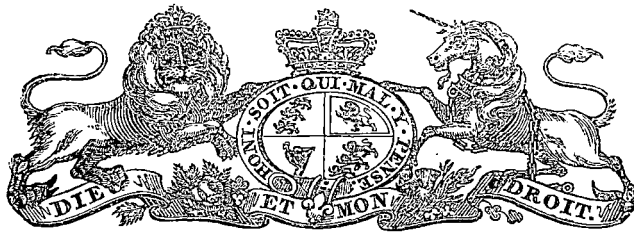


(No. 79.)



1891.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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REPORT OF ENGINEERING INSPECTOR :  
TOUR OF INSPECTION.

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



## REPORT OF ENGINEERING INSPECTOR.

TOUR OF INSPECTION—OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, 1890.

*To the Honourable the President and Members of the Central Board of Health.*

GENTLEMEN,

1. I HAVE the honour to report to you my proceedings during my recent tour of inspection. As, under the provisions of the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act of 1889, it was necessary for the applicants for public-house licences to produce to the Licensing Bench, from the Local Boards of Health of their districts, certificates of the satisfactory sanitary condition of the houses, I was instructed by the Hon. the President to inspect the houses in the districts where, under the 6th Section of "The Public Health Act, 1887," the Central Board of Health has to exercise the powers of a Local Board. Some Local Boards also asked my assistance in the matter, as the duty imposed on them by the Licensing Act was one they had not previously had to fulfil. With regard to other Local Boards, I took the opportunity of being in their neighbourhood to visit their districts on other business connected with the Department.

### *Health District of Invermay.*

2. As there is still no Local Board of Health in this district, I went on the 29th October with Superintendent Armstrong, who is acting as your Local Inspector, and visited public-houses at Invermay, Mowbray, Dilston, and Piper's River Road. Each landlord was given a note of the work required to be done before a certificate would be granted. I may state generally that I was more particular with regard to cleanliness than anything else, especially in connection with isolated country houses. Inside the houses I saw that the rooms were clean and dry; that the bedrooms were properly ventilated; that the slops and other drainage were properly disposed of; that the privies, urinals, stables, and yards were clean, and that the drainage from them was properly disposed of, and not likely to interfere with the water supply. In every case immediate attention was readily promised, and I have subsequently learned that the necessary works have been satisfactorily done. The certificates, as you have already been informed, were consequently given.

### *Health District of West Tamar.*

3. After the death of the late Chairman of the Local Board of Health of this district the administration of the Public Health Acts had fallen into abeyance. I therefore arranged with Mr. Barnes, of Trevallyn, one of the members of the Board, to do the necessary inspection of the public-houses so that time should not be lost, and he promised to get a meeting of the Board so that it might resume its duties. I accordingly inspected houses at Rosevears and Exeter, and furnished Mr. Barnes with copies of the notes given to the innkeepers, and also forms of certificates; and he has informed me that the Board has held a meeting and recommenced its work.

### *Health District of Scottsdale.*

4. The change in the lines of traffic caused by the opening of the Scottsdale Railway has resulted in the closing of the three inns that used to be licensed in this district. I took advantage of my passing through it to see Mr. O'Reilly, the Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. Ladbury, Chairman of the former Local Board of Health, and other residents, and I hope that a new local Board will shortly be established.

*District of Patersonia.*

5. On the 1st of November I inspected the *Post Office Hotel* at Lisle in this district, and have subsequently heard from the local police constable that the works I specified as necessary have been done. The certificate required by the Licensing Act was [consequently] forwarded. This district has hitherto been informally administered by the Local Board of Health of St. Leonard's; I would therefore suggest that this Local Board be requested to consent that the boundaries of its district, as fixed by the proclamation of the Governor in Council, dated 1st May, 1888, be changed so as to include Patersonia.

*Health District of Waratah.*

6. On the 5th November, at the request of the Local Board of Health, I accompanied some of the members to inspect the three inns that are licensed in the township, and furnished the Board with a note of the work that should be done before certificates were granted. I also went round the town with Sub-Inspector Pace, and visited the public school, hospital, public offices, and many private houses.

