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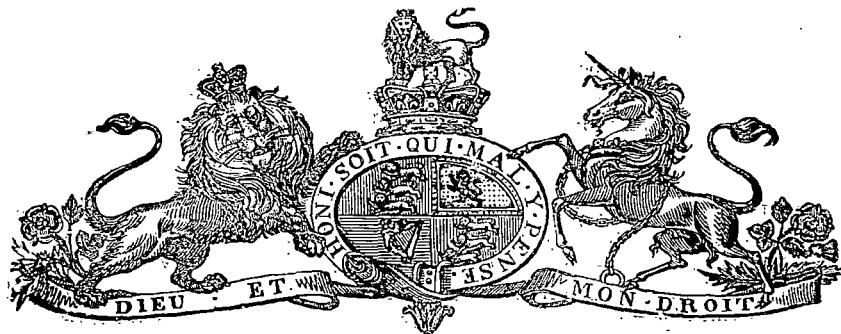
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

MOUNT BISCHOFF ROAD:

CORRESPONDENCE.

Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands, and ordered by the House to be printed, December 17, 1878.



Hobart Town, 29th May, 1875.

SIR,

IN compliance with your instructions I have the honor to submit a Report on the question of road communication between Mount Bischoff and Bass's Straits.

There are four routes open for selection, the outlets being Chudleigh, Penguin Creek, Emu Bay, and Table Cape.

I am not personally acquainted with the whole of the country between Mount Bischoff and Chudleigh, but from reliable information I have come to the conclusion that the route through there, if not impossible, is of such a difficult and expensive nature that it will not bear comparison with any of the more direct routes to the sea.

Setting aside the fact that it would pass through much private property, the Chudleigh route is objectionable for many reasons.

The first objection is the great length—nearly double that of the northern routes. Again, the Chudleigh road passing over very high ground would be subject to continual obstruction in the winter by snow. Some of the hills, such as the Black Bluff, and the valleys of the Mersey and Forth (Gad's Hill) are so steep that I fear it would be impossible to take heavy loads over them. It would be an immense convenience to the public if this route were staked out and marked over the open country, as travellers coming by the present track are in great danger of being lost.

I cannot see any advantages in this route, and in considering the question would recommend that it stand out altogether.

Penguin Creek.—There are no great natural difficulties upon this road. Much of the country is open and well suited for the purpose, and the construction would open up a large quantity of very good land near the coast. Starting from the coast the road would pass for some ten or eleven miles through good land; after that for some ten miles over barren granite hills into the Surrey Hills estate. A branch road would be necessary to reach House Top and Hampshire Hills. I cannot say what the distance along this route would be, but it would be much greater than either of the following routes. It would pass through the whole of the Surrey Hills estate, thereby benefiting the Van Diemen's Land Company to a great extent. The great objection I have to this road is that Penguin Creek is a very bad harbour for the amount of shipping the tin mines will occasion. The breakwater is not very successful, and would require a large expenditure to make it useful: in fact, the present structure would have to be removed and a new one erected before the port could safely accommodate any extensive shipping. If a macadamised road were made from Penguin Creek to Mount Bischoff, the traffic would all be to and from the Leven on account of the great natural advantages of the latter port.

In order to give assistance to the development of the mineral resources of Hampshire Hills, House Top, and the Blythe, and to give access to the Crown lands at the Vale of Belvoir and elsewhere, it is extremely desirable to clear out afresh the "Pine Road." A sum of about £150 would clear out the fallen timber and mend one or two bad places and suit all the present requirements. I would respectfully suggest that this be done in the spring.

Emu Bay Route.—A road to Emu Bay would pass for forty miles through the property of the Van Diemen's Land Company. A very good road could be obtained with gradients not steeper than one in eighteen. The country being open for about twenty miles is well suited for road-making. It would, however, require a very large expenditure to make a safe shipping place at Emu Bay, the present wharf being almost useless. A proposal has been made to make the Emu River fit for shipping, but I do not think that practicable except at great expense. However, as it is out of all question for the Government to make a road for the benefit of the Van Diemen's Land Company, it is not necessary for me to say anything more of this route.

