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1878.

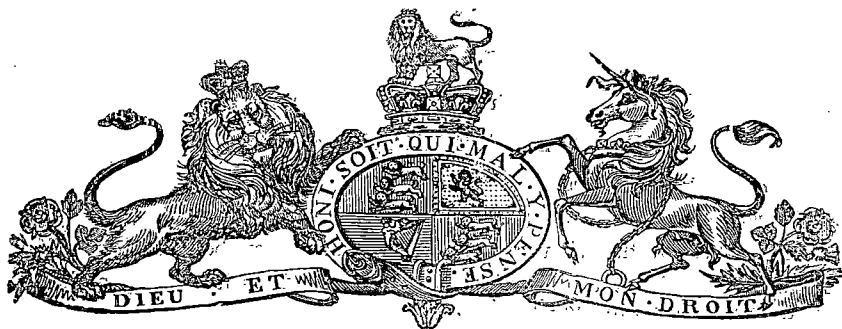
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

**PRESERVATION OF HUON PINE AND
BLACKWOOD.**

REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE, AND EVIDENCE.

Brought up by Mr. Meredith, and ordered by the House to be printed,
May 14, 1879.



REPORT from the Select Committee appointed on the 1st May, 1879, to enquire into and report upon the necessary steps to be taken for the Preservation from utter destruction of the valuable indigenous Forest Trees known as the Huon Pine and Blackwood.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MR. DOUGLAS.
MR. RISBY.
MR. COOTE.

MR. MEREDITH (*Mover.*)

MR. PILLINGER.
MR. BELBIN.
MR. CLARK.

DAYS OF MEETING.

6 May, 1879 ; 7 May, 1879 ; 14 May, 1879.

WITNESSES EXAMINED.

MR. OWEN MEREDITH ; CAPTAIN LLOYD ; MR. BENNETT.

EXPENSES OF WITNESSES.

Mr. O. Meredith, £4 18s. ; Mr. Bennett, £2 18s.

R E P O R T.

Your Committee have the honor to report that from the Evidence (attached) of experienced persons it appears that, in accessible places, the full-grown trees are all cut down, and trees only one foot in diameter are being sacrificed.

Your Committee therefore recommend that the felling of Huon Pine trees be prohibited, save under regulations to be made by the Governor in Council.

Your Committee have not any proof, in the evidence before them, that a similar step is necessary with regard to other Forest Trees.

CHARLES MEREDITH, *Chairman.*

14th May, 1879.

EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 1879.

Present—Hon. C. MEREDITH (Chairman), Messrs. COOTE, BELBIN, and RISBY.

MR. OWEN MEREDITH *examined*.

Do you know the Huon Pine? Yes.

Have you seen it growing? Yes, at the Pieman River.

In any other place? Yes, on the tributaries of the Pieman River, between it and Mount Bischoff.

What is the mode of obtaining the timber by persons who trade in it? They make rough tramways, square the timber, and haul it down to the shipping.

When a Pine is felled, is it grubbed or cut down? Cut down.

Is the whole of it secured, or is any part wasted? From many trees not more than one quarter of the good timber is taken.

What do you mean by "the good timber?" That which is available for sawing; I have seen a tree 4 feet square from which a log only ten feet long was taken, because there were a few holes in it; really good timber was left.

Where does this timber go to? Launceston, Circular Head, and Melbourne.

Does the Huon Pine grow in groups or singly? I only know of one forest; generally speaking the Huon Pines are scattered amongst other timber.

Where is the forest you mention? I do not know that I am bound to answer that question.

What is the area of it? From ten to fifteen acres.

Is there any Blackwood at that place? Yes; both on the West and North-west Coasts,—especially at the Duck and Cam Rivers.

Is there the same waste of Blackwood as of Huon Pine? I have not much knowledge of the trade, but I believe there is considerable waste. Only the choice timber is taken.

Is that because they have such a choice? The supply is so large that none but the best timber can command a good price.

Is the Pieman River navigable? Yes, for about 20 miles.

For a vessel of 100 tons? Yes.

What is the extent to which the tide rises and falls? Not exceeding three feet.

Are young pines destroyed when tramways are being made? Sometimes.

Do you think bush fires destroy the Pine forests? On Pine Creek a forest of Huon Pines was destroyed by fire; the forest has grown up since but without any Pines.

What was the extent of this forest? The Pines were on both sides of the creek; I passed through them for half a mile. Now there is not a single pine to be seen.

Are there any young Pines at the Pieman River? Thousands coming on, where the seed has been dropped by the fellers at their camping places; they are now 6 or 8 inches high.

What soil does the Huon Pine grow in? Various kinds; I have seen it on scarcely any soil at all; growing in vegetable matter. Moisture has more effect on its growth than soil. I have seen an old pine tree, which has fallen, with young trees 18 and 20 feet high growing on it, and the old tree was just as sound as when it fell.

At the present time do you know of any forests worth preserving? Only one.

What is the size of vessels employed in this timber trade? Only small vessels; they repudiate all but the best timber.

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1879.

Present—Messrs. PILLINGER, RISBY, and MEREDITH (Chairman).

MR. LLOYD *examined*.

You are a Master Mariner? Yes.

You own and sail a vessel? Yes, the *Coral*.

