

REPORT

Read at a *Special* General Court of Proprietors,
held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate-
Street, on Thursday, the 21st July, 1825.

GENTLEMEN,

At the General Court of proprietors, held here on the 18th January last, we had the honour of submitting to you a Report of our proceedings to that time, together with a sketch of our future plans for conducting the affairs of the Company, and realizing the important benefits which we had in view from the commencement of the enterprise.

Considerable progress having since been made in the various departments to which the attention of the Directors has been unremittingly afforded, we have been desirous to meet you, in order to give to the proprietors at large an opportunity of becoming fully acquainted

with the actual state of their property in this undertaking; and we trust that this information will not be unaccompanied with feelings of satisfaction.

In detailing, in the First place, the measures which have been hitherto pursued in this country, for accomplishing the various objects of the Company, it will be requisite to occupy but a small portion of your time.

In our former Report we referred to our printed statement of the particular views and proceedings of the Company, then recently distributed amongst the proprietors, in which was stated to you the passing of the Act of Parliament—the completion of the Royal Charter of Incorporation—the formation of a managing committee of proprietors in New South Wales—and the engagement of Mr. Robert Dawson, to act as the Company's principal Agent in the Colony.

Since that period, the judicious selection and early possession of our estate, objects of primary importance to the Company, have been constantly under the consideration of the Directors; and from time to time such instructions have been sent to the Colony, as in our opinion were likely

to facilitate their early accomplishment. But, in the mean time, as a considerable period might be expected to elapse, before a decision on these most important points could possibly be arranged, our Colonial committee have been instructed to hire a farm, near Sydney, for the reception and accommodation of our first supplies of Sheep and other stock, in order to avoid any unnecessary delay in establishing our flocks, and bringing the affairs of the Company into a state of activity.

With this commencement, we were enabled to proceed at once to the formation of an establishment of overseers, shepherds, mechanics, and other servants, intended to fill the various gradations in our employment in the Colony—to provide an assortment of the requisite stores and merchandise—and, at the same time, to take steps for obtaining a supply of pure bred Merino Sheep.

In these measures, we have to announce a degree of success, fully equal to what could have been anticipated.

We have caused the most esteemed of the Merino flocks in Europe, to be inspected by an intelligent Agent in whom we could rely, assisted by Mr. Dawson; and have already selected

such a number of high-bred Rams and Ewes, as will secure to the Company a foundation for their flocks.

For the transport of this, and other stock, including some thorough-bred horses and mares, and a few choice specimens of cattle, together with the establishment of servants and their families, two ships of considerable burthen, the York and the Brothers, were chartered, and despatched from the Isle of Wight in the month of June.

In selecting the establishment of servants, we have the satisfaction to observe, that strict attention has been paid to character, as well as to every other desirable qualification—that the men generally have been engaged on moderate salaries—the expected relief from anxiety with reference to the future provision for their children, having in many cases appeared to operate as the strong inducement to engage in the service of the Company—and in other instances the insurance of a man's life, for a moderate amount, for the benefit of his wife and family in the event of accident to himself, having effectually outweighed the natural reluctance to quit England.

The stores and merchandise comprehend

every article necessary for the comfort of the establishment, and will, at the same time, lay the foundation of improvements of the most beneficial and important character on the estates of the Company.

For the continued, or occasional increase of the Company's flocks by purchase, until the Directors shall have sufficiently accomplished their plans, the Company have various sources open to them, and will be enabled to proceed as quickly as is consistent with prudence.

We have, Secondly, to state to you, that during the progress of these arrangements, we have received various accounts from New South Wales.

Our letters from the Colonial committee are dated at Sydney, in the month of November last.

After acknowledging the receipt of our letters dated the 5th July preceding, the committee express themselves to the following effect:—

That they have been highly gratified by their appointment, and that we may rely upon their making every exertion in their power, as members of our committee, to promote our views, and to insure the prosperity of the splendid project confided to our direction.

That they have had the honour to wait upon His Excellency the Governor, and to lay before him such parts of our letter of the 5th July, as would give him a clear insight, as well of the highly beneficial and important objects entertained by the Company, as of the favourable manner in which they had been received and supported by His Majesty's Government.

That Sir Thomas Brisbane perused the papers with great attention, and expressed his warm approbation of the Plan, assuring the committee that nothing would afford him more gratification, than to become instrumental in promoting the patriotic and enlightened views of the Company.

