

(No. 92.)



1878.

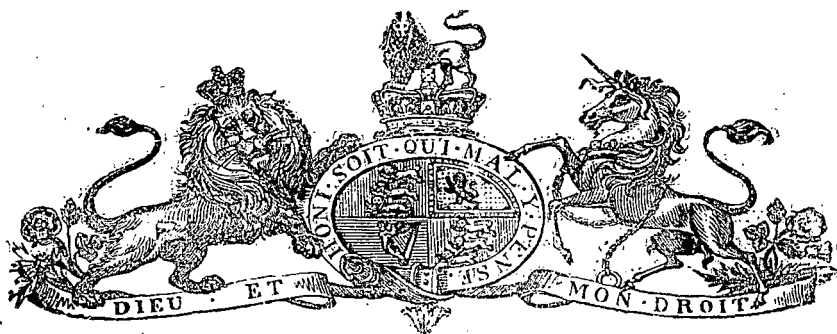
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

NORTH-EASTERN DISTRICTS:

REPORT OF ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands, and ordered by the House to be printed, October 1, 1878.



Lands and Works Office, 30th September, 1878.

Sir,

HAVING just inspected the various works in progress, and visited the localities in which further works are proposed in the North-eastern Districts, I have now the honor to submit the following Report upon same:—

LAUNCESTON AND SCOTTSDALE ROAD.

Before recommending the Government to expend the recent vote upon the partially completed road *viâ* Patersonia, (and which I have previously inspected,) I was anxious to see the line of country that would be traversed by a road *viâ* Upper Piper and Denison Gold Diggings.

This road, as far as Upper Piper Settlement, is on a rough stony formation with three very steep hills to be crossed, all of which will be considerably improved in grades and properly metalled under contracts let to Messrs. Boland & Campbell out of the provision of £2500 for Upper Piper Road.

From the Piper Settlement I walked over all the line to Scottsdale, and find that the only difficulties are in crossing a range of some 350 feet in height at east of Piper Settlement, and another range of about same height at some three miles west of Scottsdale. These places can be got over, but the grades would be steep, probably not better than 1 in 15. Between these ranges, and excepting one small patch of good land near the eastern branch of Forester River, the country is of the poorest description, consisting of slate and granite drift, with several short tea-tree swamps, and is not heavily timbered.

From the range referred to at the Piper there is a long gradual descent of some 800 feet in about 3 miles to a branch of the Forester River, and from thence to the Scottsdale Range the grades can all be made easy; on crossing this range there is a long gradual fall to the Brid River, and then another low range of about 130 feet to cross before coming to Muddy Creek, at a point where the settlers in Coombes' New Country (West of Scottsdale) all find their outlet. From thence the line would follow reserved road below "Landers" on to the main road at a point about 2 miles north of Tucker's Corner.

This new road could be made and maintained very much more cheaply than that *viâ* Patersonia, and the gradients also are far superior although the distance, say from Post Office at Launceston to Tucker's Corners, would be about 2 miles longer, but to the centre of Scottsdale about equal.

I think that the main road ought never to have been laid out *viâ* Patersonia; but as something over £18,000 has been expended, and the two ends of the road are still unconnected, it would, in my opinion, be the best course now to make the previous expenditure of some advantage to the district by completing this road for the 8 or 9 miles where there is now only a dangerous horse track.

I would at the same time recommend that the survey of the Denison route should be completed and carefully marked out, and such light work done as would enable horsemen or stock to pass through, and keep the line open until such time as a good main road could be made by that route.

BRIDPORT AND SCOTTSDALE ROAD.

Such portions of the new road as are not made solid at once by logging or slabbing are very much cut up by the heavy traffic from tin mines constantly passing over them; and while the clay formation is soft with rains, the gravel used, if put on a dry bottom and kept raked in, makes an excellent and cheap road. The contractors have, however, neglected this, and will have to make the work good now at their own expense.

SCOTTSDALE AND RINGAROOMA ROAD.

