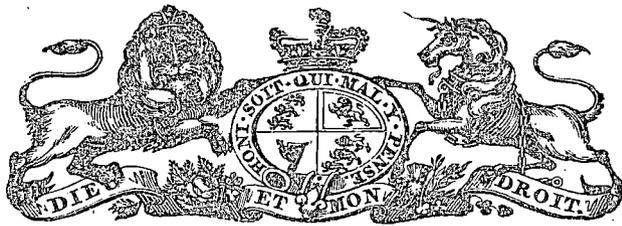


(No. 129.)



1862.

---

T A S M A N I A.

---

R E P O R T

ON PROPOSED ROAD TO ORFORD.

---

Presented by Mr. Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed,  
16 October, 1862.



*Survey Office, 6th October, 1862.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report that, in compliance with your instructions, I proceeded to Prosser's Plains with the view of ascertaining the practicability and reproductiveness of the proposed Road from Buckland to Orford, for which Parliament has been asked to vote £1000.

Before leaving head quarters I placed myself in communication with Mr. Charles Meredith, and made myself acquainted with the line he suggested. I had not, however, an opportunity of seeing him on the ground, but, from the information he afforded me, I had no difficulty in tracing the route he had indicated.

The character of the country between Prosser's Plains and the Coast presents serious difficulties to the establishment of road communication without an expenditure that is far above the resources of the District. Large sums have been spent at various times in repairing and altering the existing lines, which, in consequence of the dangerous fords they are obliged to cross, are often impassable for weeks. This inconvenience is felt more by the inhabitants of Prosser's Plains than by those on the Coast,—as the latter only use the Roads in travelling on horseback, and can avoid the fords, if required, by keeping on the north side of the river, or by following the track marked by Mr. Surveyor Wedge, which has been recently cleared by the Municipality of Spring Bay at a cost of upwards of £200.

In order that I may place the subject before you in the clearest possible way, I may state that there are three classes of settlers whose interests and requirements in the matter of roads are directly opposed to each other. This diversity of interests, which results from the physical features of the country, has proved a source of great inconvenience to the District by preventing anything like general coöperation amongst the residents.

Firstly.—The inhabitants on the Coast, who enjoy a highway by water to market, look on the Roads as mere conveniences for travelling; and, though they might wish to have them sufficiently good for the use of a vehicle, they have been so long accustomed to use them as horse-tracks, that there is not much desire evinced to improve them beyond what their own wants require.

The second class are those who live at Buckland, on the north side of Prosser's River. They would desire to see the Road made exclusively on that side, so as to avoid the fords, which are of the roughest description and preclude the transport of heavy loads.

The third division comprises the settlers on the south side of the river, who would favour the construction of a Road to the Coast that would be confined to their own bank of the river. Their object is also to escape the fords, which all agree in stamping as dangerous and incapable of improvement.

The District being divided in the manner above described, it may be at once concluded that the subject of Roads is one in which the greatest diversity of opinion exists. The present Road from Buckland to the Coast crosses the Prosser's River five times in going to Spring Bay, and four times to the Shipping-place, which is about a mile and a quarter up the river. Two of the worst of these fords will be avoided on the completion of a piece of new road now in process of formation by the Municipality. I have marked on the accompanying plan the existing lines of communication as well as that proposed by Mr. Meredith, which it will be necessary to bear in mind to render the whole question intelligible. Mr. Meredith recommends the second ford (marked A) as the starting point of his line to Orford, and proposes to keep on the south side of the river to its mouth, where there is a punt communicating with Spring Bay and the southern portion of the District. This line is about three miles in length, and agrees in direction with that in course of formation to the "Shed" or Shipping-place at the Prosser's River, and which I have alluded to as escaping two of the worst fords. Mr. Meredith's line would, however, extend to the Ferry at the mouth, following a horse-track which had been excavated along the River bank, under the steep rocky side of the valley.

The advantages to be derived by the construction of this Road are the following:—The avoidance of three of the worst fords in the river, and the establishment of communication with the ferry at Orford.

It is, however, very questionable whether the latter advantage will be appreciated in the way proposed, as the great majority of the Settlers would not, I am confident, use this route when they can travel by one much shorter. The advantages would be, therefore, limited to the convenience of being able to drive a

vehicle from the "Shed" to the Ferry,—particularly as communication will soon be provided to the Shipping-place by the Municipality along the line indicated by Mr. Meredith.

The benefit of extending the road in the manner described being confined to the convenience which the inhabitants will enjoy in being able to bring a conveyance to the Ferry, is not one in which all will share alike. The Spring Bay people will not come round by that route; and, as the majority of the persons using the road travel on horseback, it is extremely doubtful whether it would be advisable to supply, by the expenditure of public money, a means of communication for which there is so little demand. The improvement of the Road to the Shipping-place will, no doubt, be an advantage, and a portion of the grant could be well appropriated to this purpose.