You have been procuring Pine? Yes, for the last eighteen or twenty years.

Have you ever known people procuring pine to waste it? *i.e.*, do they bring all marketable timber to town? They bring all that is marketable.

What is the smallest tree you fell? I would not take a log under sixteen inches.

Would the community derive any benefit if such timber were not cut? No; the pines grow so thickly that thousands of young ones are always growing up; if more than half were taken out it would benefit the rest.

When cutting from a large butt, do the piners take the trouble to take the bad part off and send the good only to market? They cut away the bad part.

Would it be useful if brought to town? No; some is brought to town which is not good and not saleable.

You say the smallest tree you cut is 16 inches in diameter? Yes.

What size do the piners cut them now? Latterly they have been cutting them smaller, too small even to be saleable.

What was the size of the largest pine you ever saw? I saw one at the Gordon River which had a short barrel, and was fully 10 feet through, but it was of no use.

Why not? Because it was rotten, it was of immense age. At the Pieman I saw a tree which would produce a log 30 feet long and 5 feet in diameter. I believe it was sound. I could not get a road to it.

What distance from the water was this tree? Three hundred yards.

Was it growing? Yes.

What harbours have you visited when getting pine? All parts of Macquarie Harbour; Port Davey for the last four years. I have been once to the Pieman.

Do the pines grow any farther north? Yes, I believe so; people from Launceston are getting it from the Forth. There is pine in nearly all the rivers, but there is no entrance for vessels to many of them.

Are the upper branches of the pine serviceable for boat-building, for knees, &c. No, they are fit for nothing; some of the limbs might do for ship-building. It would be expensive to bring them.

Then the limbs are not utilised, though fit for ship-building purposes? No.

You take the barrel and leave the rest? Yes; if we could sell the limbs we would bring them. We sometimes get short logs out of the limbs.

Have you noticed any unnecessary destruction of pines? The greatest destruction is by bush fires; acres and acres have been burnt in this way. One-third of the timber that is brought away consists of old trees which have fallen years ago; when burnt they break off or come up by the roots. I have seen trees which must have been buried 100 years still sound. I once tried to grub up a tree 2 feet 6 inches through, and in cutting away the bank I found a log, perfectly sound good timber, 5 feet underground.

You say you have seen the pines so thick that it would benefit one-half if the other half were cut down, where was this? Both at Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey.

How is it then that so few spars come to town? No, they injure one another; wherever bark is rubbed off it causes a hole in the tree when grown up. They get injured by growing so close together.

There are beds of small pines not worth cutting? Yes.

When beds are worked out, do the small trees ever grow large enough to be saleable? Yes, they would.

What would you call "worked out?" All the timber taken. I have seen thousands of young pines growing thickly. A person in town wanted me to procure some young pines for him; I could get two or three in one spadeful of earth.

In your experience, at what rate does the pine grow? I have seen spars on the Government Road at the old penal settlement, Macquarie Harbour; they were marked by the Government axes fifty years ago. They are only nine inches in diameter now, they must have been 4 or 5 inches then.

Do you think they grow more than 4 inches in fifty years? These have not. Spars left then are not timber now.

MR. BENNETT *examined.*

What is your occupation? I have been getting pine for the last six years.

What is the size of the pine you procure for the market? The smallest averages 2 feet through. It is cut sometimes only 1 foot.

In procuring pine, if the log is faulty do the piners reduce the wood by cutting off the bad with their axes? Yes.

Could the wood that is thrown away be utilised? Yes, it would be useful for small work.

Would it pay to bring it? Sawyers could cut the butts off and make it pay well.

How long are these butts? From six to twelve feet, of various lengths.

This piece would be valuable? It is the best of the timber; but it wants cutting up there by sawyers. Generally one-third of the tree is wasted. The piners poke a stick up the hole in the log when it is cut down, and cut it off where the stick stops.

What rivers have you visited when procuring pine? The DeWitt, Rocky, Davey, and Hardwood Rivers, all in Port Davey.

Do pines grow in groups or singly? In beds; young and old together.

Do they ever grow so close together as to be injured by the action of the wind? Often.

Have you ever got pine in Macquarie Harbour? No; I have only been to Port Davey.

Is there any blackwood at Port Davey? There is plenty above the Falls, but it is not obtainable as it sinks in the water, and there is no road or place to make one. There are trees 3 and 4 feet through and 100 feet high. There is one forest of it on the north side of the Rocky River about 16 miles from the mouth. I have been higher up the river than any one else.

What extent is this forest? I went through it for a mile and a half; I should say the length of it was 6 miles.

How near is it to the Falls? It is close to the Falls.

Most of the pines within reasonable distance of the water are cut down? Yes; there are none in Port Davey now that would pay. There are plenty of small pines about a foot through.

Do woodcutters ever cut timber that is not marketable? They do.

In your opinion, is there any method of preserving those which are now not marketable? Some one would have to be there to look after them; it would be a very difficult matter. One-half of the piners down there did not pay a licence fee.

Do you think a total prohibition to piners for a certain number of years would be of any use? Yes.

How long does the pine take to grow? It is of very slow growth: I knew one 12 years ago 9 inches in diameter, it has only grown 3 inches since, that is, in twelve years.