

1899.

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WOODS AND FORESTS DEPARTMENT.

R E P O R T

BY

THE CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

PERTH:

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1899.

To the Honourable George Throssell, M.L.A., Minister for Lands, Perth.

Woods and Forests Department.

Perth, 17th June, 1899.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit, herewith, the Report of the Woods and Forests Department for the six months of the Financial Year ended the 31st December last.

This Report has been issued for the half-year, in order to make it uniform with the reports issued by the other branches of your Department.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. EDNIE-BROWN,

Conservator of Forests.

WOODS AND FORESTS DEPARTMENT.

Report by the Conservator of Forests.

SIR,

I am glad to say that, since the issue of my last Annual Report, the subject of dealing with the general management of our Forests has been dealt with by Parliament. The amended laws relating to this have been incorporated generally with those dealing with all matters relating to Crown Lands, under what is known as "The Land Act, 1898."

2. In this Act there are some twenty-three clauses, contained in Part IX., which relate to the subject of "Timber Lands."

3. The first section gives the Timber Regulations generally, and, in an appendix referred to in these sections, the fees relating to the various licenses are given. These licenses are fairly comprehensive, and the fees charged moderate.

4. The third section deals with the subject of cutting of piles and poles, which may now be cut upon Crown Lands under the old system of £3 for each license. For this small amount a man may cut piles, etc., upon any Crown Lands not included in any Reserve, for one month.

5. Under the heading of Timber Leases, there are eleven clauses dealing with all matters connected with the important subject of leasing our timbered lands.

6. These leases give the lessees the full right to cut all the standing timber which may be upon the land. This also includes the right to cut piles and poles without extra charge, which of itself is a very great departure from the original regulation, which necessitated the lessees paying extra for these.

7. There is also a clause by which lessees, upon application for the land, have to pay half the rent in advance. In the previous regulations a deposit of only £5 per square mile was required upon application. This alteration was made in order to put a stop to parties taking up these forests for speculative purposes only, and I am glad to say that this has had the desired effect.

8. I am pleased to notice that provision has been made for the granting of leases for the term of not less than one year and not exceeding twenty-five years. This provision is a most important one, and the security of tenure will enable the lessees to go to some expense in developing their properties.

9. The area of forest land which may be included in one lease is limited to 10,000 acres, and the rent is, as heretofore, £20 per annum for each square mile of country.

10. Fortunately, provision has been made whereby the lessees are obliged, within two years from the date of lease, to have erected, within their areas, a substantial and fully equipped saw mill plant, of sufficient power to cut up at least five loads of sawn timber per month for every square mile of the lease. This is a very commendable clause.

11. There is ample provision made for the protection of the saplings upon the ground, and certain portions of the lease may be resumed for conservation purposes when the old timber has been cut out.

12. Altogether, there are some very important clauses in this Act, and although, upon the whole, these are more in favour of the lessee than is absolutely necessary, it is satisfactory to have something definite to work upon.

13. Under the provisions of this Act, the Governor has the power to make regulations in order that it may be properly carried out.

14. A number of these regulations have already been gazetted, amongst which are the following very important ones:—

15. The standard sizes at which the various trees may be cut, at three feet up from the ground, are Jarrah, 60 inches; Karri, 90 inches; Wandoo, 36 inches; York Gum, 36 inches; Morrell, 36 inches; Tuart, 60 inches; Sandalwood, 15 inches; Banksia, 15 inches; and Sheaoak, 25 inches, and any other kind of trees not enumerated, by arrangement with the Conservator of Forests.

16. All persons cutting timber with licenses for two or three months shall brand all their timber with a brand to be registered in the office of the Woods and Forests Department at Perth.

17. Piles, poles, and dead timber, as well as matured timber, may be sold upon timber reserves, by special arrangement with the Department.

18. The cutting of all Kurrajong trees, of any description whatever in the Colony, is absolutely prohibited.

19. The stripping of bark from standard trees is not allowed.

20. The cutting of piles and poles upon timber leases is only allowed as necessary thinnings of the forest, and when it can be shown that these are being removed indiscriminately, without regard to the future maintenance and welfare of the forest, the Minister for Lands has the power to put a stop to this.

21. The Minister may grant permits, according to conditions, to cut timber upon any Crown lands; irrespective of the standard sizes enumerated.

