDITH,
Office of Lands and Works, 16th June, 1873.

A. BLACKWOOD, *Esq.*

1. FORTESCUE BAY.

500 ACRES of rich chocolate loam, bounded by Fortescue Bay, with a fresh-water lagoon in the middle of the 500 acres. Also towards Port Arthur a marsh known as "Surveyor's Marsh." This marsh has many goats (estimated at 600) feeding on it, and swarms with kangaroos. If the land at Fortescue were offered for sale in 10 or 20 acre allotments it would be bought as residences for the families of fishermen, who would raise vegetables, for which a good market would be found in the whalers and other vessels that would call in there.

2. SAFETY COVE.

The buildings, cultivated land, and the runs occupied by Mr. Mansfield when contractor, on which both sheep and cattle can graze, would evidently let. Plenty of kelp can be obtained on the beach for manure.

3. WEDGE BAY.

Good harbour,—a permanent fishing village would spring up here immediately, and the she-oak hills around it would feed cattle and sheep; a fine marsh near Tunnel Bay, and good run known as Hunting Ground abounding with kangaroos. Water power for mills to a large extent.

4.

One Tree Hill, beautiful feeding ground for 2000 sheep. Black Jack and Roaring Beach all she-oak hills, and sound feeding land.

Mount Communication and Mount Wilmot sheep-runs and fine black loam to a great depth; a large amount of post and rail fencing on these lands equal to thousands of acres.

CREAM OF THE PENINSULA.

5. SLOPEN MAIN.

Marsh, 400 acres, drained; is in fact a "salt lick marsh" like Salt Pan Plains, everything gets fat upon it. There is a fresh-water lagoon near it, and excellent timber ground in the vicinity.

Next comes the Coal Mines, and then Salt Water River, 1500 acres of rich land.

Impression Bay, some good land and a fair run; plenty of buildings on it. *Good blue gum* valley from about a mile from the bay, the land well cleared.

6.

Cascades, a good dairy farm; clover grows well here as it does at Impression Bay and all over the Peninsula.

Norfolk Bay, one of the poorest parts of 14,400 acres, at present locked up, but the water around abounds with oysters as large as plates.

7. SLOPEN ISLAND.

370 acres of rich grass land.

Woody Island, say 40 acres, well grassed, with chocolate soil.

CHARLES MEREDITH.
May, 1873.

EXTRACT from Mr. BOYD'S Evidence before Committee, House of Assembly, 5th December, 1871.

Is there any quantity of good land in the 140,000 acres mentioned in your Report, either pastoral or agricultural? From Eagle Hawk Neck to Port Arthur all land to the east of that line is worthless; but perhaps there are a few acres at Fortescue Bay, and a few along the old Railway—altogether not more than 200 acres of good land; the remainder is wild, scrubby, sandy subsoil, with peaty surface, and the timber worthless, except a little at Fortescue Bay and Eagle Hawk Neck. From Port Arthur to Wedge Bay, southward, is densely timbered along the road, and in other places the land, if cleared, would be found good. No good timber in the centre of this district, which portion is similar to the last; there may be 1000 acres of moderately good agricultural and pastoral land between Tunnel Bay and Wedge Bay—the whole of this tract does not contain more than 1200 to 1300 acres of such land. From Wedge Bay to Impression Bay, to the eastward up to the old Railroad, the greater part has magnificent timber, especially on the north; but along that shore the land is bad for a mile or so back, then the timber and land are good: from the southern half of this district it would be difficult to remove the timber to a shipping place, except from Wedge Bay. Blue gum is found in abundance in this district. Land cleared at Salt Water River about 300 acres; with Impression Bay and Cascades about 400 acres altogether—very fair light land, but suffers in dry weather. The remainder, from Wedge Bay to Impression Bay, and from Roaring Bay to Salt Water River, is inferior pastoral land with very small agricultural patches; timber much inferior to that in the last district. The next block, to the west of the last up to the Coal Mines boundary, is the best on the Peninsula—about 4000 acres good sheep and agricultural country; nearly all, except some of the ranges and along the coast, is suitable for pastoral purposes. The Coal Mines block is sandy and worthless.

ADDITIONAL Remarks by JAMES BOYD, Esq., late Civil Commandant.

BETWEEN Surveyor's and Fortescue Bays there is a considerable area of good rough pasture country—beds of fine myrtle, blackwood, and stringy-bark exist at Fortescue.

