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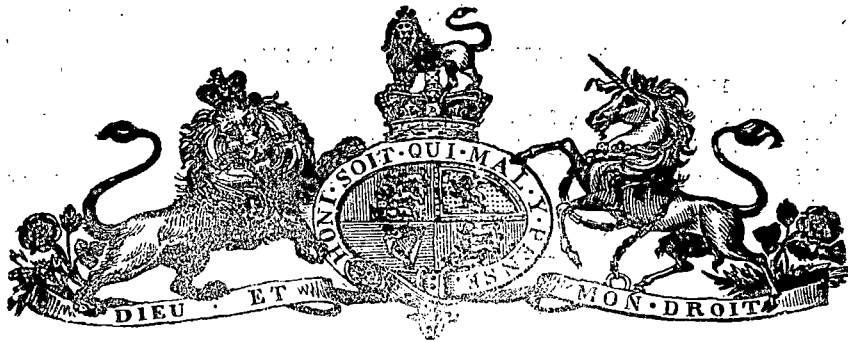
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

INDIGENOUS TIMBER.

REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Meredith, and ordered by the House to be printed,
September 23, 1875.



REPORT of Select Committee appointed 9th September, 1875, to consider and report upon the Advisability of regulating, by Act of Parliament or otherwise, the Export of Indigenous Timber.

R E P O R T .

YOUR Committee have the honor to report that, from the Evidence (attached) of experienced persons, they are of opinion that, to maintain the credit of our Timber cut from the *Eucalypti*, it should, when exported, be classified and marked as is done with Deals in Europe. And, that a most objectionable practice prevails in supplying Shingles for the Export Trade, viz., that of packing them in bundles containing 80 to 90, instead of 100: so that instead of 10 bundles containing 1000, they frequently contain not more than 750. This is a fraudulent mode of dealing in such articles, which should be put a stop to by compelling the splitters and all concerned to supply in fact 100 shingles in every bundle under a penalty, and to deliver 1000 shingles for that number sold or supplied.

CHARLES MEREDITH, *Chairman.*

Committee Room, 23rd September, 1875.

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS.

No. 1.

WEDNESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11 o'clock, A.M.

Present.—Mr. Meredith, Mr. Scott, Captain Gilmore.

1. Mr. Meredith was voted to the Chair.
2. Mr. H. B. Evans was examined.
3. Mr. Watson to be summoned for to-morrow, at 11.

Committee adjourned at $\frac{1}{4}$ past 12 to to-morrow, at 11.

No. 2.

THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11 o'clock.

Present.—Mr. Meredith, Capt. Gilmore, Mr. Scott, Mr. Salier.

1. Mr. John Watson was in attendance, and was examined.
2. Mr. P. Oldham to be summoned for to-morrow.

Adjourned to to-morrow at 11.

No. 3.

FRIDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11 o'clock.

Present—Mr. Meredith, Capt. Gilmore, Mr. Scott.

1. Mr. Peter Oldham was in attendance, and was examined.
 2. Mr. Dowdell is a large exporter. Summon him for Tuesday, at 11; and Mr. Beck at half-past 11.
- Adjourned to Tuesday next, at 11.
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No. 4.

TUESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11:20 A.M.

Present—Mr. Meredith (Chairman), Captain Gilmore, Mr. Salier, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Scott.

1. The evidence already taken having been read, and the witnesses summoned not being in attendance;
- The Committee adjourned to to-morrow at 11 A.M.
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No. 5.

WEDNESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11 o'clock.

Present—Mr. Meredith, Mr. Scott, Mr. Lewis, Capt. Gilmore, Mr. Salier.

1. Mr. Dowdell called in and examined.
2. Mr. Beck called in and examined.
3. *Ordered*, Mr. Risby to be summoned for to-morrow, at 11.

The Committee adjourned until to-morrow at 11 A.M.

No. 6.

THURSDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER, 1875.

The Committee met at 11 A.M.

Present—Mr. Meredith, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Scott.

1. Mr. Risby called in and examined.
2. Draft Report brought up by Mr. Lewis and agreed to.
3. *Resolved*, That the Chairman bring up the Report this day.

