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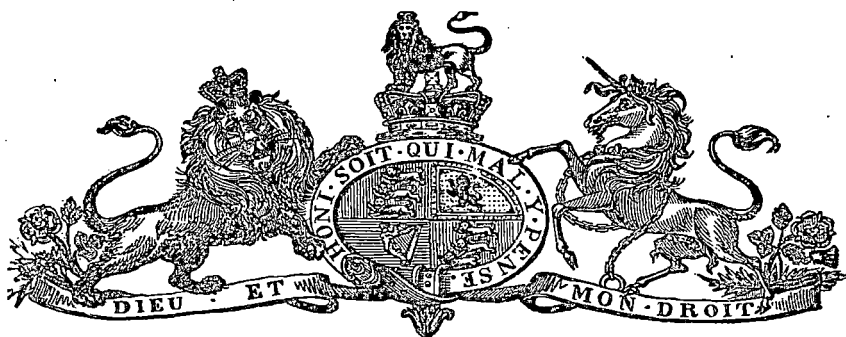
1887.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUEEN'S DOMAIN.

CORRESPONDENCE, AND REPORT OF MR. SUPERINTENDENT
ABBOTT, ROYAL SOCIETY'S GARDENS.

Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands and Works, September 20, 1887,
and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed, September 28, 1887.



*The Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens,
Hobart, 12th August, 1887.*

SIR,

AT a meeting of the Queen's Domain Committee held at the Museum on Monday, the 8th instant, I was instructed to convey the following Resolution to you:—"The Committee desires to draw the attention of the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works to the proposed vote for the Domain, including the several squares of the town,—it having been reduced from £800 to £400. The Committee would point out that the amount proposed will be totally insufficient to carry on the works. They would therefore earnestly urge that the sum of £300 for the year be placed at the disposal of the Queen's Domain Committee, as hitherto."

I am also instructed to forward you a general report of the Domain, prepared by Mr. F. Abbott, for your information.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ALEX. MORTON, *Secretary.*

*The Hon. E. N. C. BRADDON, M.H.A.,
Minister of Lands and Works.*

*The Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens,
Hobart, 25th August, 1887.*

SIR,

I AM requested by the Queen's Domain Committee to inform you that your letter of the 20th instant, wherein you request that you may be furnished with particulars as to the amount required for the improvement of the Queen's Domain for the year 1887-8, also for particulars of the works proposed to be carried out, was laid before the Board yesterday. In reply, the Committee would respectfully draw the Minister's attention to a letter sent by them, of the 12th instant, requesting that a sum of £300 (three hundred pounds) be placed at their disposal. The works proposed to be carried out during the year will be the completion of planting operations on the banks of the new road as far as the Upper Cricket Ground, which will, with the maintenance, completely absorb the vote asked for.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ALEX. MORTON, *Secretary.*

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.

NOTES ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUEEN'S DOMAIN, BY MR. F. ABBOTT.

(Read before Domain Improvement Committee, 22nd Nov. 1882.)

Preliminary Remarks.

HAVING been asked by the Domain Committee at its last meeting to make a few remarks bearing on the improvement of the Domain, I have great pleasure in complying with the request.

I must confess to some little difficulty in deciding to what extent improvement is to be carried out. The general opinion is that plans should be prepared and the work carried out in accordance with these plans. If by plans it is intended that the improvements to be carried out shall be detailed and made public, and that these improvements shall all tend towards one end,—the general improvement of the Domain,—more especially the natural features, then I perfectly agree with this opinion; but if it is intended that the plans shall be drawn with a view of improvement being carried out to its fullest extent, then I must differ, as I do not think that the time has yet arrived to warrant the expenditure of the amount that would be required for the purpose. If one or two hundred thousand pounds, to be expended in a given number of years, were available, then the latter course would be the proper one; but, in the absence of any such sum, I consider it better to be content with improvement on a more moderate scale.

The subject in all its details is a wide one, and scarcely any two persons will agree exactly on the matter, each preferring to form an opinion of his own according to taste.

I do not, myself, think it advisable to attempt too much at present, but would confine the operations to developing and improving the natural features of the place as much as possible, leaving anything of a more elaborate, ornamental, or costly character to a future time when the population of the Colony shall have increased to an extent sufficient to warrant the expenditure of a sum equal to bring up the improvement in accordance with the taste of the day.

