

1884.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

REPORT OF A COMMISSION

APPOINTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

TO INQUIRE INTO THE TREATMENT OF

ABORIGINAL NATIVE PRISONERS OF THE CROWN

IN THIS COLONY:

*And also into certain other matters relative to
Aboriginal Natives.*

WITH APPENDICES AND A MAP.

Presented to the Legislative Council by His Excellency's Command.

PERTH:

BY AUTHORITY: RICHARD PETHER, GOVERNMENT PRINTER.

1884.

To the Honorable the Colonial Secretary.

This Report, which is marked by practical knowledge and moderation, will be carefully considered by me during the recess.

2. The Commissioners have conducted an interesting, if a difficult, inquiry, and I thank them for their services.

3. As regards the Island Prison of Rottnest, some of the recommendations made have already been adopted, and others appear worthy of adoption.

4. The Report should be presented to the Legislative Council, and published in the *Government Gazette* for general information, and I will transmit it to the Secretary of State.

F. NAPIER BROOME,
Governor.

Government House, Perth,
12th September, 1884.

Report of a Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into the treatment of Aboriginal Native Prisoners of the Crown in this Colony: And also into certain other matters relative to Aboriginal Natives.

COMMISSION

F. NAPIER BROOME. By His Excellency FREDERICK NAPIER BROOME, Esquire, Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Territory of Western Australia and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.
(L. S.)

To the Honorable John Forrest, Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Surveyor General, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Justice of the Peace; His Honor Edward Albert Stone, Judge of the Supreme Court; George Shenton, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council, Justice of the Peace; Maitland Brown, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council, Justice of the Peace; William Edward Marmion, Esquire, Member of the Legislative Council, Justice of the Peace; John Frederick Stone, Esquire, Comptroller of Convicts, Justice of the Peace; Alfred Robert Waylen, Doctor of Medicine, Colonial Surgeon, Justice of the Peace.

WHEREAS it is expedient to inquire into the treatment of Aboriginal native prisoners of the Crown in this Colony, and also into certain other matters relative to Aboriginal natives :

NOW THEREFORE I, FREDERICK NAPIER BROOME, Governor, as aforesaid, have thought fit to appoint and do hereby appoint you the said John Forrest, Edward Albert Stone, George Shenton, Maitland Brown, William Edward Marmion, John Frederick Stone, and Alfred Robert Waylen, to be Commissioners to inquire into the existing arrangements for the safe custody, proper treatment, and employment of native prisoners in the Colony, and particularly at the native prison on Rottnest Island; and into the condition of the said prison, its supervision and management, and the sufficiency of its buildings, accommodation, and staff, as well as into the results of the system there pursued.

Also, to recommend any measures which to you may appear advisable, under the several above headings of your inquiry, having regard to the health and well-being of native prisoners, to their profitable employment, to the tendency of such prisoners to escape from custody, to the inexpediency of constantly working the said prisoners in chains, and to the necessity of providing accommodation, magisterial supervision, and medical attendance for working parties of the said prisoners; and you are to bear in mind, and make a comparative statement of the expense of the system at present pursued with respect to native prisoners, and of any proposed alteration therein.

Also, to inquire into the existing method of medical and poor relief of sick and infirm Aboriginal natives at the different towns and seats of Magistracy, to consider communications received from Magistrates or others on this subject, and to suggest any improvement or extension of the system now pursued which may seem necessary, stating the estimated cost of any proposal made.

Also, to consider communications from the heads of religious bodies and others, making application for reserves of land for Mission establishments intended to confer benefit on the natives; and to consider, further, the question of the formation of native centres or stations, whether for aged and infirm, juvenile, or able-bodied Aboriginals, such as have been organised or assisted by other Australian Governments, and what part, if any, the Government of this Colony should take therein; and to state the estimated cost of carrying out any recommendation made under these heads.

And I do hereby desire and request that you do, as soon as the same can conveniently be done (using all diligence), report to me, in writing, your proceedings in virtue of this Commission.

And I further will and direct, and by these presents ordain, that this Commission shall continue in force until you shall have finally reported upon the matters aforesaid, or otherwise until this Commission shall be revoked by me; and that you, the said Commissioners, shall have liberty to report to me your several proceedings from time to time, as the same or any part thereof may respectively be completed and perfected.

And I do appoint the said John Forrest to be Chairman of the said Commissioners.

Given at Government House, Perth, this 21st day of September, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-three.

By Command of His Excellency the Governor,
MALCOLM FRASER,
Colonial Secretary.

REPORT.

To His Excellency Sir Frederick Napier Broome, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Territory of Western Australia and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.

Having been appointed by Your Excellency as Commissioners to inquire into the general condition of the Aboriginal Race of the Colony—as regards the care to be bestowed on the old and infirm, on the means to be taken to assist the young, and also the course to be followed in dealing with offenders, as well as all other matters concerning their welfare and preservation, as set forth in the

above Commission under Your Excellency's hand, dated September 21st, 1883, we beg to submit the following Report. In order to more conveniently deal with the question, we have divided the subject into the following heads:—

- I. Present state of the Aboriginal Race.
- II. Medical and poor relief.
- III. Missions.
- IV. Rottneest Island Prison, and evidence taken.
- V. General Remarks.