The Committee adjourned *sine die*.LOUIS R. HUXTABLE, *Clerk of Select Committee.*

EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1875.

HUBERT BEARD EVANS, *Esquire, called in and examined.*

1. *By Chairman.*—You have been an exporter of timber from this port for some time, have you not? Yes; for more than fifteen years.

2. Will you name the places to which you have exported timber? All ports in New Zealand; South Australia, Melbourne, and Queensland.

3. Could you name the different timbers in the order of their values? Blue Gum ranks first, and Peppermint, which is almost as durable; then Stringy-bark; then Swamp Gum. All these sorts of timber are exported by me. The substances of the timber of Blue Gum and Peppermint are equal; but for ship building Blue Gum is preferred, from its being possible to get it in greater lengths, whilst Peppermint is preferred for frame timbers, staunchions, &c.

4. Would it be possible to export timbers under their own names; I do not mean the botanical names, but their common names? I could not myself, but there are experts who could name each timber. I would divide them into three general classes:—1. Blue Gum and Peppermint; 2. Stringy-bark; 3. Swamp Gum. An expert could classify these timbers without much difficulty, except Blue Gum and Stringy-bark, after they had been cut; it would be difficult, but possible.

5. Have you ever shipped to London? No. I am aware that large numbers of treenails are sent to London of Blue Gum and all kinds of timbers. Peppermint will not split readily into treenails of the length required—five feet; but that wood produces good shingles. You can get the lengths of treenails in Blue Gum.

6. Has the want of classification done any injury to our export of timber? No doubt it has. The wharf at Auckland was built of our timber,—Swamp Gum,—and had to be replaced with Iron-bark from New South Wales in 3 or 4 years. Swamp Gum will not stand wear between wind and water.

7. Can you state the expense of classifying timber for export? I cannot; but I imagine that the salary of an expert officer would be all that is necessary.

8. If a duly qualified officer were appointed, would it not aid exporters to get a better market for good timber? Certainly; and it would probably save the exporter the expense and pain of having a whole cargo thrown on his hands at the port of receipt.

9. *By Mr. Scott.*—Is it difficult to distinguish between Blue Gum and Stringy-bark? Yes, after they are cut. But I know experts who could name timbers—such as Mr. John Watson, Mr. John McGregor, Mr. Risby, and Mr. John Lucas.

10. *By Chairman.*—How long are treenails cut? Five feet.

11. *By Mr. Scott.*—Is not White Gum useful for treenails? No; but the White or Swamp Gum splits readily into palings and shingles. I know that it grows in damp parts of the North Coast.

12. *By Chairman.*—Have you exported shingles? I have shipped millions. They are sold in bundles of ten to the thousand. Of course the buyer expects a thousand, but frequently he finds 200 short of the number; the Contractor trusts to the honesty of the splitter. I recently shipped 700,000 shingles on board the *Italy*, and I don't think the bundles will average more than 85-90 to the 100.

13. What proportion of timber is exported from the Ports down the river? Very small proportion; most of it goes from the wharves in Hobart Town.

THURSDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 1875.

JOHN WATSON, *Esquire, called in and examined.*

14. *By Chairman.*—How long have you been in this Colony? Forty-three years.

15. Have you been an exporter of timber? Yes, to England and China, but not to other Colonies.

16. What description of timber have you exported? Large timbers, such as keel pieces, rudders, &c., all of Blue Gum timber, which have always been well received and approved. The export paid me very handsomely.

17. How many descriptions are there of forest timber exported? There are Blue Gum; Stringy-bark of two kinds, one of which is called Gum-topped Stringy-bark, and is only useful for splitting; Ash Gum, which is useful for ship-building when used for under water, but will not stand the weather; Peppermint, which does not grow to any size for ship-building, but is a fine timber for sleepers, and will last a long time; and Swamp Gum, which is only fit for splitting into palings, shingles, and laths.

18. How would you classify the timber? I would place Blue Gum first; then the real Stringy-bark, which is equal to Blue Gum for lasting. We did a portion of the wharf 10 or 12 years ago, and when it became necessary to remove a portion of it, the Stringy-bark beams and planking were harder than they were when they were put down.