22. There is still a very considerable demand, both here and abroad, for copies of my report upon the forests of Western Australia, issued in 1896; and it being considered advisable to have the information it contains available for distribution, it has been arranged to bring out a second edition of this publication giving full and up-to-date particulars of the forest question of the Colony; part of the cost of publication being borne by the various Timber Companies.

23. Those who have readily consented to do this are Millar's Karri and Jarrah Forests, Limited; the Canning Jarrah Timber Company, Limited; the Jarrahdale Jarrah Forests and Railways, Limited; the M. C. Davies Karri and Jarrah Company, Limited; the Westralian Jarrah Forest, Limited; the Gill-McDowell Jarrah Company, Limited; and the Jarrah Timber and Wood Paving Corporation, Limited.

24. This report I have thoroughly revised, and added portions where necessary. Of course a considerable portion of the original matter, especially that relating to the *Flora* of the Colony, will remain intact, and will be considerably added to as my experience of the habits and peculiarities of the various trees increases.

25. A considerable number of fresh plates will be added. These have kindly been supplied by the various Companies above-named, so that altogether the document will be almost a new one, and, as I have already indicated, the work will be the very latest Report upon our forest country. The name has been changed to that of "The Western Australian Forests and their Development."

26. Since the publication of the original Report, many alterations and additions have been made to our Timber Regulations, and these will be fully explained in the new one.

27. This Report, which will be a fairly comprehensive one of the Forests of Western Australia, and altogether more reliable than the one published in 1896, is now in the hands of the printer.

28. The revenue of the Department for the second half of 1898 amounted to £13,394 19s. 3d.

29. The expenditure for the same period amounted to £1,558 19s. 3d.

30. Owing to the want of funds, and other circumstances, the planting operations of the Department for the year were comparatively small.

31. The only planting carried out was that of the sowing of Wattle seeds (*Acacia Pycnantha*) on the Railway reserves at Seabrook, Burges's Siding, and Grass Valley. The ground for these was simply ploughed, and the seed sown broadcast in the usual way. Many of these germinated and are making good plants, and it is hoped more will come up during the present winter.

32. At the special request of His Excellency the Governor, the planting of spots here and there upon Rottneest Island has been undertaken by the Department.

33. A beginning was made in this work during last winter, but as the trees were of a mixed and not altogether satisfactory kind—being only the surplus stock of the nursery—nothing of a special character was attempted. Some 75 per cent. of these have grown, and will, no doubt, make good progress during the present season. Altogether something like 10,000 plants were put out.

34. Owing to there being a nice lot of plants of a strong special character raised in the Nursery this year, a special effort will be made, during the present winter, to carry out the wishes of His Excellency. At your special request an avenue of *Ficus macrophylla* and *Araucaria excelsa* will be planted round Serpentine Lake, and named Lady Smith Avenue. We have now some excellent trees of these kinds, and I anticipate that the result will be satisfactory.

35. The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, who is the responsible Minister for the Penal Settlement at Rottneest, kindly put the black labour at the disposal of the Department; so that, with the exception of the transport of the trees from Drakesbrook and Fremantle, and the expenses of the foreman in charge, the planting was carried out at comparatively little expense.

36. The planting will be carried out early this year, so as to give the plants the full benefit of the winter rains.

37. Some 800 plants of various kinds were put out on the Reserve at Point Walter. A good percentage of these have done fairly well; but, for the want of summer watering, a considerable number have died. Besides these, quite a number of the plants were destroyed at night by the usual excursionists.

38. Of course, it can be understood that small plants would be destroyed by crowds of people going over the grounds at night; but funds would not allow of these being properly protected by guards, and hence the result.

39. It is intended to continue the ornamentation of this reserve by planting during the present winter; and, in all cases, endeavours will be made to have the plants properly protected as indicated.

40. Some experimental planting of Date Palms, Carob Beans, and other hardy plants was carried out round the tanks on the Goldfields during last season; but, owing to the want of attention during the hot weather, the result was not altogether satisfactory.

41. With the permission of the Hon. the Minister for Public Works, and with the co-operation of the Engineer for Water Supply, it has been arranged to continue the planting of suitable trees round the tanks during the coming winter.

42. It is thought that the Date Palm might be successfully grown in these places, and every endeavour will be made to do so.

43. The seed of the Carnahuba Palm is being obtained, and the plants will be raised in the nursery for trial on these fields.