I.—PRESENT STATE OF THE ABORIGINAL RACE.

It is a melancholy fact that throughout Australia the Aboriginal Race is fast disappearing, and that progress of settlement by Europeans means in this Colony, and in all parts of Australia, as it does in many other parts of the world, the gradual extinction of the native races, who have for ages existed upon the land previous to the advent of the white man.

In what may be termed the Home District of this Colony, which is bounded on the *North* by the Murchison River, on the *East* by a line parallel to the coast and from 60 to 100 miles from it, and on the *South* and *West* by the sea, a great part of which has been occupied nearly fifty years, the fact that the aborigines are fast disappearing is apparent on all sides; and it is a mournful truth that, whatever is done, it appears to be an impossibility to avert this downward course.

It is often alleged, and with apparent justice, that Europeans have not done their duty to the original occupiers of the soil; and to any onlooker from a distance, or to a stranger to the Colony, this seems both true and undeniable. But, in dealing with the question, it must be remembered that the Aborigines of Australia are a vagrant race, wandering about, without any fixed habitations, without any knowledge or inclination for cultivating the soil—a race of hunters living entirely upon game and such herbs and roots as grow spontaneously, having a great dislike to remain long in one place, or to live in any habitations other than the rude huts to which they have been accustomed. The young have also strong tendencies to this roaming life, and seem most healthy when allowed to follow it; and it has therefore happened that, with every desire to assist these people, there has been met with a great difficulty in knowing how best to set about it. If, for instance, a native is ill, he has the greatest dislike to being sent to a hospital, or even to being put into a house, and prefers to be allowed to live in an open hut, attended by his friends and “doctored” by the charms of the “Boolya man” or native conjurer.

Children of the native race, too, do not seem to be strong when brought up in civilised ways, and are predisposed to pulmonary complaints; so that, however the question is dealt with, one is met by difficulties almost, if not quite, insurmountable.

In the districts north of the Murchison River, and especially that portion lying to the east of the North-West Cape, the native population supplies the principal labor of the district, and do nearly all the shepherding, shearing, stock-riding, and even fencing. They are also largely utilised as pearl shell divers, and are in every way a most useful factor in the prosperity of the settlers. A valuable contribution respecting the natives of this portion of the Colony is printed in Appendix II to this report, from R. J. Sholl, Esq., for nearly 20 years Government Resident of the North District, which has been kindly placed at our disposal.

As far as we can gather, the natives at the North-West have not very materially decreased as yet, but there are evidences that they are decreasing, rather than increasing. The greater number are in the service of the settlers, and not, as is often found in other parts of the Colony, without any fixed employment.

In the Kimberley District, which is in its infancy, the natives are being employed as pearlers and station hands; there is every reason to expect that they will prove as useful as those more to the south.

There has not been any attempt made to instruct the natives of our Northern Districts in anything but the way to work. The natives north of the Irwin, in their native state, wear no clothing; and the same occurs with all the inland tribes. This is to be very much wondered at, as it is often very cold at night, and there are kangaroos throughout the country, the skins of which would readily supply materials for rugs and cloaks.

The natives of Western Australia have, to a large extent, the same habits and customs, and are governed by laws that do not differ very much; they are also very similar in disposition, and of the same

impulsive nature. Their superstitions, too, are very numerous, and have a very strong hold upon them, appearing often nearly irresistible in their power. Their usefulness to the pioneer settler can scarcely be over-estimated.

II.—MEDICAL AND POOR RELIEF.

At the present time sick or needy natives are treated by the Government as paupers, and the medical officers in the several districts attend to them gratis, in the same way as to any pauper Europeans. Every year blankets are issued to the Resident Magistrates and Police for distribution, and, under the supervision of the Resident Magistrates, the Police and some of the principal settlers throughout the Colony are entrusted with the issue of rations to old, infirm, or needy natives. The number of natives, however, dependent on the Government for food is very small, while we believe instances of shelter being found necessary or required are very rare indeed.

With a full knowledge of the foregoing facts, we are at the outset met with a difficulty that threatens to thwart any scheme that may be devised with the object of assisting these people. The only result arrived at by us on this painful subject is, that it is our duty at any rate to see that the natives be kindly treated; that they be helped with food and clothing; that missions be encouraged; and that the old, the infirm, and the sick be provided for. The appointment of a Board for the management of all matters connected with the Aborigines, and to which all moneys to be expended on them should be entrusted, seems not only desirable but absolutely necessary; and we have no doubt, that if there were an active Board in existence, with proper means and a suitable staff, some real good might result.

The Board would communicate with all Resident Magistrates, Medical Officers, Justices of the Peace, and Police Constables, who should be instructed by the Government to consider it their duty to see to the care of the natives, and funds would be placed at their disposal for the purpose by the Board. All cases of illness, want, or infirmity would then be dealt with promptly and energetically. When natives were ill or in want, no reference, except in exceptional cases, would be necessary. The Resident Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Medical Officer, or Police Constable would be empowered by the Board to act at once, and report the matter afterwards. Permanent buildings in towns or in the country would not be generally serviceable, inasmuch as the natives do not like them. It is therefore proposed that the Magistrates, Police, &c., be authorised to have temporary huts erected when occasion arises.