19. Would it be possible to classify timber as it was exported, or to tell inferior from superior timber? Yes, by classing it in four classes:—1. Blue Gum; 2. Stringy-bark; 3. Ash Gum and Gum-topped Stringy-bark; 4. Swamp Gum. An expert in the timber trade would find no difficulty in making these divisions.

20. Have you known inferior timber sent away as superior? I have seen a great quantity of very inferior timber sent away. A portion of the Gum tree, the heart, is almost useless. All the hard wood in this country forms from the outside, except the Pine, Lightwood, and Myrtle; whilst in England the Oak forms from the heart. I have seen a Gum tree 6 feet through, which had not more than a foot of timber in it that had arrived at maturity; but in a hundred years or so it would have arrived at its full growth. The size of a tree is no criterion as to its age.

21. Is Peppermint timber useful? Yes, for short lengths it is very useful, but there is no great quantity of it available on this side of the Island.

22. Have you ever sent treenails to London? Yes, I have shipped them in three-foot lengths, and of Blue Gum. I have seen quantities go away from here, some of Swamp Gum, and even inferior timbers. Swamp Gum is a soft-cutting wood, but it is woolly. A good sawyer prefers Stringy-bark, but the Swamp Gum is a good splitting tree.

23. You say you sent timber to China? Yes, in 1845. It paid me about 200 per cent. It was taken up and sold at Hong Kong by an American ship. I made a full report on the timber of this Colony some 35 years ago, which was sent home to the Admiralty. I therein described the several timbers very fully. I believe the report can be referred to.

24. As a shipper of timber would you object to its being classified? No; it would be an advantage to me. If each mill had its own trade mark, people in the other Colonies would know from whom to buy; and on whose good credit they could depend for a good article. I would recommend a trade mark being employed for Blue Gum timber; and trade marks for every other timber. If a wrong trade mark were used by any person, or a false mark be put on timber, it should be forfeited. There would be no excuse for timber being wrongly branded at a mill, as they fall their own trees; and any bushman can tell the difference between Gum and Stringy-bark when growing.

25. Is there much Blue Gum timber available? Our best Blue Gum forests are cleared out in this neighbourhood. If a Gum tree is barked or ringed, the wood under the sap is cracked and useless.

26. What proportion of timber is sent away from the Channel and the City Wharfs? About a sixth of the timber only is exported from down Channel.

27. Did you ever export Blackwood? No; my brother sent a lot to Hamburg, which paid him well. It is used for furniture only, and is not well suited for ship-building purposes; it will not stand the weather.

28. What is the value of Blue Gum as compared with Oak? English Oak is very expensive, and costs about £7 a load. Blue Gum lasts longer than Oak in general. Some of the vessels I built 25 and 30 years ago are still in existence. I could name the *Flying Squirrel*, the *Childers*, and the *Runnymede*. Blue Gum is not equal to Teak, which wears, but will not decay. I would class Teak first, Blue Gum second, and Oak third, for ship-building purposes.

29. What is the value of Huon Pine as compared with Elm? Huon Pine is superior for boat-building purposes. Elm is tough for a few years, but it breaks when old. Certainly it bends as well as Huon Pine.

30. Is much Huon Pine exported? Yes, principally to Adelaide and Melbourne. It goes largely from Port Davey. Pine is good to the heart. A Gum tree takes three hundred years for its growth. I have counted 280 rings in the timber. In Gum timber each year's growth has a ring for itself.

31. *By Mr. Scott.*—At what size would you cease branding timber? Not under 6 by 4 inches for timbers; but I would brand all planks. It could be done easily and cheaply by a hammer with a face the size of a penny, and used by boys.

32. *By Chairman.*—Have you ever shipped shingles? I have not.

33. What about measurement of timber? The measurement of timber is now always full cut; formerly the timber was not full cut, and used frequently to be a full third less. In buying shingles you now get about 70 or 80 to the 100, or bundle said to contain 100. If a trader could be found out in selling timber short of number or size, he should be punished in the same manner as for light weight.

