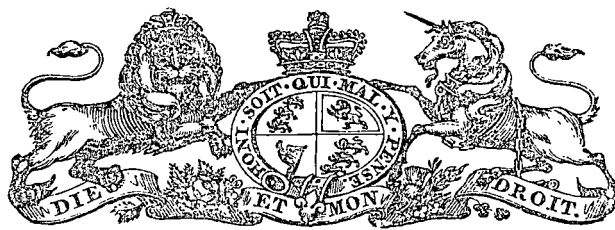


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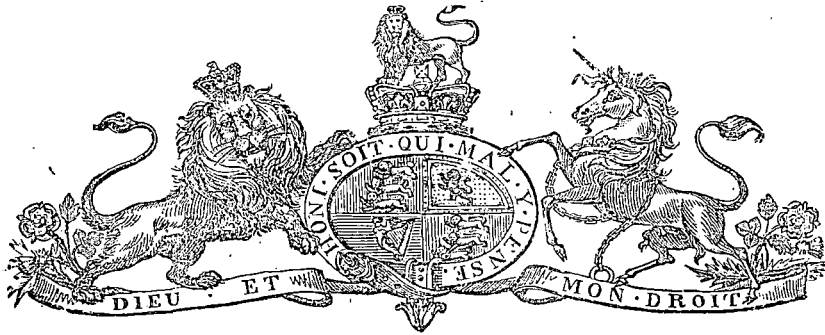
1860.

T A S M A N I A.

ROADS BETWEEN THE MERSEY AND LEVEN.

MR. GUNN'S REPORT.

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



Launceston, 13th January, 1860.

SIR,

DURING my recent visit along the Coast from Launceston to Circular Head, I made every enquiry as to the best mode of expending the £50,000 voted by Parliament to open up and give access to the Crown lands in the District of Devon, so as to make the expenditure a reproductive one; and I beg to subjoin the result of my investigations.

I found that persons were greatly deterred from settling or taking lands west of the River Leven, in consequence of the want of access or facility for passing the various rivers which empty themselves on the North Coast, and which can only be crossed at or about low tide, and in winter are flooded, and become extremely dangerous. Of those tidal rivers there are between Circular Head and the Leven seven,—some not very large, but yet forming serious impediments to travellers. From the limited funds at the command of the several Road Trusts, and I may add the unusually depressed circumstances of the inhabitants generally along the Coast, it must be many years ere the Road Trusts could perform these necessary works; joined to which I may observe, that bridges are less essential or important to the *residents*, who usually ship all their produce at the mouths of the rivers nearest to their respective properties, than they are to intending purchasers of land and persons desirous of visiting these remote localities. The want of bridges is felt seriously by all who desire to take stock down to their farms beyond the Leven, as it is now *impossible* to drive sheep, and very difficult to drive cattle. Thus a considerable quantity of salt meat, I am informed, is imported from Victoria for consumption.

With reference to the character and quality of the land in this part of the Island, I found from personal inspection, and from the information I received from Messrs. Lette and Dooley, the two Government Surveyors, that there is usually a tract of good rich land, forming a sort of plateau running to a considerable distance north and south, but only of moderate width, between every two rivers or important streams; the land on the margins of the rivers being inferior in quality, and the banks frequently steep and precipitous. These belts of rich land are heavily timbered, and are now entirely shut out from the inspection of intending settlers by dense scrubs and forests, which deter most men from venturing far from the beaten tracks. I may illustrate this by stating that on the Inglis Mr. Lette and I counted 280 dogwood trees (*Pomaderris apetala*) in a square chain, or equal to 2800 per acre, but they are frequently as thick as 3000 to 3500 per acre. They averaged about 50 feet high with a diameter of 6 inches,—and yet this land is not the worst to clear.

My opinion is that a road, or rather broad track, continued from the Mersey somewhat in the line of Kentish's old track to the Leven would be the best line. From the Leven there is an available road as far as Table Cape. From Table Cape a new line, avoiding the Coast, might ultimately be made to the Detention River, and thence to the Black River, at comparatively small cost. From this main road (or track) I would recommend smaller ones from 9 to 12 feet wide to be cut to run along the plateaus already mentioned. These would open up and give access to almost every track of good land within a reasonable distance of the Coast; and they might at any future period be prolonged to the south, or otherwise be diverged, as the lands were disposed of. These tracks and the main road would, however, be comparatively valueless without bridges over the rivers and streams. As the cost of many large structures would be beyond the means allotted, I would recommend the erection of narrow bridges sufficient for the passage of horsemen and stock, but not available for carts. Of course, if the funds admitted of it, bridges wide enough for carts would be preferable, but are not actually necessary at the present time, as all the produce of each section (that is between each two rivers) would, as already observed, be carted to the nearest shipping place on the Coast.