We recommend that every Resident Magistrate should be also a Native Protector, and that Honorary Protectors should be appointed throughout the Colony.

These Honorary Protectors might be selected from the Justices of the Peace; and their duty would be to see that the natives in the employ of settlers were properly clothed and fed; that they were not ill-used; and that the old, sick, and infirm were cared for and fed. It would be their duty to look after the welfare of the natives generally.

We are inclined to think that Native Protectors would do a great deal of good; always provided, of course, that good men can be found to take an interest in the work, who would labor with the object of encouraging a good understanding between settlers and natives.

The difficulty of making large reserves for natives is, that they have a love for their own locality, and do not like to leave it under any circumstances; besides this, wherever the white man goes the native will be certain to hang about the station, and will not for long go away into the bush. The native soon learns to find tobacco, tea, sugar, and flour indispensable; it is therefore impossible to expect that when a country is settled the natives will for long keep away from the settlers' homes, nor is it desirable that they should do so.

A fact worth mentioning is, that after over fifty years there has not been a single instance of a free native cultivating the soil for any length of time, nor of living in a house with his family, except at a mission station, and even there only under the strictest discipline, but nearly always having a longing desire to return to their natural way of living.

III.—MISSIONS.

It seems quite certain that the best way to teach the Aborigines is through the instrumentality of men who devote their lives to the work, who are willing to endure privations and difficulties in the hope of inculcating knowledge in the natives, without hope of reward other than seeing good results in the happiness of the race on whom their labor and care is bestowed.

We would like to see all philanthropic efforts of the kind liberally supported by the State, under adequate supervision, and at each mission station would recommend a small reserve, and the means of teaching useful information which would be serviceable to the native when he reaches manhood.

We have no hope that the Aboriginal native will ever be more than a servant of the white man, and therefore our aim should be devoted to such instruction as will enable him to live usefully and happily among the white population. It seems impossible to expect that much will or can be done. The experience of fifty years finds us at a point as if we had never begun, notwithstanding that good and able men have devoted their lives and means to attempting their improvement.

It is needless for us to deal any further with this portion of the report, as the experience of the past and the outlook of the future is far from hopeful.

IV.—ROTTNEST ISLAND PRISON.

The Island of Rottnest has been, since the year 1840, used as a Prison, specially for the incarceration of Aboriginal offenders. Its insular position, and its convenient distance from head quarters, were the principal reasons for its selection. The 1st clause of the Act 4 and 5 Victoria, No. 21, clearly sets this forth, viz. :—"That such of the Aboriginal Race as are sentenced to transportation or imprisonment "may be conveniently kept, in order that they may be instructed in useful knowledge and gradually "trained in the habits of civilised life; and whereas a continued close confinement is prejudicial to their "health as being uncongenial with their ordinary habits; and whereas the Island of Rottnest seems "peculiarly suitable to their detention, inasmuch as a greater degree of personal liberty may be allowed "consistently with their safe custody, on account of the isolated situation of that place, and the consequent "difficulty of escape therefrom, &c., &c." Here Native Prisoners are worked without any chains or other impediments to escape, inasmuch as it is next to impossible to swim to the mainland, and other means of escape are carefully guarded against.

As one of the principal duties of the Commission was to inquire into the condition and treatment of prisoners at Rottnest, a stay on the Island for that purpose, and for a thorough inspection of the arrangements for the health, safe custody, and employment of the prisoners, as well as of the buildings and other conveniences connected with the prison, was made. A large amount of evidence from the officers and residents on the Island, as well as that of several of the prisoners selected from different portions of the Colony, was also taken, and is herewith annexed. (*See Appendix I.*) Unfortunately, during our visit of inspection, nearly all the natives were ill with measles, and we therefore saw them under very disadvantageous circumstances, and under circumstances when the accommodation was quite inadequate; but, as epidemics of this kind are of rare occurrence, it was not to be expected that the accommodation would be sufficient for over 100 prisoners ill at one time.

The treatment pursued with reference to the natives seems to us to be kind and humane; and discipline, as far as good behaviour is concerned, appears exceptionally good. This is to be attributed to the firmness of the supervision and to the character of the native, who, when in custody, is very amenable to restraint. While on this subject we must express our opinion that the state of the natives from a sanitary point of view is very unsatisfactory; for, while we are aware that natives in their natural state do not wash or take any trouble to keep themselves clean, we are convinced that this rule is not to their advantage when cooped up in a prison, where, without washing, they become filthy in the extreme. We found that their clothing is never washed; their blankets are scarcely ever aired; their hair is never cut; and their faces are never washed. We do not propose any elaborate lavatories, but we strongly recommend that every native shall have his hair and beard cut tolerably short; that he should wash his face and hands regularly; that he should air his blankets; and have two suits of clothing, to be changed at intervals. We believe that this would, besides being more healthy, have a civilising effect. The soap for washing can easily be produced on the Island, or the tallow exchanged for soap, which is done at present, and sold on the Island on behalf of the Government.