The Witness withdrew.

Mr. Watson produced two specimens of woods:—

- 1st. Blue Gum, 8 years old, used as a plank on the top of the pier at New Wharf, weighing 72lbs. per cubic foot.
- 2nd. Real Stringy-bark, 5 years old, used as a beam in wharf, 60lbs. per cubic foot.

FRIDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 1875.

MR. PETER OLDHAM called in and examined.

34. *By Chairman.*—You are acquainted with the timber trade, Mr. Oldham, and for how long? Forty-five years ago I commenced the timber trade.

35. In what way? First as a sawyer and splitter; then 10 years later I supplied all kinds of timber, and in 1852 I gave up business to my brother, and went to England. After my return to the Colony I built several vessels of various tonnage. I believe the largest was the *Sea Bird*, of 156 tons. There were several of smaller tonnage.

36. Have you ever exported timber? Not myself; but I have supplied it largely for exportation.

37. Will you be good enough to classify the timbers of the Colony? There are three distinct kinds of *Eucalypti*. 1. The Peppermint, which is first in quality for durability and everything necessary where strength is required; but there is not any great quantity of this timber. 2. Blue Gum. 3. Stringy-bark. Each of these three classes will divide into 7 or 8 more. The Swamp Gum is useful, in its way, as a splitting timber. I have split 150,000 shingles out of one tree at Port Esperance. I prefer the Stringy-bark to the Blue Gum for ship-building purposes—I mean the Gum-topped Stringy-bark, which grows with the stringy bark up to the branches, and then the smaller branches have the gum bark. The Blue Gum is much heavier wood. The Gum-topped Stringy-bark is best for bridges or ships, where length and durability are required. There is not a great deal of real Blue Gum; people call it the Blue Gum, but it is not the true tree at all. The real Blue Gum grows in open country, where the sun and wind can get at it, and consequently the wood is heavy and the fibre very firm. Then there is the Bastard Blue Gum, so called, and of which more of the timber is produced. It ranks between Swamp Gum and Blue Gum. The Swamp Gum will not stand wind and weather; it goes rotten in a few years. Brown Stringy-bark will not stand weather.

38. Would you advise a trade mark to be put on timber by each mill? Yes. When in 1833 the Admiralty sent out for some of our Blue Gum, bad timbers were sent home,—bad Stringy-bark,—which quite condemned our Colony for good timber.

39. Do you know anything about railway sleepers? I know that a quantity were sent to India, of Swamp Gum. If we could send a really good article, India would absorb all we could supply in the way of railway sleepers.

40. How should the mark be applied? As in Deals, which are always examined and stamped; and though people say that no one can tell the different timbers, it is not the case. An expert could do so, and might be employed to mark all the good timber. If bad timber is sent away it merely cheats the buyer. It melts down under the weather just like a cabbage stalk.

41. Would you prefer Peppermint wood to Blue Gum to make a plough beam? I would take a Gum-topped Stringy-bark in preference to Blue Gum. The Blue Peppermint would be as good as Blue Gum—Peppermint is the heavier wood and closer grain, but the Blue Gum is toughest. The White Peppermint is inferior timber. The Blue Peppermint grows on open ground on the East Coast. I put down some piles of this wood 14 years ago, and they have not lost an inch. The wood of the Huon swamps is too porous.

42. Could an expert class the timbers? Yes, he could easily distinguish the good timber from the bad. Much bad timber is sent away, and a second order is never got from the places to which this bad timber is sent. At present timber is almost entirely cut by machinery, and it would be dealing properly, and in a business-like way, to put a trade mark on timber.

WEDNESDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 1875.

MR. DOWDELL *examined*.

43. *By Chairman*.—I am a Timber Merchant.

44. I have been for 20 years an exporter of timber; and for 33 years connected with the trade.

45. I have exported to all the Colonies, principally New Zealand and South Australia; on an average from two to three millions of feet per annum.

46. With the exception of the cargo shipped to Napier, per *Free Trader*, some time ago, by Mr. Beck, I have heard no complaints of Tasmanian timbers. This cargo consisted of beams, &c. for bridges. In squaring our timber the best of the timber is cut away—the outside being the cream of the timber.