That Mr. Oxley, the Surveyor General, was most friendly to the establishment, and that they had no doubt of receiving all the information and aid in his power to give.

That being sensible we should attach great weight to this gentleman's opinion, they have written to request he would favour them with his detailed sentiments, regarding the most eligible district for the location of the Company's estate.

That in reply to their letter, they had received a Report from that officer, to a copy of which they refer us.

That in Mr. Oxley's opinion of the ineligibility of the southern districts for the location of so large a tract as the Company's grant, they *the South* fully concur, and have little doubt that the districts recommended by him will be found, in many respects, highly desirable.

The committee then assure us, that they shall endeavour to carry into effect any instructions they may receive, on the most economical principle, being perfectly aware of the necessity of observing extreme circumspection in incurring expense.

They further state, that "if the first experiments be conducted cautiously, and on a prudent and limited scale, they entertain no apprehensions but that the property of the Company will become of great value, and that the importance and character of that Colony and its population, will be raised beyond what has ever yet been contemplated".

The Report of Mr. Oxley, the Surveyor General, above referred to, is dated Sydney, the 4th November 1824, and is in substance as follows :—

It commences by observing, that he feels much flattered by the committee's letter of the 1st of that month, in which they request his

opinion, relative to the choice of the lands which are ordered to be granted to the Australian Agricultural Company, having reference to the principal objects, which, in the first instance appear to engage the attention of the Company.

It then states, that in a country so extensive as New South Wales, embracing every variety of climate and soil, he should hope the Company would experience but little difficulty in selecting lands, every way adapted to promote and secure the ultimate success of their patriotic and most useful undertaking.

That the rich and extensive tracts of land known as Liverpool Plains, connected by hills of moderate elevation, with the more lofty ranges bordering on the sources of the Hastings River, seem to be admirably adapted for extended Sheep and cattle grazing—that, although that line of country is considerably to the north of Sydney, yet from its elevation above the sea, it may be considered as perfectly resembling in climate the country round Sydney—that the whole tract is extremely well watered, and that there is an ample sufficiency of timber for all agricultural purposes.

That the south extreme of this desirable tract,

is not more than thirty-five miles from the western settled parts of Hunter's River, and that a very excellent road from thence to the plains, has recently been explored by his assistant, Mr. Dangar, who in his Report to Mr. Oxley, gives the most flattering accounts of the country—that, it is true, that Hunter's River is not navigable to the point from whence a road might be most eligibly commenced, and that therefore no water-carriage for any article of agricultural produce must be looked for—that he thinks, however, that the whole tract intended to be granted to the Company, may be taken out of this district of country—and that the proportion of unprofitable land, if any, would be so exceedingly trifling, as to be unworthy of notice—that, in order to give a general idea of the situation of the tract above alluded to, he states it to extend from latitude 31° to latitude $31^{\circ} 40'$ south, and between the meridians of 150° and $150^{\circ} 35'$ east—that, if the grant be divided into two portions, one moiety might be most advantageously selected in the vicinity of the River Hastings, singularly well adapted for agricultural labours, and intersected by navigable branches to a great extent, that the climate is, however, much warmer than the first

*Half
Port
2 quare*

described country, and is capable of producing Cotton, Coffee, and Sugar—that, of the latter, Government have at present a considerable plantation—that the hills in the vicinity of the river, are open and grassy, the timber excellent and abundant; but that, how far the warmth of the climate would be favourable to the growth of fine Wool, he does not feel competent to decide—that this, indeed, might not be considered a question of much importance, as the possession of the remaining moiety, in or near the situation pointed out, would enable the Company to choose any climate which might be found most favourable to Sheep—that it ought to be observed, that the two situations are at a considerable distance from each other—that the first must communicate with the sea by means of Hunter's River, having a tolerably good port, the other, by the Hastings, with a very indifferent one.

only
Mr. Oxley proceeds to remark, that he is quite sensible the information he is then able to afford, is not sufficiently detailed, to enable the committee to come to any thing like a decision, as to the situation of the land to be taken by the Company; and concludes by assuring the committee, that he shall at all times feel infinite

gratification, in being able to forward the truly important objects, which the Directors of the Company have confided to the judgment of the committee, and expresses the most sincere wishes for the prosperity of the Company.

The expressions contained in various letters addressed to individuals connected with the Company, all concur in representing, not only the general satisfaction manifested in the Colony upon the establishment of the Company, but also afford the most encouraging anticipations of the success of the undertaking.