Table Cape Route.—I was always under the impression that it would be impossible to obtain a road by this route, regarding the valley of the Hellyer as an impassable obstacle. A rough track having been cut, I have had an opportunity to examine the country. The track just cut is

so badly selected that it would be altogether unfit for a road, but I am of opinion that on examination a better route will be found. The worst places on the present track are about the source of the Inglis and Cam; and from my own knowledge I can safely say a great improvement can be made.

Commencing from the end of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company's tramway, the road would pass down the west boundary of the Surrey Hills estate; or, better, a little inside the company's property to escape Deep Gully Creek and the falls on the Wandle River. On the west side of the Van Diemen's Land Company's ground there is some three thousand acres of open country belonging to the Crown, close to which the road would pass. After crossing the Wandle the road would go through myrtle forest country, very level, for about six miles. I believe, however, it would be advisable to go a little more to the west of the present road so as to pass through Sheffield Plains. Some six miles from the Wandle we come to the valley of the Hellyer, where the great difficulty of the road occurs. The descent on the Bischoff side would be nearly a mile long, and about three quarters of a mile rise on the north side. I do not think the present track is in the best situation, and it is very likely a better crossing could be found by the surveyors. As far as I can judge the valley is not more than five hundred feet deep, and if a fair gradient could be had there would be no further difficulty on the road. From the north side of the Hellyer Valley the road would be nearly level for some three miles and then patches of "horizontal" would be encountered and much sidling ground. Ten miles from the Hellyer the road would come out on "Sprent's Track to the Hellyer." By keeping a little to the east of the last-mentioned track an objectionable hill at the Calder River would be avoided, and the road would then come out on to "Moore's Plain" or Henrietta Plain, according as "Connor's road" or No. 2 road is adopted as the outlet.

The land along this route is almost entirely myrtle forest of the usual description; it is not regarded as first-class land, but it is suitable for grass, roots, &c. I am informed there is some good land at the head of the Inglis, and another patch at the head of the Cam. Very little splitting timber grows along the track, nor is there any extent of blackwood. Stone suitable for metalling occurs everywhere.

The distance from the Waratah River to Wynyard Wharf would be about forty miles, or about two miles shorter than the Emu Bay route.

The capabilities of Wynyard as a shipping place are too well known to need any description.

In the absence of a proper survey of the country between Wynyard and Mount Bischoff it is impossible to give any idea of the gradients to be encountered, or the probable cost of a macadamised road; but as the question of route is one of great importance it appears advisable to have a plan and section made as soon as possible.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
CHAS. P. SPRENT.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works, Hobart Town.

Table Cape, 31st July, 1875.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward you the following report on the proposed road from Table Cape to Mount Bischoff.

Before going into details I may state that I have previously given it as my opinion that a road by this route would be impossible,—thinking at the time that the valley of the Hellyer and the head branches of the Cam would form impassable barriers.

The people of Table Cape having raised a sufficient sum of money sent out an experienced bushman to examine the country and mark a route. It was then discovered that a narrow ridge of high ground separated the source of the Cam from the source of the Inglis, and that this narrow ridge joined the Campbell Range, which range forms the north side of the Hellyer Valley. Thus one formidable difficulty was overcome. The crossing of the Hellyer Valley was then the only remaining difficulty, and it was more especially to examine this portion of the proposed road that my services were required.

It is a very difficult and dangerous matter to examine the country in the vicinity of the Hellyer at this time of the year; the river is very large and rapid, and the country is very heavily timbered. The only means of crossing the river is by falling large trees; and from the force of the current these trees cannot be depended upon from day to day. On our present trip we cut down over a dozen trees, none of which are safe crossings.