I would further recommend the widening of the mere bridle track recently cut under my directions to the River Hellyer, south from Circular Head, and its prolongation across the River Arthur. This would open up the country beyond the Arthur, of which at present we know nothing beyond that, on old maps of 30 years ago, there is marked on this locality "*apparently good country.*"

I think the formation of roads near the Coast where the lands are already alienated and sold, as also the roads from these lands to the shipping places, may safely be left for the present to the proprietors and occupiers.

I believe that if the bridges and tracks as suggested were made, the expenditure would be amply reproductive to the Government, and also give a great impulse to the progress and prosperity of the many important rising settlements on the North Coast.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

The Honorable F. M. INNES, Esq.

RONALD C. GUNN.

NOTE.—Mr. John Alexander, of Table Cape, informed me that he would undertake to erect bridges over all the rivers west of the Leven, receiving payment in land, the value of the bridges to be fixed by the Director of Public Works after they were completed.

I am not aware of Mr. Alexander's mechanical attainments, nor do I know whether he could perform this work well. He has plenty of property, I believe.

RONALD C. GUNN.

MEMORANDUM.

Survey Office, 25th January, 1860.

I APPREHEND that there is no necessity for any very elaborate report from me as to the propriety of directing a road through the heavily wooded but fertile lands of the north west, whenever, as at present, the means are at our disposal for making a good commencement with it.

With reference to the direction of such a road, I believe that the Honorable the Colonial Treasurer is aware that my opinion, which is founded on personal observation, and correct knowledge of the course that settlement is taking, is in very exact coincidence with those of Messrs. Gibson and Gunn (both of whom I believe are accurate and disinterested observers), which is, that it should follow the general, if not the exact, line of Kentish's road, deviating from it, however, where it will cross the deep infertile ravine of the Forth River (somehow according to the double dotted line between the points marked on the accompanying sketch with the capitals A and B). I think also that, if no physical difficulties interpose themselves, it should not cross the Rivers Leven and Blythe near their mouths (as Mr. Kentish's road did), but at more favourable points higher up, and beyond where boat navigation ceases. If it be thought that these are matters of professional detail which are foreign to my duties to enter into, I can only excuse myself by saying that my knowledge of the district emboldens me to throw them out as hints which, I respectfully advance, merit some little consideration.

The waste lands of these districts are very extensive, large masses of the same being of the best description, of which I cannot suffer myself to doubt that such only await the formation of a line of access to pass into private possession.

All papers connected with the subject of the designed road that have been received at the Survey Office are herewith.

J. E. CALDER.

The Honorable the Colonial Treasurer.

Office of Public Works, Hobart, 1st February, 1860.

SIR,

AFTER a perusal of the papers herewith, and after obtaining other information relative to the public lands in the County of Devon, I beg to express my concurrence in the views of the Surveyor-General with respect to Mr. R. C. Gunn's report. I also agree in opinion with the Surveyor-General, that the projected bridges at the Rivers Leven and Blythe should be erected at a favourable point near to where the navigation of the river ceases.

As the vote of the Parliament is of a specific character, I do not think that any portion thereof can, unless by Executive authority, be appropriated to the roads of settled districts; I cannot therefore recommend that the suggestions of Messrs. Dooley and Gwynne, Contract Surveyors, be acted upon. Expenditure on branch lines of road that would lead to or open up saleable crown lands should, I think, be favourably considered, provided such lands in extent and quality would warrant such expenditure.

I am of opinion that it is desirable to act on Mr. Gunn's recommendation respecting the Kentish line of road, deviating from the original line at the points suggested by the Surveyor-General, whose personal and professional knowledge of this part of the country renders his opinions valuable.

On the partial completion of the Kentish track, branch lines could be proceeded with so far as the unexpended portion of the vote will then admit.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

W. R. FALCONER, *Director of Public Works.*

The Honorable the Treasurer.