Although I do not counsel the adoption of any elaborate plan at present, it must not be understood that a vast improvement cannot be effected by a judicious expenditure of a moderate sum. Naturally the place is remarkably adapted for a national recreation ground; it embraces a variety of surface and aspect, and commands magnificent views and glimpses of ever varying scenery from almost any part. Its area is 493 acres, the soil being for the most part of good quality, with a gravelly subsoil. It is adapted to the growth of a great variety of plants, if properly prepared for their reception. These natural advantages, if judiciously aided by a moderate amount of art, are sufficient in themselves to render the place attractive and make it an agreeable, beautiful, and healthful pleasure-ground.

In these few preliminary remarks I have endeavoured to point out the line of improvement which I consider most desirable to adopt; and I will now endeavour to define some of the objects to be kept in view during the progress of the work.

Roads and Drives, &c.

The proper laying out and construction of the drives is a matter claiming first attention, as upon the performance of this work will, to a great extent, depend the success of all future operations. Road-making is an expensive process, and the due preservation always troublesome, and therefore roads should never be more multiplied than absolutely necessary, their construction always giving rise to a great disturbance of the surface, and necessitating much expensive grading of the side banks after the road itself has been completed; especially would this be the case in regard to the Domain, the whole surface of which is of a hilly and undulating character, rendering road-making a matter of difficulty, and one not to be undertaken without careful consideration.

I am of opinion that the roads already constructed or defined are amply sufficient for all present purposes, and will, when complete, meet all requirements for a long time to come. If to the roads already constructed we add those defined,—that is to say, Chapman's drive round the crown of the hill to be continued along the brow above Park street to the new cricket ground and thence to a point to be defined near the High School, a short road from Government House gate to a point on upper road near guard-room, and the completion of the road from the end of the Gardens to Cornelian Bay,—there will then be, approximately speaking, about nine miles of road in the Domain, the proper maintenance of which will entail considerable trouble and expense.

Although it may be admitted that the roads have been sufficiently defined, their construction is by no means complete, and this to my mind is the most difficult part of the whole subject, and one requiring mature consideration. The first point to be decided is the width it is desirable the roads should be; opinions differ greatly on this point, some contending that if there is room for two vehicles to pass one another that is all that is required; but it must not be forgotten that we are a growing community, and that a road suitable to the requirements of the day would be totally unfit for those of a quarter or half a century hence, and this should be kept in view in deciding upon the scale of construction. If the purpose of construction was merely one of convenience to afford easy access between one part and another, the matter would be comparatively simple, as the roads could then be increased in width at any future time without much difficulty; but if after the roads have been completed the banks are to be graded and prepared for trees, which they unquestionably should be, then it is essential that the construction be such as to prevent the necessity of any alteration in width, especially at a future date, as this would in all probability cause the destruction of the trees planted and loss of valuable time. Where practicable the roads should not be less

than from 30 to 36 feet in width, and they should be increased to that extent if no insuperable obstacle present itself. Where this width could not be attained they should be increased as much as possible, and in every case the width should be definitely decided before any planting be done.

In addition to roads, foot and bridle tracks would be needed in various parts ; but as these would to a great extent follow the inequalities of surface, then construction would not be attended with much difficulty, and in many cases do not call for immediate attention.

The most pressing in the former class is a path leading up the hill near the Roman Catholic Glebe, from the bridge connecting the end of Campbell with Park street, and thence to the road near Government House and the Gardens. In the latter class it would be advisable to grade Chapman's drive to a convenient width ; for a bridle track this ought to be done as a commencement of the road, and could eventually be increased to a suitable width for a drive. Other tracks naturally suggest themselves, but could be undertaken at a later date, when more urgently required.

General Improvement.

With reference to general improvement, the natural features should first claim attention ; the development of these, with a little assistance from art, would go far towards making the Domain a pleasant and attractive place of resort, and would not interfere with any future embellishment that might be decided upon. The construction of Chapman's drive would go far towards developing these features by opening up views of diversified scenery not to be obtained from the lower ground. Another aid would be the judicious thinning out of trees, so as to obtain glimpses of as much good and beautiful scenery as possible ; but this should be done with caution, as it would not be desirable to open up too great an extended view,—the aim should be to induce a desire to ramble in search of fresh vistas rather than to open up the whole scene at once.

The natural tree vegetation will need attention. Dead trees, stumps, decrepid and unsightly timber will need removal, and afterwards the remaining trees should be cautiously thinned out so as to throw the best situated into groups, and create a more park-like appearance. This thinning should proceed very gradually, and only after mature reflection, so as to avoid the removal of any trees that could with advantage be turned to account. The trees that are finally left will need the dead and misplaced branches pruned out, and in some cases they may be headed back with advantage.