47. I should divide our timbers into:—Blue Gum, (as the best of timber); Gum-topped Stringy-bark; Stringy-bark; Swamp Gum, and Peppermint.

48. Our timber is generally branded B. D., not denoting the kind of timber.

49. There would be no difficulty in marking the different classes of timber so as to denote their kind.

50. Blue Gum, cut into small sizes, is shipped to South Australia for wheelwrights' purposes.

51. I would not approve of timbers being marked according to their kinds; I should want to exercise my own judgment. I can see no benefit in trade-marking the timber so.

52. It is quite possible to distinguish the different trees at the time of felling; but the mill-owners take the logs indiscriminately after felling from the men engaged in felling. The mill-owners and the men engaged in felling the trees being engaged in two different branches of the trade, to the best of my knowledge.

53. There would be no difficulty in the log-cutters marking the timber at the time of felling, so as to distinguish Blue Gum, Gum-topped Stringy-bark, Stringy-bark, Swamp Gum, and Peppermint.

54. I do not know that there is any particular season in which the trees are felled.

55. I do not know that the timber cut at any one time is better than that cut at another time.
56. I have never shipped timber to London.
57. *By Mr. Scott.*—We brand all timber for our own protection on the Wharf, not to distinguish its kind.
58. We trade in shingles. There are two sorts of shingles:—1st. Full shingles; 2nd. Market shingles. Full shingles are always bought 100 to the bundle. Market shingles average 90 to the 100. Lately we have been endeavouring to make all shingles “full shingles.”
59. *By Chairman.*—A purchaser of market shingles would pay a less price, and would know what he was buying. Full shingles average 10s. to 12s. per 1000; market shingles from 7s. to 8s. 6d. per 1000. Market shingles are sold so many bundles to the thousand.
60. *By Mr. Scott.*—I have not a saw-mill.
61. I believe that a person buying shingles and finding himself short would have a remedy at law.
62. *By Chairman.*—A person wanting 100,000 shingles would have to buy 110,000 market shingles.

MR. BECK *examined.*

63. *By Chairman.*—My name is John Beck; I reside in Wellington, New Zealand.
64. I have been engaged amongst Tasmanian timber for 22 years past. Of this timber, Blue Gum is the best, and Stringy next. There is a difference in Stringy-barks. I believe that Gum-topped Stringy-bark is superior to the other kind. People outside Tasmania know nothing of it.
65. I first visited Tasmania in June, 1874. I came to purchase timber. I purchased timber from H. B. Evans, and shipped it on barque *Free Trader*. I bought it for Stringy-bark; it consisted of sawn timber, shingles, and palings. I landed it in Wellington, New Zealand.
66. I was generally satisfied with the timber, and was fairly served.
67. I know the Swamp Gum. I believe it has been shipped to New Zealand, but not under that name. I have never exported any.
68. Peppermint excels for use as sleepers; it is the most valuable of our timbers for railway purposes.
69. I have exported since I came here about 2 millions of feet of timber, in about 12 or 15 ships.
70. I reside here permanently for the purpose of shipping timber.
71. Five-sixths of the timber that I have exported has been shipped in Hobart Town. If I could ship from the mills direct I should save at least 10 per cent.
72. The names of the mills with which I do business are:—Andrewartha, Port Esperance; Risby, Hobart Town; Judd, Port Esperance; Chapman, ditto; Facy, Hay, and Co., Southport; Geeves, Honeywood; Watt, Oyster Cove; Lucas, Mountain River; Hickling, Dromedary; Clark, Hobart Town; Chesterman, Garden Island Creek.
73. When the timber is landed in Hobart Town it is subjected to a severe inspection, and also to a further inspection upon shipment.
74. The timber as it grows is easily distinguished; as also at the mill when the bark is on it. As a rule the timber goes to the mill with the bark on it. The bark really distinguishes the different kinds of timber after felling.
75. The timber could be classified at the mill; and that is the only way in which it could be so classified.
76. A Gum-topped Stringy-bark could be distinguished from a Stringy-bark by its bark, and all the other kinds of timber could be likewise distinguished by the same means. In the case of the Gum-topped Stringy-bark there might be a difficulty if the butt of the tree only were to be seen.
77. The logs are obtained by the servants of the mill, and the mill-owners know the kind of timber they are supplied with.
78. There are other mills than those I do business with; viz., Crowther, Oyster Cove; Oates, Mountain River.
79. As a rule the different descriptions of gum trees, as Blue Gum, Swamp Gum, &c., grow in beds.—Blue Gum and Peppermint especially so.
80. I have shipped shingles, and in purchasing them have done so under great difficulties, viz., the bad quality of the timber, and as a rule not obtaining more than 750 for 1000. I have had bundles delivered to me with only 68 shingles to the 100.
81. Is there any way in the trade in which, without actually counting them, you could ensure getting ten hundred shingles per 1000? None that I know of.
82. *By Mr. Scott.*—There are in the trade two kinds of shingles, market and full. I do not buy shingles under either of these names. I purchase them by the thousand, and expect to get the number for which I pay. People outside Hobart Town know nothing of the distinctions between full and market shingles.
83. I believe that there would be an advantage in cutting timber at certain periods of the year, but there exists a difference of opinion as to the proper time to do this.
84. The matter of shingles appears to demand the interference of legislation; it is a most important