A great error was, we think, made in constructing the Prison with so many small cells; and we feel sure that it would have been far more healthy, and better in every way, if there had been large rooms with good fire-places and plenty of ventilation. The cells are too small for the number in them, and only 140 cubic feet is at present allowed for a native; and, as the cells are also generally badly ventilated, it is not nearly sufficient. We would therefore recommend that the cells be altered, wherever possible, and at least 280 cubic feet allowed for each native, and that large fire-places be built in as many as

possible with more ventilation from the back of the cell. It appears preferable to cleanse the floor by dry rubbing, rather than by too frequent washing, as the floors are not water-tight, and as a result the cell becomes damp and unhealthy.

Reception of Natives.—As soon as the natives are sentenced they should be given European clothing, and their native “bookas” taken from them. On the voyage by steamer they should have the chains taken off their necks, and be provided with a blanket. On arrival at Rottnest they should have fresh clothes given them, and the old ones either washed, destroyed or returned; but in no case should a native be allowed to retain either his clothes or his blanket after arriving at Rottnest. We found that it is customary to allow natives to keep the clothing they arrive with, if it is any good, and not to issue fresh clean clothing, and that they exchange this clothing from one to the other. It was owing to this that the present disease of measles was imported to the Island, as some natives from Albany came to the Island slightly unwell and were allowed to retain their clothing and exchange it throughout the whole Prison. This system of exchanging clothing is very prevalent among the natives, and is a mark of friendship, the same as exchanging dinners, which is regularly practised: for several minutes after the issue of a meal a ceremony of exchanging goes on, in which a large number of natives take part.

When a native is sentenced by a Magistrate, his native name, together with an accurate description of him, should be noted on the warrant, with his height, appearance, marks, etc., in order that he may be always easily recognised. In the absence of this rule the greatest difficulty is experienced in recognising natives, and it no doubt sometimes happens that a native has a warrant attached to him which may belong to another. An accurate description of the native is also necessary and valuable on many occasions. As a mark of friendship, exchanging is so common that the leaden number attached to each native, and which he wears either tied to the button hole of his shirt or suspended like a locket from a string round his neck, is often exchanged from one to the other, and by this means confusion arises which may sometimes even be very serious—a sentence being attached to one native which may belong to another.

Sentences.—We think some system of remission of sentence for extra good behaviour might with advantage be introduced. We think also that once a year a statement should be prepared, showing how many natives there are at Rottnest, their sentences, date of probable liberation, conduct, &c., as also a list of natives released during the year, the number received, the number of deaths, and from what cause. This return might be laid before the Legislature, and would be a valuable record in the future as well as at the present time.

Deterring effects on Crime at Rottnest.—The evidence taken as to the dislike of Rottnest by natives is satisfactory as a deterrent on crime, and seems to be a clear and undeniable refutation of statements that have been made that Rottnest is considered by the natives as a pleasant retreat for a holiday.

As a place of abode which is disliked by the natives, we think Rottnest is held in merely the same light as any other island, where the restraint, work, and discipline would be similar. The evidence of the Officers goes to prove that it is but seldom that a native is re-convicted after returning to his own country, and therefore that it has a very deterring effect.

Clothing of Prisoners.—Two suits of clothing and two blankets should be given to each native. We find that natives complain of cold during the winter, and therefore warmer clothing should be provided, as well as warmer covering for the night. The hour for rising should be sunrise all the year round. Allowing natives to wear wet clothing is a very dangerous practice and should be guarded against. We found that when they get wet in winter they have no change of clothing provided, and have to dry their clothes as best they can, and as there are but few fire-places, this is next to impossible.

Diet.—We notice an entire absence of vegetables, except rice. As there is abundance of garden ground, we think that vegetables should be grown and issued to the natives. A large area worked by the natives is used by the Superintendent for his own use. We recommend that what is known as the Superintendent's Garden be in future used as the Prison Garden, and that the produce of it be used by the natives under a liberal scale of allowance, and that the balance be disposed of for the credit of the establishment. Viewing the satisfactory evidence on this point given by the officers examined, it appears a very easy matter to grow a large quantity of potatoes and other vegetables which, after supplying the Prison, could be disposed of to the advantage of the Government.

Nearly all the manure now made finds its way into the Superintendent's garden, which does not produce anything for the Prison, and very little for the Government, except the carrots, which it appears are sometimes given to the horses.

The dietary scale does not seem a very good one, and we recommend the following daily ration for the future, viz. :— $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. flour; 1 lb. meat (uncooked); $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. sugar; $\frac{1}{8}$ oz. tea; 6 oz. vegetables; 2 oz. oat-meal or 4 oz. rice. We think no difference should be made on Sunday (at present they have no dinner), and that fishing lines and hooks should be provided for the natives, as at present they are dependent on borrowing from the white population, which they are able to do only to a limited extent. A change in the way of cooking the food at intervals, and allowing them to cook their own on Sunday, as suggested by Dr. Barnett, seems both desirable and expedient, if it can be managed.