A marsh of about 500 acres between Port Arthur and Wedge Bay; there is also some good sawing timber from the marsh to Wedge Bay.

The timber from Port Arthur to Wedge Bay marsh is chiefly only fit for splitting and fuel, it is not durable.

Fine sites for saw-mills, with good land about them, exist on the north side of the Peninsula from Sympathy Point to Price's Flat. The finest blue gum and other superior sawing and cabinet timbers are found in abundance in this district from one to four miles back from the coast. Coal exists from Cascades to Price's Flat, and along the greater part of the sea frontage of the leased land at the mines.

Large quantities of fine she-oak are found on the old sheep farm, and might be easily shipped.

Hobart Town, July 8th, 1873.

SIR,

IN accordance with your instructions I proceeded to Tasman's Peninsula to examine the lands. The Civil Commandant kindly rendered me any assistance and information that I required.

Port Arthur has a fine harbour and jetties (which require some repairs), very good roads, and some fine buildings well suited for factories, a good supply of water, sufficient to drive a water-wheel, some fine cottages, and several gardens in a high state of cultivation. The fences are in very good condition. There are about 100 acres in cultivation; a good deal of it is laid down in grass, which appears to grow well. The uncultivated land in the immediate vicinity of Port Arthur is poor and stony. There is a fine Tramroad made into the land west of the Settlement about two miles in length. The land is cultivated on each side of it for a considerable distance; the first mile the soil is light and sandy; it then improves into very good soil,—a red loam.

There are about a thousand acres of land south, west, and north of the Tramroad all fit for cultivation. Some of it is rather steep. It is nearly all covered with a dense scrub of pear-tree, musk and wattle in places. The large timber is chiefly swamp gum,—good splitting timber. There is lightwood and some myrtle in places, but no great extent of it. Nearly all of it good red soil.

Port Arthur would be a very suitable place for a township. There is a good harbour and abundance of fish, and the only place on the Peninsula suitable for fruit-growing. It is sheltered every way from the wind, and the soil is well adapted for fruit of any description grown on the mainland. The cultivated lands could be sold in small allotments for orchards, and the adjoining lands in lots from fifty to one hundred acres.

I hope it may not be the intention of the Government (it would be a great error) to remove the iron rails off the Tramroad, as it is now a good permanent road, and the Engineer, whoever he is, deserves credit for his work. The road could be extended to Wedge Bay Marsh, and the land laid off in lots fronting on the Tramroad. The price the land would realise with the present Tramroad would more than compensate for the rails, taking into consideration the cost of lifting them and removing them to town for sale. The Tramroad could be let by tender, and kept in repair by the lessee.

From Opossum Bay to Safety Cove there are about two thousand acres fit for cultivation. Nearly all the large timber has been cut off the land, and it is now covered in a dense scrub. The soil is light and sandy in places, good grass grows where it has been cleared, and there is abundance of seaweed to manure it.

SAFETY COVE.

There is a nice little farm, with good buildings, and about sixty-three acres in cultivation, part of it planted with hops, and would make a good dairy-farm on a small scale. There is plenty of manure on the beach, and some very good land adjoining.

From Safety Cove to the Brown Mountain there is a Run formerly let to Mr. Mansfield, about a thousand acres in extent; very rough feed; cattle might live on it, but they would not get fat; scarcely any timber on it. It would make a good appendage to Safety Cove Farm.

WEDGE BAY MARSH.

About three miles from Port Arthur, from four to five hundred acres in extent. There are three wooden buildings on it, and some fencing around them. Part of this swamp has been partially cleared and fenced, and is now nearly covered in tea-tree where it has been drained. The whole of this swamp could be drained, and it would make a fine farm, but it would require a good amount of capital to do so as it is at present. There is good feed on it for cattle, and would make fine feeding-ground in the summer when the feed on the surrounding hills is dried up.

From Wedge Bay Marsh into Wedge Bay there is a fine bed of timber, nearly all stringy-bark, and good clean timber. It is the finest bed of timber I have seen for saw-mills. There are about two thousand acres of it, with sufficient water-power to drive any mill that may be erected. The timber can all be taken into Wedge Bay.

WEDGE BAY.