My examination was of necessity hurried, and confined to examining the valley to ascertain the practicability of the proposed road. I did not set out or survey any road, as I imagined it would be more satisfactory to devote all my time to exploration. The result of my examinations are as follows:—

Distance.—The distance of the entire road from Wynyard Wharf to the end of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company's Tramway at "Rouse's Camp" is thirty-eight (38) miles. This is measured along the present track, round all the turns and hindrances. When the road is surveyed and set out I expect the distance will be thirty-six (36) miles. Of this distance thirty-one miles is through Crown land.

Van Diemen's Land Company's Land.—About three miles from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company's Tramway there is a deep gully called the "Deep Gully Creek;" it would be advisable to head this by keeping on the Van Diemen's Land Company's property. It will be also necessary to enter on the Van Diemen's Land Company's land to avoid the Falls on the Wandle River. To obtain the shortest possible route it would be necessary to pass through about five miles of the Surrey Hills Estate; but should the Van Diemen's Land Company raise any objections this distance could be reduced to about three miles—the route, however, would be about a mile longer. It is rather difficult to tell where the exact boundary line is, the country being open and the marks nearly grown out. By great expenditure I think the Deep Gully might be crossed on Crown land, but the Wandle must be crossed on the Company's land.

Metal.—Basalt abounds all along the line, and quartz gravel is obtainable at intervals.

Bridges.—Bridges would be required over the Calder, Hellyer, and Wandle; and about a dozen culverts over creeks not exceeding thirty feet span. The bridge over the Calder would be but a small affair, costing about £150. The Hellyer would require a substantial bridge, and at the spot I selected could be a single span of about sixty feet in length and about twenty in height—one bank being solid rock and the other all alluvial flat. Timber of any required size is on the spot—stringy bark and blackwood. The Wandle is a very shallow stream, gravelly bottom, width about forty feet.

Route.—Commencing from the wharf at Wynyard the road would pass for one mile and a quarter along the Main Road to Circular Head, and thence for about another half mile through a sandy open plain. For the next four miles the route is along a narrow ridge, covered with gum and stringy bark; the soil is sometimes clay, and sometimes quartz gravel and sand. Six miles from Wynyard we come to Connor's farm. Plenty of good metal here. Seven miles and three quarters from Wynyard we enter the myrtle forest, and at nine miles and three quarters come on to "Quiggin's Plain:" up to this point there is a passable cart road. The road would pass for one mile over the open plain and then enters the myrtle forest again. At twelve miles we cross the first creek encountered after crossing Big Creek on the Circular Head Road. At fourteen miles we come to the "Calder Hill." By keeping a little more to the east this hill can be avoided and a fair gradient obtained. Fourteen and a half miles brings us to the Calder River; thus far the track is very good, and is capable of being made into an excellent road. In the vicinity of the Calder good stone for metalling is procurable in any quantity. After leaving the Calder the country rises in terraces for a mile and a half and then falls towards the Inglis; the gold-digger's track to the Hellyer passes on in a southerly direction, but as Bischoff is more to the east I would leave the gold-digger's track at the Calder and go in a direct line for the dividing range between the Cam and Inglis. Up to the eighteenth mile the route is good; after that about three miles of stony sidlings occur,—but it seems to me the track has been cut there to avoid the "horizontal" scrub in the flats beneath. From the twenty-first mile to the twenty-fourth the route is very good indeed, and then we see the valley of the Hellyer beneath us.