The diet, too, might be much improved, and also an economy practised if fishing were systematically pursued on the Island. Large quantities of fish can easily be procured, and two or three natives, with an officer in charge, could as a rule, in two or three hours, obtain a plentiful supply. We think this question worthy of consideration.

Cultivation of the Island.—Ploughing or digging the land should be practised; the system of hoeing is too superficial. Manure should be made from sea-weed, and in every possible way. A better stamp of horse should be kept on the Island; those now kept are a weedy light lot, not fit for harness, and almost useless. All available garden ground should be cleared, and as many potatoes as possible grown. Wheat-growing should be discontinued, as the ground is not generally suitable. Barley and rye thrive better, and with care and good management yield moderate crops. Couch grass, if planted properly, will thrive, and will increase and improve the pasture of the Island.

With the large amount of labor, a great deal more might be done in clearing and cultivating the Island, in planting grasses, &c., if a better system were pursued; but, in order to do this, care should be taken, in appointing officers, to select men who have a practical knowledge of the work, and who could use their knowledge to advantage. An attempt has been made to grow the castor-oil tree, but at present it is impossible to say how far it will succeed. From what we saw, the plants have not, thus far, thriven well, but they may eventually do so. We think also that pines should be planted all over the Island, and, as they would probably grow well, there might be a large supply of valuable timber available in the future.

After carefully considering the question of the climate and situation of Rottnest, we are unable to recommend its abolition as the prison for Aborigines. While we feel that it has disadvantages, among which we may mention the cold in winter, and the want of fertility of the soil, and therefore the difficulty in making the labor of the natives remunerative and self-supporting, we are of opinion that the difficulties surrounding the formation of prisons on the mainland would be great and be more expensive, and would, we feel sure, also be more injurious to health than Rottnest. The great advantage of this Island Prison is that the natives can be worked without chains, and that they are allowed liberty on Sundays to roam at will about the Island. On the mainland their liberty would be impossible, and we place so much importance in this freedom and exercise once a week, that we should be sorry to recommend any alteration that would have the effect of doing away with it. In dealing with this question, we have kept carefully before us the fact that it is not only our duty to deal with these poor unenlightened Aborigines as merely the dispensers of punishment for offences committed, but we have also felt that we have a higher duty as well, viz., that during their imprisonment they shall be taught to respect the justice of our laws, returning to their native haunts benefited by those laws, and by the treatment they have received.

We are, however, bound to say that the system pursued is not calculated to have any great civilising effect. We think it is very desirable that natives who are sent to prison should be instructed in those pursuits which will be most useful to them when they return to their own country, such as carpentering, building, team driving, farming, etc.

We do not anticipate that the number of prisoners will increase at Rottnest, and it is evidence of the good behaviour of the Aborigines generally throughout our vast territory, that so few are sent to prison. At the present time there are more than usual, but they are generally from the Gascoyne and Murchison, where a continuance of bad seasons, the scarcity of game, and the absence of sufficient police supervision has, we think, had much to do with it.

The death-rate at Rottnest, as shown from the attached return, has been generally very small indeed, and, notwithstanding that during the past year an epidemic carried off a large number, evidence goes to prove that the same epidemic has raged through the North-West and Gascoyne Districts, and that it was not solely due to the climate of Rottnest.

The means of communication with Rottnest is not good, and a steam-launch is very much required.

V.—GENERAL REMARKS.

In concluding this report we cannot but be aware that our inquiries have not produced any great result. On the face of the question, it is apparent that if good could easily have been done, it would have been done long ago.

Bishop Hale devoted his time and his means to the work for a quarter of a century in this Colony, but without doing any great and marked good. The New Norcia Mission, under Dr. Salvado, has attempted and done more than any other institution, and has existed for about forty years; but at the present time there are only 84 natives (35 pure blood and 49 half-caste) at the Mission, and there is no striking evidence of its good effects (outside of the Institution itself) in the neighborhood or in the Colony.

It appears certain that any change from the natural way of living soon shows its injurious effects; and we cannot, in the face of such evidence, recommend any great change from the natural habits of the natives, without feeling certain that it will result in harm to the race, and that we are accelerating their speedy removal from the earth.

Large revenues, nearly £100,000 a year, are now raised from the sale and lease of lands which were originally possessed by its native inhabitants; and therefore it seems but reasonable that some portion of this revenue should be devoted to the amelioration of their condition.

Fifty years of settlement by Europeans has had the effect in the "Home District" of causing the gradual disappearance of the native race. We fear that this will continue, and that the forces that have been at work in the past will in like manner work in the future. We would be glad to hope that such will not be the case, and that some means may yet be found to check these baneful influences, and thereby maintain, on the soil owned and trodden by their forefathers, the descendants of the Aborigines of Australia.

JOHN FORREST, Chairman.
E. A. STONE,
GEO. SHENTON,
MAITLAND BROWN,
W. E. MARMION,
JOHN F. STONE,
A. R. WAYLEN,
CHARLES HARPER.

11th September, 1884.

Appendix I.

Evidence and information collected with regard to Rottnest Island Prison.