Beautiful harbour, and a fine site for a township. It is close on the fishing-ground. There is abundance of firewood around the bay. The land on the north side of Parson's Bay is very good in places, she-oak hills and good feed being on the most of it. I have no doubt but that the land would be taken up in lots from fifty to one hundred acres around the bay for the timber alone. There are only two wooden buildings left, plenty of old brick chimneys, and several stacks of bricks. There is not the slightest doubt but that saw-mills would be erected close to the bay as soon as the land is thrown open to the public.

There is a good run for sheep and cattle south of Wedge Bay extending to Cape Raoul, ten thousand acres in extent, very good feed on some of it, and she-oak hills along the coast. There are a few small swamps in places, but the greater portion of it is dry until you come up on to Crip's Hunting Ground in a line with Wedge Bay Marsh, where there are a few hundred acres of swampy ground with very little timber. The above run would carry from three to four thousand sheep.

FORTESCUE BAY.

There are from five to seven hundred acres of very heavily timbered land, nearly all stringy bark, with a little lightwood through it. The timber is good and clean, well adapted for saw-mills, and the soil is a rich chocolate loam. There is good land on to the beach in places,—no one could wish for better. As there are so many ships calling in here for wood and water, and abundance of fish in the bay, I have no doubt that a good many small lots would sell where the land is good. There would be a good market found among the ships calling in for nearly all vegetables that could be grown on the allotments. I was informed there was a fine bed of lightwood up Watson's Creek, and some fine land, but it is such a dense scrub that we could not get through it without cutting our way.

Between Fortescue Bay and Port Arthur there is a large tract of land known by the name of "Surveyor's Marsh,"—good rough pasture land, with very little timber on it, and about eight thousand acres in extent. I was informed by the Station Officer that two flocks of goats were seen a short time ago, about three hundred and fifty in each.

On the road from Port Arthur to Norfolk Bay the land is very poor in places. There is a small farm cultivated on Garden Point, about twenty acres, well cleared, and laid down in grass; the soil is a dark red, and two wooden buildings are on it.

On the road from Port Arthur to Norfolk Bay, two miles from the former, there are about four hundred acres of good land fit for cultivation, red soil, and covered in a dense scrub of pear-tree and musk.

LONG BAY.

There are three wooden buildings, and about ten acres cultivated; there is some good land to the west of Long Bay, but not to a great extent—about two hundred acres red soil. The land from Long Bay to the Old Railway Station is only fit for rough pasture; at the Old Railway Station there are two buildings, and about five acres have been in cultivation.

From the Old Railway Station to Norfolk Bay the land on each side of the road is only fit for rough pasture, with the exception of about one hundred acres, two of which have been cleared at the junction of the road to the Cascades.

Norfolk Bay is a very pretty place. There are six buildings, four of brick and two of wood, a good jetty, and three small gardens in cultivation. The land about Norfolk Bay is very poor, only fit for rough pasture. From Norfolk Bay to the Neck it does not improve. From the Neck round to Tasman's Arch it is equally bad, and heavily timbered in places; the timber is not of any commercial value where it is. From Tasman's Arch to Fortescue Bay the land is inaccessible from the beach on account of the high cliffs. The land is very steep and very heavily timbered; that portion of land is of no value at present.

WOODY ISLAND.

From thirty to forty acres in extent. There are three buildings, one of brick, and two of wood; jetty, boat-house, and three small gardens have been cultivated; all the soil on this island is very good, dark red soil, and all covered in good grass; only three or four small trees on the west side of the island.

I was informed that there was abundance of oysters in the bay and around the island. I had no means of ascertaining the truth of the statement.

SLOPEN ISLAND.

About thirty acres have been cleared, and apparently lucerne grows well here in the spring, as there is a lot of the dry straw left in heaps on the ground. There are two wooden buildings and the ruins of other two. The soil on the eastern and southern side of the island is light and sandy. There are about fifty acres on the north-west corner of splendid dark soil, three acres of which have been cultivated, and that is all covered in manure from either sheep or rabbits. Very little timber on the island. Thousands of rabbits and quail, and a small flock of twenty goats, and three sheep. The grass is cropped bare to the ground with the quantity of rabbits; they would require to be destroyed before any grass could be obtained for cattle.

From Norfolk Bay to within half a mile of the Cascades there are about three thousand acres of good pasture land. There is some good timber, but not in sufficient quantities to induce any man to erect a saw-mill.

CASCADES.