The three inns and many of the houses are built on the slope of the hill forming the west side of the valley of the River Waratah. This hill slope is at the place full of springs, and two tunnels have been driven into it with the view of carrying off the water. These tunnels are partially utilized for house drainage as well by those whose houses are near them; but the rest of the houses suffer the inconvenience of receiving into their back yards the drainage of the hill side and of the houses above them. None of these yards are paved, and but few are gravelled. None seem to have any receptacles for refuse, and so in most cases the yards are muddy and unwholesome with slops, rubbish, and litter of all kinds left to accumulate. Most of the houses are supplied with water from wells situated in yards, of which the condition is as above described; the wells are not deep, and are therefore in such yards constantly liable to pollution. The privies have either cesspits—adding to the danger of well pollution—or old tin receptacles, many of which were overfull.

The proper disposal of the night-soil is one of the most difficult problems the Local Board has to solve. The foregoing description shows how unsuitable the ground is for forming cesspits or for burying the night-soil in the gardens attached to the houses: for in either case it is certain to pollute the water of the springs that abound on the hill slope and flow out in many parts of it. On the other hand, the periodical removal of it to a distance is a very expensive proceeding in a community like this at Waratah, where wages are very high, and where there is not much cultivation going on. I was told by householders that they had to pay as much as five shillings a time for the removal of the tin pails.

The streets of the town are mostly well made and clean. But the unoccupied land is allowed to be encumbered with refuse of all kinds, some of which must be in summer time very offensive.

On the 6th of November I attended a meeting of the Local Board, and advised generally as to the above matters and as to the necessity of enacting by-laws, and of appointing an Officer of Health and a Local Inspector. These appointments have been made, and the other matters are receiving attention. Some of the gentlemen appointed by the Governor in Council as members of the Board having left the district, it was resolved that the Governor should be asked to appoint others in their place.

*Health District of Burnie.*

7. On the 7th November I went with Mr. Dudfield, the Chairman of the Local Board of Health, and inspected part of the town of Burnie. It is a town that could be very easily and cheaply drained, provided there was some authority that could lay down and carry out a system for the whole township or for definite parts of it. But some of the inhabitants have hitherto successfully opposed the appointment of any such body. The consequence is that the Local Board of Health, which has no rating powers, is practically powerless to deal with many matters that are causing a very offensive condition of things. For instance, there are several cases like one in Ladbrooke-street, where there is a house built on what was naturally a little marshy level on the hill side which receives the surface drainage from the higher lands. By the formation of Ladbrooke and the cross street this drainage is virtually dammed up, so that there is no get-away for it, nor for the house slops, consequently in wet weather the house is standing in a bog, the water of which is not free from pollution, and in hot weather the inhabitants of this and the neighbouring houses have to suffer the stench arising from the drying up of this bog. It is true that the Local Board could serve on the proprietor of this house notices under the 118th and 119th Sections of "The Public Health Act, 1885," to drain the premises. But the fulfilment of such notices would entail work sufficient to drain half the street at a cost that it would be quite unreasonable to impose on the owner of a single house in it. Again, there are nuisances that have been continually complained of, and that arise from the drainage of hotels and houses upon and in the neighbourhood of the Esplanade and Ladbrooke-street. This drainage is retained by the railway embankment upon the waste ground between the roadway and railway. The Local Board in these cases might act as above described, and the result would be that a number of owners would each be put to an expense for separate works that would go far towards covering the entire outlay necessary for carrying out a combined scheme for the drainage of all the properties concerned.

In the case of the first above-mentioned house in Ladbroke-street, matters were aggravated by the fact that the privy was situated in the lowest part of the yard, and that its cesspit was merely a hole dug in the ground; when I saw it this cesspit was overflowing. Had the weather been wet the water accumulating in the yard would have been further polluted with night-soil—a state of things that has more than once occurred, and that has consequently greatly increased the nuisance during the drying-up process in hot weather.

Another instance of the evils resulting from want of drainage was afforded by a baker's establishment, the well upon which was situated close to and on ground sloping from the stables of the baker and of a neighbour.