Commission commenced its duties 9.15 a.m., 27th October, 1883.

William Dockwrey Jackson.

1. I am Superintendent of Rottnest. I was appointed as Pilot on the Island in February, 1857, and in January, 1867, was appointed Superintendent of the Island. I succeeded Mr. Vincent.
2. There are at present 148 native prisoners on Rottnest. The Staff is at present one Chief and six Assistant Warders. There are also on the Island four white prisoners and two Reformatory boys in charge of Mr. Watson. There is also a Military guard of eight. There are 37 adult Europeans residing on the Island, viz., 27 men and 10 women, besides 27 children.
3. There are 36 cells, but six are used for European Prisoners and two as association wards. I have had five natives in a 6 × 10 cell, but as a general rule there are only four.
4. The cubical content is 550 feet.
5. Ventilation is procured by an opening over door 12 × 10 inches, and by a grating in door 8 × 6 inches.

6. There is no draught through. There is always a strong close smell in the cell during the night, especially during summer. The floors of cells are of jarrah boards, and are swept (and occasionally dry-rubbed) every morning. There are no stated periods for whitewashing, but it is done whenever considered necessary. Lime is plentiful, and none spared.

7. There have never been any complaints from the prisoners as to the smell or want of air. I have had to use the Association Wards, which have concrete floors and fire-places, as sleeping-places, and have had as many as 20 men sleeping in one ward.

8. During my experience there has not been much illness until the last 12 months. The general illness has been chest-complaints. I have prepared a statement showing the mortality during the time I have been Superintendent of the Island.

9. The white population on the Island are generally healthy and enjoy good health. Insubordination is rare among the natives. The punishment usually given is bread and water, not exceeding 3 days. I sometimes stop a dinner.

10. I think natives very much dislike being prisoners at Rottnest, and feel the restraint.

11. For misconduct, natives are sometimes sentenced by a Magistrate to irons, and have been worked about the Prison in them. These cases are very rare. The irons used are light. It had, I think, a deterring effect, and I approve of it as a means of punishment.

Natives have never been flogged during the time I have been at Rottnest as Superintendent.

12. I find a great difficulty, on first arrival at Rottnest, in knowing the individuals who come to Rottnest and applying the warrants to the proper persons. Eventually, I believe, I get the right men for the right warrants.

13. Prisoners are due for freedom on termination of their sentences, unless specially recommended for remission. There is no rule as to the time when I am to bring their names forward; it is left to my discretion when to submit their names to His Excellency. A return is made out every month, of natives due for freedom during the following month, and sent to the Colonial Secretary. A separate record is kept in the Prison against every prisoner, showing sentence, remissions, and date of discharge. The civilised natives know when their sentences expire, but the uncivilised have no idea of either the length of sentence or the date they are due for liberation.

As a rule they do not make any inquiries as to the date of their liberation. They are very pleased when they are told they are to be liberated, and pay an affectionate farewell to their friends left behind. I am not aware of any native being kept longer than his proper sentence.

14. I think imprisonment at Rottnest has a very deterring effect on crime. Very seldom a native returns to Rottnest for a fresh offence.

15. In my experience, I am of opinion that natives improve in condition and health after arrival at Rottnest.

16. There is a hospital ward capable of accommodating 8 sick persons.

17. I do not remember of late years prisoners dangerously ill being sent over to Rottnest. Prisoners are examined by the Medical Officer at Fremantle before sending.

18. I think the natives have suffered through there not being a Medical Officer stationed on the Island. The Chief Warder dispenses the medicine, which is prescribed by the Medical Officer.

19. I have not remarked that there is any difference in the strength of natives from different parts of the Colony. The natives from the North of the Murchison appear to feel the cold winds and rain of the winter more than the natives from more Southern parts, but not to an extent to affect their general health. If they get wet (which, however, every means is taken to avoid) no change of clothing is provided. The men are not sent out on wet days.

20. There is abundance of firewood allowed, but there is but limited fire-place accommodation. The clothing is warmer in the winter.

21. There is a proper dieting scale, sanctioned by the Governor, viz., 2 lbs. bread in winter, and 1½ lbs. in summer; 12 oz. of meat, 4 oz. of rice, ¼ of tea, 1½ of sugar. On Sundays they have neither meat nor rice.

22. The longest time I have known a native to be imprisoned at Rottnest is 11 years.

23. From my experience, a long imprisonment at Rottnest is injurious to the health of a native.

24. The arrangements for safe custody are: All natives are locked up in cells inside the prison walls, the entrance gate of which is also locked. A military guard, of one corporal and three privates, is stationed inside the prison night and day, armed with a revolver and side-arms. The prisoners are paraded and counted before being locked up for the night. No certificate is made to me of the numbers counted on parade by the Chief Warder. No attempts have been made by the prisoners to escape from the prison itself, but they have escaped from the working parties, but never escaped from the Island. They have been most infrequent—not exceeding, I think, one a-year.