There are numerous buildings, but fast going to decay. Cottage and garden, slaughter-house bakehouse, two large prisons, row of cottages, workshops, hospital, numerous cells, and a large building formerly used for a church, the remains of an old building burnt down some time ago. There has been about forty acres in cultivation, fencing all down. About a mile and half west of Cascades there has been a paddock cleared, about eight acres in extent. There may be about two hundred acres that could be cultivated about here; it is covered in a dense scrub. All the available good timber has been cut about this station.

From Cascades to Impression Bay the land, about two thousand acres, is only fit for rough pasture.

IMPRESSION BAY.

This is a beautiful spot, fine paddocks and good grass; about sixty acres in cultivation. There are some fine buildings; about sixteen detached buildings, and three squares of buildings. This would be a very good place for a township, as there is some good land west of it. Valley Farm, about one mile from Impression Bay, good land and well cleared, very good fence around it, good grass on it. There was a herd of deer on it when I went up. There may be about four hundred acres of good land fit for cultivation, and very good feed on the lands adjoining. The Civil Commandant has men sinking a shaft for coal, quarter of a mile from Impression Bay. They were down sixty-two feet when I was there, with every indication of coal. I have no doubt that coal is in existence all along the coast from Impression Bay to the Coal Mines. There is an old Tramroad and jetty at Impression Bay that could be repaired at a small cost. There are about four or five hundred acres of good land on Price's Flat extending from the beach, good black soil.

From Price's Flat to Salt Water River the land is only fit for rough pasture.

SALT WATER RIVER.

A fine bay, safe anchorage, and a long jetty very much out of repair. There are a number of buildings, four cottages on the hill, hospital buildings, barn, slaughter-house, cow-sheds, square of sheds for stables, two large buildings, building fitted up with boilers and a dip for sheep, a row of stone cells, a square of buildings, two buildings used for workshops, one cottage, and a portion of a windmill never completed. This is a very extensive farm; about three hundred acres have been cultivated, splendid paddocks and well sodded with grass and clover, a beautiful red loam soil; all the fences are in a dilapidated state. There are about two hundred acres adjoining the farm that would well repay the labour of clearing.

On the south side of the river there are about sixty acres cleared, about a mile and a half from the farm, good red soil; and about one thousand acres adjoining of good land, all a red soil, with good feed on it.

On Slopen Beach there is a beautiful marsh of from four hundred to five hundred acres, with good feed on it, and splendid black soil. It has been partially drained years ago. There is not a tree on some hundreds of acres of it. I rode over a good deal of it, and saw cattle feeding on it where I did not go, so that it cannot be so wet. There is a fence run through it. There are two small lagoons south of this marsh, with any amount of wild ducks on them.

Around the Coal Mines the land is very poor, but the value of the coal makes up for that. They are working a four-foot seam at present, and sinking a new shaft some distance from their present one. There are about twelve buildings standing, the roofs of the other large buildings are off, and the walls falling by degrees. There may be about fifteen acres of cultivated land about this place. From the mines to the north-west point the land is only fit for pasture, and the extent about six thousand acres. There are some very good spots, several she-oak hills, and around the lagoon there is good feed. The water in the lagoon is very brackish, plenty of wild ducks, and a pair of black swans.

SHEEP FARM.

There is a cottage, men's house, and shearing shed. There are about six thousand acres of land, a great deal of which could be cultivated, splendid soil and fine feed, mostly timbered with she-oak and gum; the she-oak is the largest I have seen. This is the pride of all the Peninsula. The she-oak alone, leaving out of view the splendid quality of the land, would, if sold at £1 per acre, pay for it. As soon as this land is open to the public it will soon be disposed of.

The roads on the Peninsula are not good, and the bridges are the worst I have seen, simply spars about 9 inches thick, and then covered with saplings from 2 to 3 inches thick, and the most of

them covered over with soil enough to break down the bridge. It is simply dangerous to ride over any of them as the saplings are rotten in many places, and when a horse treads on them down they go. In my opinion it would enhance the value of the land, and facilitate the sale of it, if the prisoners were employed to erect new wooden bridges, with good sleepers about one foot three inches thick at the small end, and covered over with good split slabs four inches thick and twelve feet in length, and a hand-rail on each side of the bridge, all the slabs treenailed at each end, no soil put on them, they would last for years to come. There would be no expense required, only the labour, as there is plenty of timber on the ground, and they have plenty of bullocks to draw the timber for the bridges.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) ARCHIBALD BLACKWOOD.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.