There are three slaughter-houses at Burnie, and in them is slaughtered not only the meat required for the town, but also that required for Waratah and the mining country beyond. Mr. Thomas Borrodale's slaughter-house is situated at the confluence of Romayne's Rivulet with the Emu River near Wivenhoe. It is a wooden building with a plank floor raised some height above the ground. The blood, &c. from the slaughtering runs through the joints of the flooring and renders the ground below a foul and noisome mass of mud mixed with animal matter. The paunches and offal are thrown outside the building, the skulls and bones are cast on the banks of the river and rivulet, and a number of pigs are kept to feed on this horrible food, and add to the nuisance by their continual stirring up of the filth.

Mr. William Borrodale's slaughter-house is situated on Romayne's Rivulet near the railway. In construction and condition it is similar to the one just described, and pigs are also kept. As the piggery yards are covered with large stones, it is quite impossible to keep them clean. Some of the bones are burnt, and the burning causes a bad stench in the neighbourhood. Other bones and skulls are thrown into the rivulet, and in dry weather the rivulet forms the water supply of the people living below.

Mr. F. Wells' slaughter-yard is situated on the foreshore behind the parsonage on the Table Cape Road. It is also similar in construction to the others, but as the building is situated over loose shingle and not earth as in the others, there is not the mass of bloody mud under the floor that formed one of the principal causes of nuisance in the other slaughter-houses. The shingle also prevents in part the nuisance arising from the pigs that are kept, but the stink from the paunches and green bones was very offensive.

In the afternoon I attended a meeting of the Local Board, and advised with the members especially upon the matters above referred to, and pointed out the necessity of immediately taking steps to have such a system for the disposal of night-soil as would enable them to act under the 18th Section of the Public Health Act, 1887, and to at once make by-laws that would empower them to deal effectually with slaughter-houses and other matters requiring attention. I also urged that they should do all in their power to further the formation of a Town Board that could satisfactorily arrange for the drainage and water supply of the Town.

I also accompanied the Board to the cemetery, which is on the side of the hill sloping towards the town. The soil is friable and easily percolated, and the drainage must go towards the inhabited portion of the town to which reference has already been made. The members said that a suitable site for a cemetery could be obtained on Crown land at Wivenhoe, and I pointed out the necessary steps to be taken in order to close the existing cemetery.

With reference to the water supply of the town, one or two sources were mentioned, and arrangements have subsequently been made to have the water analysed.

#### *Health District of Wynyard.*

8. On the 8th November I met Mr. Chambers, Chairman of the Local Board of Health of Wynyard, and with him and Sub-inspector Priestley inspected Mr. Todd's slaughter-house and shop, which were in very bad condition, with piggeries and yards close by other dwelling houses. I suggested what should be immediately done pending the removal of the slaughter-house to a site outside the town, which Mr. Chambers thought would be a suitable one.

In the afternoon there was a meeting of the Board—the first for about two years at which a quorum had been present—at which it was determined to ask the Governor in Council to appoint additional members of the Board so that meetings might be more easily constituted. I accompanied the members in their inspection of the various inns in the district, and left with the Sub-inspector memoranda of the work that should be done before certificates were granted under the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act. The town generally was also inspected.

Wynyard is laid out on a flat marsh between the River Inglis and the Camp Rivulet, and the evils arising from the swampy nature of the site are aggravated by the fact that the drainage of many of the "blocks" is now dammed up by the embankments upon which the roads are made. When I saw them many of these "blocks" were still partly covered with water, and in wet weather some of the houses stand in pools, and the people have to construct temporary causeways to get dry-shod to the raised roadways. It would take some considerable length of drains to properly dry this swamp, but the town will never be healthy until it is drained. Most of the houses have wells, and I was informed that the water in them is not very good.

*Health District of Russell.*

9. On the 10th November I proceeded to Stanley, the principal town in the Police District of Russell—a district in which no Local Board of Health has been appointed. The various inns in the town were inspected, and the works necessary to improve their sanitary condition pointed out. A memorandum of these works was given to Sub-Inspector Grubb; and he having subsequently reported that they were done, the necessary certificates, under the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act, from the Central Board, acting as Local Board of Health, were forwarded for presentation to the Licensing Bench, and you have approved of what was done.