At the Scottsdale end the slabs, from being laid on a wet soft formation, have nearly gone out of sight on some short portions; and where this is the case I have ordered the relaying of same. There is ample security in the money retained from payments to contractor to compel him to do this work.

At the Ringarooma end the slabbing is better laid, and the contractor has done his work very fairly. On both contracts the slabs would fairly average the specified size, although some I picked out were too thin and too wide. The contractors also had been following local advice and laying slabs so as to make a close top surface, instead of laying them with all their backs down.

All this work has been done on a soft greasy red clay during wet weather, and with a heavy traffic constantly over it. The contractors would have done well for their own sakes to have asked extension of time; but I see nothing to prevent the work being well finished before it is taken over by the Government. One of the old fallen trees from which slabs had been cut was shown to me, and the timber in it was sound and good; but the Chairman of Road Trust informs me that some unsound ones were used. This work generally is not the class of work I should like to see, but the worst portion is, I find, that which had been sub-let.

BRANXHOLM LANE.

Most of the slabbing, although almost floating in mud when laid down, has been very well done, and there is a finish about the works on this contract which is creditable to contractor. A complaint had been made about want of drainage from slabs, and at time of my visit men were engaged in removing the earth from one end which had been placed there by them in error. The more recent work is, if anything, the best; and on this and other works the local criticism has had a very good effect.

PACK TRACKS FROM LOWER JUNCTION TOWARDS THOMAS'S PLAINS.

The slabbing laid by Apted & Co. on a road previously formed by Government has been very well done indeed. There was plenty of good loam with which to bed and blind the slabs, and this bedding with loam or sand makes all the difference to a slabbed road.

On Hardiman & Macmichael's contract the work is fairly well done; the corduroy is all done with good 6 and 7-inch spars, and there has been a large quantity of side cutting, some of it through granite. Blinding or adzing is required on this track, and this work was provided for in specification upon which tenders were invited, but owing to the limited funds at disposal, and the high price asked for same, was not included in contract. I considered that, if a substantial pack track were formed, it was not too much to expect the people using it to blind it themselves with tailings, &c., and on another track this has been done, but here the people do not seem willing to do anything.

PACK TRACK FROM UPPER JUNCTION TO CAMP CREEK.

The work on this track is generally solid and good, but of a rough character. The flooring, however, over culverts and smaller bridges is not up to the mark. It is being blinded from funds raised by local subscription, supplemented by the Government to the extent of £25. I do not like some of the blinding, but a portion of really good road at Junction was shown me as having been made originally with the same material. The specification allowed Contractor to go round trees of a certain size, and this concession has been taken advantage of to rather a greater extent than necessary, without causing, I consider, much saving to the Contractors.

A small cart to carry about 15 cwt. travels over this track. It is not fair usage, but as yet does not seem to have hurt it.

PACK TRACK FROM UPPER JUNCTION NORTHWARDS.

The works on this track were carried out by day labour under Overseer Hall, and have made an excellent and solid road.

Several hundred tons of material have been carted over it from Full Moon, Rising Sun, &c. Claims without making any impression. It is well blinded, but in places water was being led to different claims by channels cut close under the corduroy (to save a little expense), and in one place the corduroy was deliberately taken up to form an open culvert across the track.

All the line of pack tracks have been very well laid out by Mr. Overseer Hall, and with gradients for a cart road, so that such could be made at any future time at the cost of simply widening and re-logging.

MAIN SLABBED ROAD FROM BLUE TIER TOWARDS GEORGE'S BAY.

This road has stood the heavy traffic exceedingly well, and is generally in fair order, but it is imperative that some £20 or £25 be spent at once in clearing drains so as to let off water from slabs and replace such slabs as are damaged by falling trees or the traffic. If this is neglected some three or four times this amount will soon be required.

I would strongly recommend the Government to charge some light toll for use of the roads so as to cover the cost of the maintenance, which will be very light for some years to come.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES FINCHAM, *Engineer-in-Chief.*

The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.