

(No. 40.)



1877.

SESSION IV.

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T A S M A N I A.

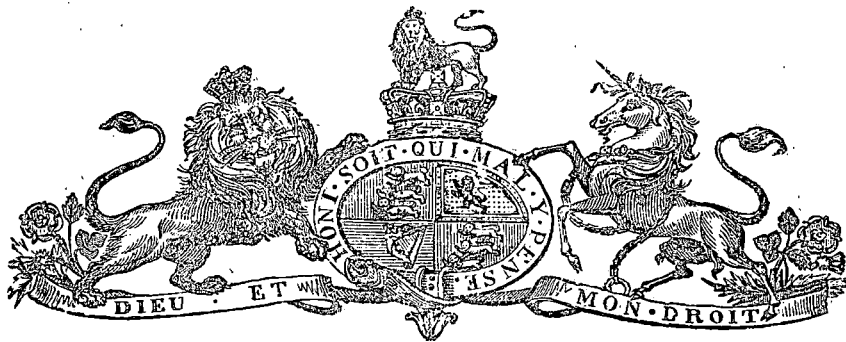
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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M E R S E Y B R I D G E.

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Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands and Works, and ordered by the House to be printed, November 15, 1877.



*Petition to His Excellency* **FREDERICK ALOYSIUS WELD, Esq., C.M.G.,**  
*Governor of Tasmania and its Dependencies, &c.*

**MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :**

WE, the undersigned selectors of land under the Waste Lands Act on the west side of the River Mersey, and other residents of Chudleigh and its vicinity, who are also anxious to select Crown lands on the west side of the Mersey, humbly pray :

That your Excellency will be pleased to recommend that a sum of money not exceeding £1000 may be placed on the Estimates for the purpose of constructing a bridge over the Mersey River, to the west of the township of Chudleigh near the Van Diemen's Land Company's old line of road.

We beg leave to apprise your Excellency of the lamentable fact that out of the few persons who have ventured to cross this river at this ford ten have been drowned. The stream being very rapid, and the bed of the river covered with large rounded moveable boulders, make the ford uncertain and always dangerous : moreover, the frequent rapid rise of the river often places an impassable barrier for weeks together to the return of those persons who have ventured across.

Trusting, for these reasons, your Excellency will be pleased to grant the prayer of your Petitioners, believing, as they do, that thereby a very large and valuable tract of fertile land will be made available to us and other intending settlers, and in that case become a most important district.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

15th October, 1877.

[Here follow 90 Signatures.]

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*Chudleigh, 3rd July, 1877.*

SIR,

WE, the undersigned, beg most respectfully to point out to you the actual necessity there exists of erecting a bridge over the River Mersey at that part known as the "Old Ford," and leading directly to Gad's Hill and to about three thousand (3000) acres of selected land in that vicinity.

The late accident, viz. by the death by drowning of a man named George Johnstone at that spot, impresses more fully on us the desirability of a bridge (and, in fact, the necessity), his death being about the tenth which has occurred within a few years at or near the same place. The large quantity of grazing land in the vicinity of Gad's Hill holds out strong inducements to parties desirous of obtaining a run for their cattle ; and we are confident that were a bridge erected many would avail themselves of it immediately, the danger of crossing the river debarring them, as in certain seasons of the year the crossing is not only difficult but dangerous. Gad's Hill being in the direct road to Mount Bischoff, many practical miners have stated that that line of road, being upwards of fifty miles nearer than any other, it would immediately, on a bridge being erected, be used as the best road to the above-named place.

We beg to state that in the immediate neighbourhood of the proposed bridge there are large quantities of fine timber, stone, and lime available for the required purpose.

We therefore beg most respectfully to request that, from the urgent necessity of a bridge being erected, you will have the goodness to take our application into your favourable consideration, and grant the prayer of our request.

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*

[Here follow 6 Signatures.]

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SIR,

*Mersey Bridge, 10th September, 1877.*

WHEN your letter addressed to the Chairman of Promoters, from the *Brisbane Hotel*, Launceston, dated the 27th ultimo, reached the Promoters, the people here were earnestly engaged on a subject not very remotely unconnected with the Bridge, and of which you shall hear more by and bye. Your letter, though strange, did not take us by surprise: it was rumoured here some days before, and foreshadowed in the press by an anonymous scribe who hails from among us, and is said to live by us.