Mr. Anderson, the Stipendiary Magistrate, called a public meeting to be held on the evening of Tuesday, the 11th November, to consider the desirability of having a Local Board of Health appointed for the district. About twenty gentlemen attended, to whom I explained the scope of the Public Health Acts, and the powers and duties a Local Board would have to exercise and fulfil. It was thought that sufficient notice of the meeting had not been given, and a resolution was passed that the Stipendiary Magistrate should be asked to convene a meeting to be held during the ensuing week. Mr. Anderson has since written to inform me that at this second meeting the attendance was so small that nothing was done.

Stanley is a small town with very healthy surroundings, but matters that require attention are frequently occurring, and have to be dealt with to safeguard the public health. These matters could be immediately and satisfactorily seen to by a local authority; but at present information of them has to be sent to the Central Board at Hobart, and instructions sent back thence to Stanley. An instance of this kind has occurred since my return. Not only is time thus lost, but the nature of the remedial measures that should be taken cannot be so well determined by a person at a distance judging from a written description as by a person on the spot with all the facts before him. I would therefore suggest that, as the people of the district seem indisposed to nominate persons to be recommended for appointment as a Local Board of Health, the Hon. the Chief Secretary should be asked to take other means of getting suitable persons appointed.

*Health District of the Mersey.*

10. A certificate under the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act was given to the landlord of the *Don Hotel* after its inspection, as there is no Local Board of Health in this district, which was part of that of the Torquay and Formby Board. I saw the Hon. J. M'Call, M.L.C., and Dr. Young, M.H.A., who were members of this last-named Board, and asked them to take steps to get a Board appointed for the district.

*Health District of Hamilton-on-Forth and Don.*

11. On the 15th November, at the request of Mr. Alcock, the Chairman of the Local Board of Health of this district, I inspected and made suggestions for improving the condition of the inns at Hamilton-on-Forth. I also advised with him upon various matters connected with the sanitation of the town. Many of the residents derive their water supply, especially in summer, from the Hamilton Hill Rivulet, which receives drainage from farm-yards and piggeries, and on the immediate banks of which some privies are placed. There are two public buildings in the town which require to have provision made of better means of egress. It is desirable that the Local Board of Health should be strengthened by the appointment of some new members.

*Proposed Cemetery at Sassafras.*

12. Under the instructions of the President, and at the request of the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works, I inspected the site proposed for a cemetery at Sassafras, in the Health District of Latrobe. With Mr. Dooley, M.H.A., I met some of the residents of the locality, and they agreed with our suggestion as to the superiority of another available site in the neighbourhood, and I have forwarded a report recommending that this suggested site should be adopted instead of the one I was requested to examine.

*Town of Devonport.*

13. On the 18th November I accompanied Mr. Cole, Sub-Inspector of the Local Board of Health of Devonport, on a visit of inspection, and in the afternoon I attended the meeting of the Local Board. It is intended for the present to adopt the "pail system" for the disposal of the nightsoil of the town, and I explained what should be done to carry out this system as satisfactorily as possible, including the provision of proper pails, their periodical removal, their cleansing, the prevention of nuisance during their removal, and the best methods of disposing of their contents; and recommended the Board to employ their own staff for the work, and to supply the proper pails or receptacles. The Local Board had received a report on the system adopted at the town of Donald, in Victoria, but as this entailed the use of night-carts, and the emptying of the pails into them while in the streets, I strongly urged the undesirability of adopting it at Devonport. It was also pointed out to the Board that, apart from the disposal of night-soil, there was an urgent necessity to provide for the drainage of the town, especially the more thickly occupied part of it.

When the waterworks, which have been authorised by Act of Parliament, are constructed, it will be absolutely necessary to have the means of properly draining off the water after use; but, in the meantime, Stewart-street and other streets near the wharf might be sewered in such manner as to form part of the general drainage system hereafter to be carried out. In this part of the town drainage is necessary, not only on account of house sewage, but also for carrying off the ground water.

*Proposed Cemetery at Railton.*

14. By direction of the President, and at the request of the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works, I went, on the 19th November, to inspect the site proposed for a cemetery at Railton, in the Health District of Kentishbury. Mr. Dooley, M.H.A., was good enough to go with me. The site itself was good as regards the nature and conformation of the ground, but was rather near to the township. There are two other cemeteries in the township: one of these, belonging to the Church of England, adjoins the playground of the public school; and the other, belonging to the Wesleyans, slopes down to land laid out in building allotments. There are but few burials in these existing cemeteries; they certainly ought to be closed before another cemetery is opened, and I reported to this effect.