The most important of these letters, appears to be one addressed to John Smith, Esq. M.P. by Major General, Sir Thomas Brisbane, Governor of New South Wales.

It is dated, Parramatta, New South Wales, the 10th January 1825;—and states, that in the month of November last, Sir Thomas Brisbane had received the Company's letter of the 5th July, transmitting the Act of Parliament that had recently passed, in behalf of the Australian Agricultural Company, together with the Plan for establishing the Company.

That reflecting on the effects resulting from such a Company, in the various points of improvement connected with it, he cannot but

view it as a bright and unexpected light burst forth on the infant Colony—and observes, that if it be followed up by all the characteristic energies of the gentlemen connected with the undertaking, either as to influence, wealth, or respectability, he can only regard the interests of New South Wales as thus completely identified with those of the mother country, and must therefore hail it as the happiest event which could have befallen the Colony.

Sir Thomas Brisbane expresses a hope, that he need not request Mr. Smith to assure the gentlemen, who have done him the honour to sign the letter transmitted to him, that he shall have the utmost gratification in promoting their views, in as much as he must ever consider them as promoting the interests alike of the Government as of the Company.

Sir Thomas Brisbane then observes, that the committee had waited upon him, when he assured them of his hearty co-operation—and that he would communicate with them hereafter, and with perfect candour state his sentiments. Sir Thomas Brisbane adds, that he considers, as the most favourable omen of the future well-being of the Company, the selection they have made of the committee resident in the Colony,

and concludes by most heartily wishing the Company every success in their undertaking.

Information to the following purport, has also been communicated to us, by a very intelligent gentleman, lately arrived from the Colony.

That all accounts hitherto received, confirm the opinion, that Liverpool Plains, and the country in that vicinity, would be the most desirable situation for the Company's estates—that, in fact, it was generally considered to be the finest tract of land, hitherto discovered in New South Wales—that the soil was fertile and well watered—that one part of the grant might be taken approaching towards the Hastings, and the other, towards the Coal River—that there was easy access from the head of the Coal River to Liverpool Plains—that Mr. Bowman, one of the members of the committee, had an estate near the head of the Coal River, to which he had lately moved several flocks of Merino Sheep, obtained from Mr. Mac Arthur, and that several gentlemen of respectability were established on the banks of the Coal River.

*Subsequently
Sheep were
removed
from there
to Peels River*

We proceed, Thirdly, to report to you,

the substance of various instructions which have been transmitted to New South Wales by His Majesty's Government, and since communicated to your Court of Directors.—

Sir Thos. Brisbane was by these informed, that it was of the utmost importance no time should be lost, to enable the Company to commence those inquiries and that examination, which would be indispensable, before the selection of a tract of land could be made, suited to the various and important objects of the undertaking—it was therefore His Majesty's pleasure, that he should afford every facility to those gentlemen, who might be authorized to make the necessary arrangements in the Colony, and to collect information, previous to the arrival of their Agent, and the commencement of more active operations—that it appeared to His Majesty's Government, from the accounts which had been received, that there was a tract of land between the Blue Mountains and the River Hastings, which would be very eligible, from the goodness of the soil, and the convenience of water carriage, for the particular objects of the Company.

Sir Thomas Brisbane was instructed to pay particular attention to the application for

convicts, which he might receive from the person authorized to act on the part of the Company—and was apprized that Mr. Robert Dawson had been appointed the Agent of the Company, to whom he would afford every reasonable facility in prosecuting the objects, with which he was proceeding to the Colony.

In another despatch, we have learned that Mr. Dawson has been recommended to the Governor's notice and protection; and that his name is directed to be inserted in the commission of the peace.

Earl Bathurst also directs, that as soon as Mr. Dawson has fixed upon the situation for the Company's grant, the Surveyor General shall cause an accurate survey and description to be prepared of one million acres of land, carefully availing himself of all natural boundaries and landmarks, and adding to the grant of one million acres, any quantity of land which he may think necessary to render the boundaries of the grant more complete and distinct.—That this survey and description shall be transmitted home to his Lordship, in order that he may cause the necessary warrant to be prepared for His Majesty's signature—and that in the intermediate time, a licence of occupation

shall be given to Mr. Dawson, and possession of the land delivered to him by the Surveyor General, with all the solemnities and publicity that may be practicable.

His Lordship then states, that in the event of its being considered advantageous by the Company's Agents to divide the grant into two separate portions, he wishes their request to this effect to be complied with.