The general surface would be improved by the removal of stones, which should either be at once converted into metal for immediate use or stacked in convenient heaps until required at some future day. The quarry at the Stoke-street entrance to the Domain might be made a convenient receptacle for stones collected in its vicinity. Here they could remain permanently, or be converted into metal when required.

Grading will have to be carried out as opportunity offers. It is not necessary that any very great degree of evenness should be attained except in the more frequented parts, or in close proximity to the drives ; on the general surface it would be sufficient to reduce sudden depressions and inequalities, only slightly modifying the original forms. In the more frequented parts the inequalities of surface should be reduced to comparatively easy curves. In the immediate vicinity of roads, in some cases, a great disturbance of soil will be necessary to attain the required grade.

Quarries.

The stone quarries, and especially the freestone quarry near the Government House entrance, might be at once taken in hand and graded for planting. The Corporation quarry near the High School has been improved to a certain extent, and only needs a few finishing touches and the hand of time to completely change its character. The banks have been planted with various coniferæ, and a semicircle of the silver poplar has been planted round the lower edge of the bank ; the flat at the bottom it is intended to reduce to a level and sow with grass. When complete it can be put to many uses. If the funds for the necessary amount of up-keep are available, it would form a good tennis-lawn or bowling-green. When the plants on the bank have grown to a sufficient size, it is intended to construct walks under them and place seats in the shade of the trees.

The bank to the right of the entrance to the quarry has not yet been planted, the ground in its present state not being in a suitable condition. The same may be said of the upper edge ; here the old fence needs removal, then the ground can be graded and planted suitably.

The unsightly quarry at the Government House entrance already referred to should be taken in hand as soon as possible. In the absence of sufficient prison labour, it is very desirable that a special vote be granted by Parliament for the purpose. There is an abundance of material available in the vicinity which could be moved with advantage, but the amount of labour necessary for its removal would be great, and would need to be specially provided for.

The quarry at the Stoke-street entrance to the Domain is a more difficult one to deal with, and may with advantage be left till those calling for more urgent attention have been completed.

Recreation Grounds.

The reservation of suitable sites for parade, cricket, football, croquet, lawn-tennis and other grounds, and all games and pastimes which are customary in the large centres of population, must be attended to. These should be not only on a scale sufficient for the day, but provision should also be made for the increased requirements of the future.

Planting.

The question of planting is a matter of some importance, as upon the proper selection of plants will to a great extent depend the future effects to be produced. Fortunately there is a very fair amount of healthy natural tree vegetation existing, though not of a very diversified character.

The natural arboreal vegetation of the Domain consists principally of *Eucalyptus viminalis*, the manna gum, and *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, the peppermint. *Acacia decurrens* used to be very plentiful, but it is rapidly dying out, very few healthy specimens now being met with. There are also a few trees of the blue gum, native cherry, she-oak, native box, and Banksia.

In the upper portions of the Domain there is sufficient of these trees existing, and at present there is no need for planting. Eventually it may be necessary to do so in the vicinity of Chapman's drive to a certain extent. On the lower grounds, especially near the drives, a greater necessity for planting exists, and could be carried out with advantage as expeditiously as due preparation for the reception of the plants can be made.

To indicate more particularly the precise spots which seem to demand first attention, I will mention the completion of the stone quarry near the High School. I would also recommend that a shrubbery or plantation of ornamental plants be formed along the line of fence extending from the Domain road to the main entrance to the High School; that a similar plantation be made on either side of the Stoke-street entrance to the Domain; that a little judicious planting be done in the vicinity of the Ship-yards so as to shut them out to a certain extent from the approach to Government House, and that the same be done in the vicinity of the three cottages in the Domain. A few groups of trees might with advantage be planted on the ground near the powder jetty on the upper side of the railway cutting, and a few groups of willows to afford shade to the picnic parties on the Esplanade at Cornelian Bay. In addition to these places it is very desirable that the edges or banks of all the lower roads should be planted; but before this could be done considerable preparation would in most cases be required, especially on all the upper banks. Groups of native plants and pines might be introduced at various places along the water's edge, care being taken not to obscure the view of the River too much.