The want of a ready means of transporting produce to the coast has exercised a retarding influence on the District; and if the expenditure was confined to supplying that want, there would perhaps be more abundant reasons for supporting the claim; but, the other advantages being disclaimed by the great majority of the inhabitants, the question becomes a local one, in which the general public are scarcely interested.

Having so far introduced the subject, I shall now afford you specific information under the following heads, as requested in your letter of the 19th ultimo:—

1. The physical character of the Country which the Road in contemplation will traverse.
2. What will be the probable cost of the proposed road?
3. The advantages the Revenue is likely to derive by the formation of the Road by reason of the increased value it will confer on the Crown Lands.
4. The amount of traffic on the existing Road from Buckland to Orford; and whether it is likely so to increase as to justify not only the proposed expenditure but its ultimate cost.

1. With regard to the first question, I beg to state that the improvement of the present road must be confined to the mode proposed by Mr. Meredith, and which has been already taken in hand as far as the Shipping-place by the Spring Bay Municipality.

There has been a Road marked out under your direction some years ago, which, if cleared and formed, would prove of great advantage; but the route chosen would render it too expensive for the means of the District, and could only, I believe, have been carried out at a time when prison labour abounded. Along the proposed line, from the ford (A) to the mouth of the River, the Country, although rough, presents no insuperable obstacles. The new line now in course of construction for nearly two miles, and requiring side cutting nearly the whole distance, will cost only £175. There is only one place where steep gradients will have to be resorted to, in crossing a spur which runs down to one of the bends of the river; but this could be obviated in a great measure by a little cutting on the crown of the hill, and making a zig-zag course up the ascent. The portion from the "Shed," or Shipping-place, to the punt would prove the most expensive, as the solid rock in some places would have to be excavated; but there are no difficulties to speak of which could not be overcome by the sum of £1000. The land through which the Road passes is rugged and only adapted for pasturage. There is little agricultural land within a considerable distance, and none, that I am aware of, belonging to the Crown. On the south side of Prosser's River the Waste Lands are steep rocky ranges, little of which is worth, on an average, ten shillings per acre. They are, however, occupied by various proprietors, who run sheep throughout their entire extent.

2. The cost of the Road as suggested would, I consider, be somewhat under the £1000, as the work now being carried out would be available in some places. This would, however, greatly depend on the particular route chosen, as, in a country so rough as the Valley of the Prosser's River, a very slight divergence would considerably increase the expense. I should think, taking everything into consideration, that the sum of £800 would be amply sufficient for the purpose.

3. The reproductiveness of the work, in the increased value it is likely to confer on the Crown Lands, is extremely doubtful; and, if this is the recognised principle to apply in cases where there is a demand for public money, I fear that the result in the present case would not prove such as to justify the expenditure. The fact is there is little Crown Land in the District fit for cultivation, and none within the limit of the Road in question. It is generally conceded that pastoral land is least dependent on road communication for the purpose of rendering it available; and, as this is the general character of the Country, I do not believe that the Crown property in the District, whether surveyed or not, will be affected in the least by the construction of the Road as proposed.

4. With regard to the existing traffic from Buckland to Orford, it is confined, I am given to understand, to the transport of fruit and dairy produce. There is little or no grain grown, and the wool is sent overland to Richmond in preference to the Coast. I am under the impression that the increase of traffic would be slight in the event of the proposed line being carried out. The wool might probably be sent down in larger quantities, but the grain returns would remain very much in the same state as before. On the Coast, where there are no Roads required, the production of grain has materially decreased, in consequence of the high price of labour; and the same reason will necessarily hold good for a District where there is a land carriage of eight or ten miles.

I have before alluded to the probability that the passenger traffic would not follow the line as a rule, particularly as the Spring Bay people have a new horse-track much shorter, and which enables them to avoid all the fords, if they desire it, except that at the Township of Buckland.

Under these circumstances, the advantages the Road would confer would be purely local. A few of the residents might, perhaps, enjoy the convenience of being able to drive to and from the coast; but the route would not be generally adopted for the reasons above cited. I fully coincide in the general demand for a better system of road communication, and hold the belief that the money could be most usefully expended in improving the existing roads; but, in doing so, I should be disinclined to recommend the disbursement of any sum beyond what the interests of the District required. A good Road to the Shipping-place is the first requirement; and I am of the opinion, if that is satisfied, there remains little more to be done that would be entitled to consideration as a public measure.

In offering this opinion I must be understood as referring solely to the best use to which the money could be applied in promoting the interests of the District. As a remunerative work I believe it would prove a failure. The public estate would not be enhanced by the expenditure as above stated, so that the rule usually applied would scarcely justify the appropriation of the grant in the way suggested.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

W. ALCOCK TULLY, *Inspecting Surveyor.*

J. E. CALDER, *Esq., Surveyor-General.*

Submitted, with plan and tracing.

J. E. CALDER,  
14 Oct. 1862.