Previous to the conclusion of this division of our Report, we request your attention to some copies (now placed upon the table for the inspection of the proprietors) of the terms upon which His Majesty's Government have determined in future to make grants of land in New South Wales.

By these it will be seen, that instead of giving free grants of land, as heretofore, lands are to be put up to sale, according to a valuation of the Surveyor General, similar in many respects to the system adopted in the United States of America—an arrangement which will necessarily give an increased value to land in the Colony, and in the same ratio, augment the worth of the Company's estates.

Lastly, we enter upon the subject respecting which, we have been more peculiarly anxious to meet you, namely—the result of a negotiation recently concluded with His Majesty's Government regarding the Mines of Coal in New South Wales.

These Mines are situated at Newcastle, about sixty miles to the north of Sydney, at the south entrance of a secure harbour, called Port Hunter, containing a sufficient depth of water for vessels of about two hundred and fifty tons, and into which the Coal River empties itself.

The entrance to these Mines is on a considerable elevation above the level of the sea, and the seams of Coal are visible on the surface of the cliff, which forms the south headland of the harbour.

The country immediately to the south of Port Hunter is an extensive field of Coal, of which the strata have been traced for nine miles, when they bend downwards, and sink below the level of the sea.

Between the Coal beds are strata of sandstone and of clay-slate, embedded in which there is found abundance of argillaceous Iron Ore.

We have the satisfaction to acquaint you, that His Majesty's Government have agreed to

grant to the Company, a lease of these Coal Mines, for a period of thirty-one Years, on the following conditions :—

That one-twentieth part of the Coal to be raised shall be allotted to the Crown, and that the Company shall purchase such produce, or any part thereof, at the pit's mouth, at the market price of the day, provided the Crown shall deem it advisable to dispose of the same to them. And further, that a right shall be reserved by the Crown, to take one-fifteenth portion of the produce instead of one-twentieth, should it be deemed expedient hereafter, to alter the terms of the agreement with the Company in this particular ; but, it is distinctly understood, that such additional portion is not to be demanded unless the result of the experiment of working the Mines be such, as, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, may justify the demand of an increase.

His Majesty's Government have also agreed to grant to the Company, leases of any other minerals which may be found in the Colony.

The working of the Coal Mines at Newcastle, has hitherto been conducted on a very limited scale, and in a very imperfect manner,

by Government—it has been effected by manual labour alone—until the year 1817, by a simple adit, or opening on the surface of the cliff, which served as a drift, both to carry off the water, and to wheel away the Coals. Since that time, it has been worked by a perpendicular shaft, of one hundred and eleven feet, and a common windlass turned by convicts; recently, a second shaft has been sunk, and as access has been opened to the seams lying at a distance from the surface, the quality has much improved. It was at first equal to the ordinary descriptions of English sea-Coal, and is now ascertained to be of the finest sort; nothing is required but the application of machinery to raise it in abundance, and of excellent quality.

The shafts are within a short distance of the sea, and the Coal can therefore be shipped with facility.

With reference to the demand, likely to be experienced for the produce of the Coal Mines, it may be sufficient to state, that there is now a large consumption of Coals at Sydney, where fuel is already scarce, and that, in the course of last year, several cargoes of the produce of these Mines were shipped to India, the Isle of France and the coast of South America.

At Sydney, it is proposed to form an extensive depôt, for sale.

We may thus, in the first place, fairly anticipate a considerable sale within the Colony of New South Wales, not only at Sydney, but at the various smaller towns now rising into importance. And, secondly, in contemplating the numerous thickly-peopled settlements, and ports abounding in the eastern seas, including Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Batavia, Canton, Singapore, the Isle of France, &c. &c., to many of which places, Coals have frequently been shipped from Great Britain, and at all of which, it finds a ready and profitable sale—we may expect an extensive demand for exportation, independently of the consumption of the produce of these Mines, likely to be caused by steam navigation, which will probably be introduced into that quarter of the globe, and encouraged by the facility of obtaining, from this source, abundant supplies of Coals.

In conclusion, it may be proper to add, that this new branch of our undertaking, will in no respect interfere with the conduct of the main objects of the Company, as explained to you in our former statements.

Neither will it require us to call, during this,

year, for any increase of the funds already placed at our disposal, whilst the profits from this source, together with those likely to arise from the estates of the Company, will form a fund, out of which dividends may be hereafter made.