Before closing this part of the subject I would draw attention to a matter that I have long considered desirable,—that is, the formation of a Pinetum and Aboretum in the Domain outside the Garden boundary. There is not sufficient space in the Garden to give each plant room for its due development, and consequently even now many are suffering from over-crowding. And, again, it was not possible from various causes to adopt any classification, and it is only now that this could be advantageously carried out. For the formation of a Pinetum, the ground situate between the Government House entrance and the gully leading to the Garden reservoir on the one hand, and the Garden fence and upper road on the other, is admirably adapted; and for the formation of an Arboretum, the flat ground situate at the head of the gully leading to the Gardens, and extending to the brow of the hill above Park-street, is the most suitable in the Domain.

The intention would be to plant in groups, leaving considerable space between each group so as to allow of extension if necessary. A light fence round each group would be sufficient protection, leaving the intervening space free.

Lakes suggested.

On the flat mentioned as suitable for an Arboretum an additional improvement would be one or more small lakes, which could be made of an ornamental character by the judicious planting of moisture-loving plants. These lakes might be kept full partially by the surface drainage from the upper portions of the Domain, and partly by a branch pipe connected with the supply pipe leading to Government House reservoir. For nine months in the year the supply could probably be kept up without detriment to the Town. When it could not be longer continued it could be cut off. The cost of constructing these lakes will, I expect, prevent their being formed for some time to come, but it is as well to have the matter under consideration should it be decided to form an Arboretum at this part.

Plants.

With reference to the most desirable plants to be used for planting, it would be well to consider first the fact that if plants of a permanent character are to attain to a high degree of development, they must be suited to the sites chosen for them, and the ground must have thorough preparation. This preparation cannot be too complete, as the greater the extent of root-room, and consequent nutriment afforded to the plant, the more satisfactory the growth and the longer will it remain an object of beauty. Even the native gums are very different under a liberal treatment to what they are when the reverse is the case. Deciduous trees should only be used on the lower portions of the Domain, or on the flat already referred to, and only then after thorough preparation of the soil; they are better suited as shady trees to the roads than evergreens, as they afford more shade in summer, when it is required, and do not obstruct the sun's rays in winter.

If at any future time an abundant supply of water should be conducted to this place, deciduous trees could then be more freely used; but till then the very best sites only should be planted with them.

The coniferæ would succeed well in most parts if a little care were exercised in the selection of kinds of a suitable character. The same may be said in reference to many other plants, and it would not be difficult to make out a long list if it were desirable. The selection in every case will depend upon circumstances at the time of planting.

Many beautiful plants are of very slow growth, and could not be obtained of sufficient size to justify their being used in the Domain. Others are of short duration, and cannot be used in permanent planting. Others, again, will endure for a century or two, under very favourable circumstances, and only show true beauty when touched by the hand of time. All these considerations have to be weighed at the time of selection if the after results are to be satisfactory.

In many cases the better forms of indigenous trees might be used with advantage, and should by no means be neglected. A fringe of the weeping gum on the upper edge of the Corporation quarry would be an appropriate finish, and many other species could be used in various parts.

Maintenance.

The maintenance of the works perfected will have to receive due attention. The expense of maintenance will always be in proportion to the improvements carried out: the more ornate these improvements the greater will be the cost of keeping them up to the required standard of excellence, which should always be equal to that of their first construction. Eventually if any progress is to be made it will be necessary to hire a staff of men for the purpose, and even now there is urgent need of the appointment of at least one man, and I would recommend that this appointment be at once made. It is advisable that he have a residence on the Domain, not only for the purpose of being near his work, but also that he may have charge of any implements and tools required.

Pasturage.

It is necessary that the pasturage in the Domain be kept down to a certain extent; the most feasible way of doing this is by grazing during a portion of the year. All things being considered, perhaps sheep are the best for the purpose, and I would suggest that the Domain be let for the grazing of sheep only up to the end of January next, and that in future years it be let from the first of November to the end of January, that is, for a period of three months; but this might be extended in some seasons. The only object to be attained by letting the pasturage is that of keeping down the rank growth of the grass during the summer months, and thus render walking more agreeable, and lessen the risk of fire.

Concluding Remarks.

In the foregoing remarks or suggestions I have but briefly touched on the various heads of Domain improvement, but trust sufficient has been said to mark or define a satisfactory course of action. Too much stress cannot be laid on the advisability of developing the natural features, as that will not entail any great after-cost for maintenance. With artificial planting this will not be the case, and therefore it must be carried on with caution, so as to keep the cost of maintenance as low as possible, for some time to come at least.