25. Each party is in charge of a warder, and sometimes as many as 40 men under one warder. The warder is unarmed, and if anything occurs a report is sent in by a native. I remember three attacks on warders by individual natives, but the warder has never been injured. I do not believe that there has ever been a pre-arranged attack, on the part of the prisoners, to attack the white population. I consider the present arrangement for custody complete. I think the civil guard necessary for the protection of the residents on the Island, and for the safety of the establishment. I think the present guard preferable to armed warders.

26. Each Sunday the natives have permission to roam at will over the Island, as also on all holidays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. They appreciate this privilege, and I think it is very beneficial to them. They do not get a dinner on these holidays, as they are supposed to be able to obtain it from the bush. I believe, generally speaking, they get a sufficient dinner from their fishing and hunting. They are not supplied with lines, but some of them borrow from the white population. I think lines and hooks should be provided.

27. They are well behaved when at liberty on holidays; they return at the regular hour, and it is very rare that any of them misconduct themselves when allowed to roam at will over the Island.

28. The Warders are at the station; the Guard is on duty every Sunday or holiday, and I do not think an organised attack on Sunday would be likely to be successful.

29. I think it is necessary for the safe custody of the prisoners to have them locked up at night. When prisoners are refractory, they are put into cells and punished by me with bread and water, under the Prison Regulations, which I produce.

30. Working parties are in charge of a Warder, and occasionally visited by the Chief Warder and myself.

31. Occasionally I visit the prison at night. No one else does. The civil guard is stationed inside the prison. A bell is provided to sound an alarm.

32. The prisoners are employed at quarrying, clearing land, collecting fire-wood, salt works, farming work, carting, building, &c. Rye, wheat and barley are grown here, also hay. There are 60 acres under crop, 100 acres under crop of castor oil, planted this year and prospering satisfactorily. Some of the old cleared land is worn out, and has not been cropped of late. It is now overgrown with bush. Manure is not used to any extent, but all that is

available is used. The land lessens in productiveness as it is used, as manure is not obtainable. There is no great extent of new land available for cultivation. Irrigation has not been practised. Fresh water is not plentiful, except round the lakes and near the Establishment.

33. Vegetables grow well at certain times of the year, that is, during the winter.
34. Horses thrive on the Island. Sheep and cattle for a short time do well, but they will not do for any length of time.
35. Artificial grasses have not been tried to any extent, but couch grass has grown fairly well in a few places.
36. All sewage, etc., is carried away daily to pits and afterwards utilised as manure.
37. Grubbing hoes are used for cultivating, scythes and reaping-hooks for cutting the crops.
38. The natives are industrious and able to do a good hard day's work.
39. The vine flourishes here and the olive trees also, but neither has been attempted on any large scale.
40. Six natives are continually employed at the Salt Works, and occasionally a large number in addition are employed carrying fire-wood to the works. A large quantity of salt can be made, but there is no great demand for it. I believe the salt manufactory is remunerative, and I would recommend its continuance.

(Signed) W. D. JACKSON.
27-10-83.

Adam Olver.

1. I am Chief Warder at Rottnest. I have been 13 years on the Island as a Warder. My duties are the charge of the prison, the safety of the prisoners, to assist the Superintendent, and take charge of the Island during his absence.

2. There is always a strong smell in the morning, and some of the civilised natives have complained of it. The "itch" is very common among the natives; and influenza and chest complaints are prevalent in the winter; and the more severe the winter, the more deaths occur from chest affections.

3. I believe natives very much dislike Rottnest. They seldom return, except the more civilised natives for drunkenness and other minor offences.

Natives have never been flogged while I have been at Rottnest.

4. A great deal of trouble is found in finding out the right warrants for the right persons, and sometimes a considerable time elapses before it is satisfactorily arranged. I believe, however, that eventually the right persons are attached to the right warrants. The uncivilised natives have no idea how long they are to be imprisoned, but frequently make inquiries through the civilised and more intelligent natives. The civilised natives have generally a very good idea. The natives all long for their own country, and pine very much to return. They are very pleased when they get their liberty.

5. It is not part of my duty to bring under the Superintendent's notice the good conduct of prisoners, in order to get a recommendation in their favor for the remission of their sentence; but I often do so, when I see a deserving case.

6. I think when natives arrive at Rottnest in good health they improve in condition. For a few years, say three, they do very well, but after that time they seem to get depressed and seem to suffer in health. In many cases up to three years, they go away better than they came. I think the natives from the Murchison are strongest and most cheerful.

7. The natives from the North of the Murchison appear to feel the cold more than those from further South, and complain of the cold. I think warmer clothing is required for winter.

8. There are not sufficient fire-places to accommodate the prisoners during winter.

9. The food is sufficient, I think; but on Sundays they do not, I think, have sufficient to eat.

10. I think a few armed Warders would be preferable to the Military Guard. I do not myself see any danger to be apprehended.

11. The arms are kept under lock and key on the Superintendent's premises. I have a duplicate key of the chest, but not of the door of the room in which the chest is kept.

12. The only check on the numbers of prisoners is when they are numbered morning, noon, and night; but no receipt is given or taken by the Warders.

13. The supervision of the working parties is very slight. The Warder is left to himself. I have a party of prisoners to look after. There is no check on what a Warder does when out with his party, as far as I know. In the event of my seeing any signs of insubordination I would march the party back to the Prison.