Hellyer.—The hills on the Hellyer vary from three to four hundred feet in height. I examined a great number of gaps and found that I could obtain a gradient of one in fourteen easily enough by making long sidling cuttings. On the north side the sidling would be about one mile long; by making a longer sidling a much easier gradient might be obtained,—indeed I do not see any great difficulty on the north side. Two creeks would have to be crossed requiring small bridges. The slopes are not very great, the steepest not more than one in four. The cuttings would be in earth; the rock, if any, would be conglomerate. The bridge required at the Hellyer I have already spoken of. On the south side of the Hellyer, for about twenty chains, the country rises very gently, and by the route I selected an easy sidling takes us on for twenty chains more; after that two small gullies cross the route, both of which would require small bridges; and twenty chains more of rough sidling, about one half rock and the other half red soil, would bring us into the gap,—an easy sidling of about fifteen chains would then put us on to level ground. The gradient on the south side would require to be steeper than the one on the north; I managed to get up with one in fourteen.

Other places can be found to cross the Hellyer; and I have not the least doubt but that, on survey, a good gradient will be obtained. Not knowing where the Van Diemen's Land Company's

boundary might be, I was afraid to go far up the river. There is no engineering difficulty in crossing the Hellyer Valley, the question is one of distance and expense. I have seen many worse places where roads have been made. The scrub is mostly dogwood, musk, and fern-trees, the timber stringy-bark and myrtle. I should estimate the cost of the three miles of difficult country on the Hellyer Valley for a metalled road, sixteen feet wide, at £4000, not including the bridge.

Hellyer to Van Diemen's Land Company's Boundary.—From the top of the Hellyer Hill to the Van Diemen's Land Company's boundary at the Wandle River the road passes through a country almost level. Stone is abundant and the forest is not thick, chiefly myrtle and fern-trees. The Van Diemen's Land Company's boundary is thirty-one miles and a half from Wynyard. At thirty-two miles and a few chains we come on the open grass country which extends for the rest of the route. I have already referred to this portion of the country under the heading Van Diemen's Land Company's Land.

Nature of the Land passed through.—Most of the land on this route is myrtle forest, with occasional patches of stringy-bark. The soil is the usual chocolate-coloured soil common to such forests. It is not considered first-class land by the settlers. However, I know from experience that it will grow first-rate grass and vegetables; and on Quiggin's Plain, which is nothing but a burnt-out myrtle forest, splendid crops of oats and potatoes have been grown. Some of the myrtle forest where the laurel-fern grows is too clayey to be much good; but other parts, such as that between the Hellyer and Wandle, seems fit for any purposes.

About the Hellyer is some first-rate land, dogwood, musk, and fern-tree scrub.

On the west side of the Van Diemen's Land Company's line there is a fine extent of open land, I should think at least 3000 acres of it. It would be extremely useful to have the boundary re-marked, so that the extent of the Crown land would be apparent to intending settlers. Numerous patches of good land have been reported to me, but as yet I have not visited any of them. For instance, Sheffield Plain is reported as being originally 3000 acres in extent, but now overgrown with ferns. Patches of good land are to be found between Quiggin's Plain and Connor's, which could easily be reached by branch roads.

Mr. James Smith reports an extent of good land at the head of the Inglis, which would be about one mile from the road. In fact, I am of opinion that there is a great extent of fair land on both sides of the road, all of which could be made available.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
CHAS. P. SPRENT.

To the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.

Table Cape, 17th August, 1875.

SIR,

As I understand it is almost a matter of certainty that the road from Table Cape to Mount Bischoff will be now surveyed, might I request that the order be given me as early as possible. I am very anxious to get my surveying done before the end of the year, so that I may be in a position to take part in the proposed explorations between Mount Bischoff and the West Coast.

Before the survey can be commenced some preliminary work would be necessary, such as re-marking the Van Diemen's Land Company's lines, and examining for good land.

I should also require assistance; and as much surveying will be necessary this summer all through Tasmania, one must be early in securing suitable men.

As it is unlikely the Parliament will sanction the appropriation of a large sum for the road before a survey is made, and as it is most important that the work should be pushed on, might I suggest that a sum be placed on the estimates sufficient to grub and clear the road as soon as the survey is completed: by so doing the road could be used next autumn for packing upon.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
CHAS. P. SPRENT.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.