When, Sir, you wrote the letter in question, you must necessarily have had some alarming intelligence from your Colleague, who is beating the wind down here for the last past few weeks,—so alarming that it must have completely effaced from your memory the following facts of which you are or should have been fully cognisant:—

1stly. That the Promoters have had plans, sections, and specifications, &c., for the approach made and forwarded to your office for approval or otherwise:

2ndly. That the Chief Engineer inspected these plans, &c., and also the Western Approach site. Revised and altered the said plans and estimates, and finally fixed the amount necessary for the efficient construction of the work, at a sum of £2000 or thereabouts:

3rdly. That I, authorised by the Promoters, concurred in such revision, alteration, and amount:

4thly. That (as I have been informed) this sum of £2000 has been submitted to and approved of by the Executive Council as essential for the effectual and substantial construction of the work in question; and that the opinions of the law officers of the Crown were attached thereto, signifying that the Promoters had the power to borrow such sum for the completion of the Bridge works, without again appealing to the Ratepayers:

5thly. That on a former occasion some one of the many occupiers of your office, for some reason unknown to the Promoters, urged upon them the desirability of obtaining the sanction of the Ratepayers for an additional loan to construct the approach in question. That such meeting was duly convened and held in August, 1876, and the result communicated to your office. Then, as now, party spirit prevailed, and the loss of the Bridge is the penalty to the inhabitants. A sum of £500 was all the meeting would sanction: believing this to be totally inadequate, the result was equivalent to a total refusal:

6thly. That in February, 1877, at the suggestion of your predecessor, the Promoters met and passed a Resolution to the following effect:—

“That in the event of the Government advancing a further sum of £1500 for the construction of the Western Approach, they, the Promoters, guarantee interest and principal of the said sum as though the same were a part of the original sum borrowed under the provisions of “The Local Public Works Acts” for the construction of the Mersey Bridge.”

This Resolution was duly communicated to your office. The amount (£1500) asked for was based on plans of a less pretentious structure than was subsequently found acceptable to your Engineer-in-Chief, who revised the plans, thereby increasing the amount to a sum of £2000.

These are but few of the fruitless efforts of the Promoters to complete this work. Yet in your letter from the *Brisbane Hotel*, no reference whatever is made to anything previously done in the matter; but the Promoters are asked to begin *de novo*, as though you were wholly uninformed, or that you entirely ignored all that has been done by the Promoters and your predecessors in office. And all this time professing an anxious desire for the security of life and property, &c. And as the necessary means to this end you impose upon the Promoters two necessary preliminary conditions. The one impossible, the other very improbable. The impossible is the effectual construction of the necessary work for the prescribed sum of £1000. The improbable is—that the Ratepayers will now sanction the borrowing of a sum of £1000 believing that sum to be inadequate, and having in February last refused to sanction the borrowing of a sum of £1500 for the same work. And contingent on the Promoters obtaining the money by any means, you will construct the work in your own way, regardless of the desires or opinions of the Promoters. Verily this excels anything ever attempted by any of your numerous predecessors.

Surely the Promoters have a right to be considered at least equally interested with the Director-General of Public Works in this matter. And as the law has wisely limited the expense of any undertaking under “The Local Public Works Act” to a sum of £10,000, or a rate of one shilling in the pound, on the rateable property within the District, why prescribe any other limit to the sum necessary to complete the works in question?

In all good faith and sincerity, this is a work of great necessity and one in which the Promoters are deeply interested and prepared to meet you in a fair spirit of compromise. And as you profess you are desirous of having the work proceeded with with as little delay as possible, tenders for the work may be called upon within ten days from this, and so end this five years war and bury the hatchet.

Individually and sincerely speaking, I cannot give you credit for good intentions when you penned the letter in question. Possibly there may have been much done and said on the subject that I am not aware of; nevertheless, if I failed thus freely to express my opinions to you on this matter, I would have felt as if I were not doing justice to you, or my duty to my constituents who are mainly interested.

(Signed) I have, &c.

J. M. DOOLEY, *M.H.A.*

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*

*Lands and Works and Works Office, 17th September, 1877.*

SIR,

I AM directed by the Honorable the Minister of Lands and Works to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 10th instant, on the subject of the Mersey Bridge.

I am to inform you that your letter is so exceedingly discourteous and offensive that no consideration can be accorded to it.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GEORGE F. LOVETT, *Ministerial Clerk.*

J. M. DOOLEY, *Esq., M.H.A., Latrobe.*

*Deloraine, 25th October, 1877.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report, in compliance with the instructions on the 27th ultimo, that I have made a flying survey of the unoccupied Crown Lands lying on the west of the River Mersey, in the latitude of the Township of Chudleigh, and the tracks and approaches thereto, and find there is a very large area of fine pastoral and agricultural land extending from about two miles from the ford where the old line of road crosses used by the Van Diemen's Land Company, and extending from thence in a south-westerly direction some 18 or 20 miles between the Rivers Forth and Mersey, varying in width from two to five or six miles, many large elevated table plains, mostly covered with fine grass, and intersected with belts of scrub and splendid timber, both on the hills and flats.