44. The attention of the Department was directed to the suitability of this palm for planting upon the fields by Mr. Vosper, M.L.A. From what is known it appears that this valuable palm can be successfully raised in dry, arid country.

45. The plantation of Sandalwood at Meckering, which has been enclosed and thoroughly treated for the purpose of experimenting in the conservation of this tree, is making satisfactory progress. There is a considerable number of self-sown Sandalwood trees in this area, and these have all been properly attended to by pruning, etc., and all the blank spots in the enclosure have been sown or planted with Sandalwood nuts. I watch this enclosure with much interest, and by the result of its treatment we shall gain experience in regard to the best method of dealing with our outside Sandalwood areas.

46. In order generally to put a stop to the indiscriminate cutting of young immature trees, the Government has prohibited cutting of Sandalwood trees of any sort whatever, for a term of two years, upon the following area:—Bounded on the Westward by the Great Southern Railway, Northward to Beverley by the Eastern Railway to Clackline Junction, the Newcastle Railway to Newcastle, and thence by the road to Walebing *via* New Norcia; on the North by an East line through Trigonometrical Station HK 107, Waddouring Rock; on the Eastward by a Southern line to Mindibooka (HK 196), and a South-South-Easterly line to Cape Knob, and on the South by the sea coast.

47. This area embraces all the Sandalwood country which has been cut over and denuded of its matured Sandalwood.

48. Of course there is still a considerable quantity of matured Sandalwood in places here and there within the area named, but not to any material extent.

49. Nearly all over the area there is a fairly good crop of young trees coming up, and it is hoped that the prohibition referred to will enable it to grow and gradually mature.

50. In this way it is hoped that the means adopted will enable us to maintain the export of Sandalwood as a standard industry of the Colony.

51. There is still a large area—especially round about the Coolgardie, East Coolgardie, and North Coolgardie Goldfields—upon which the Sandalwood tree grows, and this will enable the Sandalwood industry to be continued until the young trees have matured upon the area named in paragraph 46.

52. Of course, should it be found that, after the two years referred to have expired, the young trees have not matured sufficiently to be cut, the country will be further reserved for cutting until such time as it is considered advisable to throw it open for the purpose.

53. I have to acknowledge the receipt, during the year, of various samples of timbers from Mr. C. L. Hastie, of Bunbury, Mr. J. H. Gregory, of Northam, Mr. J. H. Brown, Chidlow's Wells, Mr. L. Grant, contractor, Perth, and collections of woods from the Canning Jarrah Timber Company, the Jarrahdale Jarrah Forests and Railways, Limited, the Millar's Karri and Jarrah Forests, Limited, the Gill-McDowell Jarrah Company, Limited, the Jarrah Timber and Wood Paving Corporation, Limited, and the Engineer-in-Chief.

54. At the request of the Inspector General of Schools, small samples of our principal timbers were procured from the above-named companies, for educational purposes in connection with some of the principal schools of the Colony.

55. At the instance of the Engineer-in-Chief, pile sections were sent to the Boston Harbour Trust, in America, with a letter pointing out the durability, etc., of our Jarrah timber for piles and other harbour work.

56. Samples of our timbers were sent to the Minister for Agriculture in Japan.

57. Samples of timber in the rough, and a handsome book of samples of all of our timbers, were sent to the Agent General in London. The latter was designed and carried out by Mr. William Howitt, foreman at the factory of Messrs. Bickford & Co., Hay Street, Perth.

58. I much regret to say that the services of Mr. J. H. Gregory, Northam, as a Forest Ranger, were necessarily dispensed with at the end of September last. Mr. Gregory was in charge of the Sandalwood areas principally, and the want of his services will, I fear, be keenly felt.

59. At the request of the Hon. the Minister, most of the samples of timbers brought together in our Museum have been forwarded to the Coolgardie Exhibition.

60. I am much pleased to report that all the officers of the Department have given me entire satisfaction during the year.

61. The State Nursery at Drakesbrook has been thoroughly established, and now contains something like 150,000 excellent plants of various kinds. Besides pines and other valuable timber trees, the stock includes many kinds of ornamental trees which have been raised for the purpose of distribution to schools, corporations, and other public bodies.

J. EDNIE-BROWN,

Conservator of Forests.

17th June, 1899.