*Rural Municipality of Evandale.*

15. In consequence of a complaint made by the Rev. H. D. Atkinson of the objectionable condition of a slaughter-house at Evandale, I was asked by the Warden to make a visit of inspection. I accordingly went on the 20th November, and, accompanied by the local Inspector, examined the premises upon which the slaughter-house is situated. These premises adjoin the grounds of the parsonage, and though the slaughter-house itself was clean when I inspected it, pigs are kept and skins hung up to dry, both of which must occasion offensive smells, however carefully the business may be managed. The pigs should certainly be taken away, and the slaughter-house would be much better if removed out of the town.

I noticed that the gutters on each side of the main road to Lymington were in a condition that will be dangerous to the public health in hot weather. I would recommend that the pipe sewers should be continued to carry the house drainage much farther from the houses.

My attention was called to the condition of St. Andrew's Church-yard, the ground of which is so very retentive that in wet weather graves cannot be dug to a proper depth on account of water. There are some vaults in it which, when opened in such weather, are also found to be full of water. I suggested the desirability of taking the requisite steps to close this graveyard. Mr. Collins, the Council Clerk, drove me out to inspect sites that had been proposed as suitable for a cemetery, and one of them, on land belonging to Mr. C. Ball, appeared to be so.

*Graveyard at Hadspen.*

16. The Local Inspector at Hadspen, in the Health District of St. Leonard's, having called attention to the graveyard attached to the unfinished church at Hadspen, I took the opportunity of being in the neighbourhood to go and examine the locality. The graveyard adjoins and is at a higher elevation than the playground of the Public School. It seems that formerly a rough-stone drain from the burial-ground ran partly underground through the playground, and then was continued by a shallow open ditch into the table-drains of the main road. This rough-stone drain is said to be stopped up, but I was informed that what seems to be clear water occasionally flows from it upon the table-drain of the main road, and the low-lying parts of the playground are also affected by it. At the end of October a vault in the churchyard was opened for the purpose of a burial, and was found to be full of water. This water was emptied out upon the surface of the ground, whence it naturally flowed down to the lower levels of the school playground, where for some days it caused a very offensive stench. As long as vaults in this burial-ground are allowed to be used this is a nuisance that is likely to be recurrent. Both this graveyard and that belonging to the Wesleyans are badly situated, especially in reference to the Public School. They evidently require artificial draining, and the natural drainage from them percolates through or flows over the playground and adjoining main road on its way to the South Esk River. The character of the stagnant water lying on the main roadside also shows that something should be done to improve matters. The desirability of closing these graveyards is a matter for the consideration of the Local Board of Health. If they are allowed to remain open I would suggest that it be on condition that all vaults should be filled up. The attention of the Works Department should be called to the condition of the drains on the main road: and, in particular, the Education Department should be advised upon the necessity of preventing not only the recurrence of so dangerous an incident as that which took place at the end of October, but also the unwholesome conditions attending the dampness of the undrained ground around the school. A very short length of drains would greatly improve matters.

*Health District of Beaconsfield.*

17. At the request of the Local Board of Health I went to Beaconsfield on the 21st November and inspected the five licensed inns in the town, and gave to the local Inspector a memorandum of

the work that should be done to improve their condition before certificates were given under the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act. I took the opportunity of advising on other matters connected with the administration of the Public Health Acts, and of conferring with the Local Board and its officers.

*Municipality of Campbell Town.*

18. Acting under the instructions of the Hon. the Premier, I visited Campbell Town on the 24th November, for the purpose of making further inquiries into the circumstances attending the outbreak of diphtheria there. I have already sent you a report on this visit.

19. I cannot refrain from expressing my sense of the uniform courtesy and kindness with which I was received by the Local Boards of Health and other officials of the various localities I visited.

I have the honour to be,  
Gentlemen,  
Your obedient Servant,

A. MAULT, *Engineering Inspector.*

*Central Board of Health, Hobart,  
30th December, 1890.*