matter. In all there are three descriptions of shingles, the third kind being shipping shingles. This shingle runs 5 shingles to the inch. The market shingle is between the shipping and the full. The full shingle runs 3 shingles to the inch. There is more actual dishonesty with regard to shingles than in any matter than I am aware of. A remedy might be applied as in the matter of weights and measures.

THURSDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 1875.

MR. RISBY *examined.*

85. *By Chairman.*—My name is J. E. Risby; I am engaged in the timber trade, and have been so engaged for 30 years past. I am owner of a saw-mill.

86. The different kinds of *Eucalypti* sawn in my mill are:—Gum-topped Stringy-bark, Stringy-bark, Peppermint, Blue Gum, Swamp Gum. These timbers are brought up the river in crafts in log. When these timbers thus come to me I can easily distinguish them; when they are sawn, not so easily.

87. I should class our timbers as follows:—1st. Peppermint, for durability; next, Blue Gum for agricultural and all manufacturing purposes; then Gum-topped Stringy-bark for ships, bridges, &c., and general purposes, but Blue Gum has the advantage in durability and strength. Blue Gum is, considering its length and strength, the best and strongest wood in the world. Swamp Gum is the most inferior.

88. I export large quantities of timber to all the Colonies, sometimes as a speculation, sometimes to order.

89. I do not specially mention in the invoice the different kinds of timber shipped, unless specially ordered.

90. I know all the different kinds of logs sawn in my mill. After sawn they are not so easily distinguishable. Blue Gum, after sawn, could be distinguished by an expert, as also Swamp Gum.

91. I have heard of inferior timber shipped as good timber from Tasmania; I have known Swamp Gum sent away as Blue Gum.

92. I use no trade mark on my timber; occasionally, on a good article, I put my initials.

93. I have never shipped timber to London, but have known treenails shipped to London as Blue Gum which I know they were not.

94. I cannot say what period of the year is best to fell timber. The question is an open one.

95. I deal in shingles and palings. I have known large quantities of shingles and palings sent from here which I call good timber spoilt.

96. The buyer of shingles has no security as to the quantity of shingles he will get; the bundles, supposed to contain 100, containing only from 80 to 90 on an average. I know of great quantities of rubbish sent away as shingles; I have known some of the bundles to contain only 75 shingles.

97. *By Mr. Scott.*—I do not know why we should not mark our timber, as I believe they do in England. A Crown might be stamped on all our best timbers. A large quantity of inferior timber could not be so marked.

98. A large quantity of wood is cut for sleepers; there would be no difficulty in an expert marking these according to their classes, viz., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.

99. Our timber might be marked as Deals are marked, in classes, 1, 2, and 3. This, I believe, is done in England by an expert paid by the Government.