Also, on the north and west of the Van Diemen's Land Company's road, there are between the hills some thousands of acres of fine Crown Lands, both marsh, plains, and scrub land.

The great obstacle to the purchasing and settlement on these extensive and valuable unoccupied Crown Lands is the difficulty and danger of crossing the River Mersey. The stream is at all times rapid, and the bed of the river covered with water-worn round loose stones of large size, many of them 18 inches and 2 feet in diameter, which are constantly moving, so that where you cross safely one day may be very dangerous the next day; and many persons knowing the ford have been lost in attempting to cross.

On making a preliminary survey to ascertain the best site for a bridge, I think the most favourable is about half a mile up the river above the ford. The banks on either side are perpendicular, and some 10 or 12 feet higher than any flood mark I could find or hear of, thus giving a good approach on either side without expense of fencing. The span between the banks is about 120 feet; the bed of river, solid rock. Immediately opposite the site of bridge on the west bank of the river there is a large number of fine grown trees, straight as a line, and 100 feet without a limb so that the cost of timber required for building a bridge is reduced to a minimum.

On the eastern side is pure limestone rock in any quantity, ready for burning; and about mile from the site is a hill of good building stone in layers, easily quarried, with good faces.

With these facilities so handy I think a bridge equal to all present requirements might be constructed for about £900; stone abutments, and one stone pier in the centre; the girders and timbers not squared; the platform 14 feet wide, sawn by hand on the spot; the girders spurred underneath.

The road from the Mole Creek to this bridge can be considerably shortened, and the hills and gullies over which it now passes can be altogether avoided. Also on the western side of the River Mersey the old road or track runs over a very high and steep part of Gad's Hill, which also may be avoided, and with the advantage of having good land and fine timber on each side of the road, and leading to fine large well-grassed plains.

On two or three days I had 8 or 10 persons with me all anxious to take land as soon as they are assured a bridge will be built.

I would also beg leave to suggest the propriety of reserving some 500 acres of land on each side of this site for a township. The situation, suitability, and position with regard to the settled and unsettled parts of this extensive district render it admirably adapted for a township, and must ere long become a necessity, as there is no other site within many miles, either up or down the river, that can command a title of the advantages this possesses.

This ford is considered 18 miles west of the township of Chudleigh, which is the only township west of Deloraine on this line of latitude; and I feel confident if a bridge is built and township declared, it will be the means of opening up a very large, valuable, and important district; and from thence a direct road (self-paying) would soon be opened to the south of Mount Bischoff, the western mineral district, and Pieman River or coast, and eventually become one of the main arteries of the Island.

Of course it is very difficult to give a reliable estimate of the whole area of good land that would by this means become available without actual measurement; but, from what I saw and heard of, I am satisfied there are many thousands of acres that would pay cent. per cent. on the cost of opening the country up.

Awaiting your further commands,

I have, &c.,  
(Signed)

CHAS. J. SMITH, *Surveyor*.

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*

*Deloraine, 11th October, 1877.*

SIR,

IN accordance with your instructions of the 27th ultimo I have made a preliminary survey of the unoccupied Crown land in the Parish of Parkham, and the line I think best for a road thereto from Deloraine, and have the honor to report for the information of the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works,—

That the land I have been over and examined is about three thousand acres of good, useful land suitable for agricultural purposes, a rough diagram of which I enclose showing the situation and approaches.

About 1000 acres of it is good black soil covered with scrub and moderately timbered. The northern part is a loamy marsh, with very little scrub or timber, well watered by small rivulets, and admirably adapted for dairying.

This land would have been purchased some time back, I have reason to know, had there been any probability of having a road to market anything like direct, and I am informed now will be taken up by selectors immediately they are assured of the road being opened direct to Deloraine.

The road I have indicated by the pink line on the diagram, though not quite the shortest, has by far the best gradients, soundest bottom, and will cost much less to open throughout and make than either of the other routes; and, in fact, I think can be opened for about £350.

I ran through another line marked yellow to the west of the pink one, chiefly through unoccupied Crown land; but there are so many steep hills, mostly stone and rock, that the land at present is of little value except for splitting timber. The gradient would be much steeper and a through road much more expensive to open and make, even if shorter, which I am not prepared to state without actual measurement.

From what I saw of the country while making this survey, I am of the opinion that there is a large quantity of good land to the east and north of this between the hills covered with dense scrub, and would take some time to explore properly, and that would be tapped by this road.

The report of bridge of the River Mersey and land to the north and west I will forward in a few days.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

CHAS. J. SMITH, *Surveyor*.

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*