14. The prisoners are employed in cultivating the farm, cutting and collecting wood, making road to Lighthouse, salt works, etc. They are good working fellows, and can do a good day's work, and are willing and anxious to please.

Wheat, barley, rye, and hay are grown. Rye and barley are only fair crops this year. The land is worn out and overrun with weeds.

15. There is a good deal of light land capable of growing rye, which can be cleared and brought under cultivation. The system of hoeing is in my opinion unsuitable, and I have always condemned it. I am sure many of the fields are fit to be ploughed. Manure is much required; and more might be obtained by keeping more stock and collecting seaweed. The result would be most beneficial.

16. By irrigation much might be done with the water that is available.

17. Vegetables thrive on the island on the damp soil, viz., carrots, parsnips, mangel-wurzel, beet-root, and turnips. Potatoes grow well when planted in a marsh and in July. There are several suitable spots for gardens on the Island not now used as such.

18. Horses and pigs thrive well on the Island; but sheep, cattle, and goats only for a limited time of the year.

19. Couch grass might, I think, be grown if proper paddocks were made; but it has not been much tried yet.

20. The closets are emptied twice a week. The sewage, etc., is cast into a pit and used for the gardens. The natives do not get any of the vegetables from the gardens. The horses and pigs get the carrots. At times vegetables are sold to the warders; some go to waste. By systematic management enough vegetables could be grown to supply the native prisoners.

21. Of late years but few complaints have been made by prisoners. Sometimes they ask for more clothing. I think the treatment of native prisoners on the Island is humane and kind, with the exception of the deficiency in clothing during the winter.

22. Every opportunity is given to natives to make complaints, and if made, all needful attention is given to them; but I believe only the civilised natives understand fully their right to make complaints.

23. Natives often get wet in winter, and have no change of clothing. They have to dry their clothes as best they can. They generally get wet in winter. No mattress or bed or straw is allowed except to natives in hospital. The medicines prescribed by the Medical Officer are compounded by me, without any extra remuneration, and I have also to attend to the sick natives. The Medical Officer rarely compounds medicines for the natives, but he writes the prescriptions and I make them up.

24. I think if the prisoners were in large rooms with large fire-places, it would be better for them. Natives who die are buried in their blankets, according to their own custom, by their friends. The grave is from 5 to 6 feet deep. There is no truth in the statement as to pigs raking up bodies.

25. The water supply from the well is not very good, and I think a tank is very much required. My quarters are very small, and the smell from the yard is offensive, and comes into my quarters through the three windows opening on the yard. There are four rooms, one of which is very small. My family consists of myself, wife, and four children. I believe my health is suffering in consequence of the offensive air from the prison yard coming into my quarters.

26. There is no Superintendent's Order Book in use; all orders are verbal.

27. I consider the present staff ample for all present requirements.

28. I think fish-hooks and lines should be provided for the natives by the Government.

(Signed) ADAM OLIVER.

Commission adjourned 7 p.m.

Monday, October 29th.

Samuel Nicholls Walcott:

I am catechist and schoolmaster to the European population of the Island. I have nothing to do with the instruction of the natives. I have been over five years on the Island. I have had a life-long experience in the Colony, and have had large means of observing the habits and customs of the natives. I do not think there is any cruelty practised in dealing with the natives here. I think, however, they require warmer clothing in the winter, for they suffer from cold. I think they very much dislike Rottnest, not because of the Island, but because it is a prison. I know from experience that natives look with dread to being sent to Rottnest, because of the imprisonment, the discipline, and the work. I do not think they are over-worked, but they are worked regularly. I think natives improve in physique after being at Rottnest, but I think a long incarceration has a depressing effect; though my attention has not been particularly called to it. I think that natives, being accustomed in their natural state to vegetable diet, would be much benefited by vegetables being given them regularly; and this Island is capable of growing any quantity. Large quantities of potatoes can easily be grown on the Island, the land being well suited to their growth. Cereals can be grown in certain places. Some of the old land is worn out, but there is plenty of land that can be cultivated, which is at present over-grown, or new land which requires clearing. Most of the manure is used for the Superintendent's garden, but the Officers have been each allowed a small quantity during the past two years. Water obtained by sinking is generally plentiful on the Island, and could be used for irrigation if labor was available. I do not think the water is good on the Island. Occasionally, when the wind is from the direction of the cess-pit, a nasty smell is experienced.

(Signed) S. N. WALCOTT.

Examination of Aboriginal Natives.

Bob Thomas:

I was born at Kojonup and brought up at Beverley. I can read a little. I have been two years on the Island. I was here for twelve months before, about five years ago. I do not like Rottnest, because I am not the same as if I was in my own country. If I was out I would be my own master. I would rather be imprisoned on the mainland, as this is a bad place in the winter: it is cold, and when a man gets wet here he has no clothes to change. The food too is not as good as I should get if at liberty; there is plenty, but no change, we get the same from one end of the year to the other. Generally we get no vegetables, but about 18 months ago on an occasion we got a few small potatoes from the Superintendent's garden. We had them three times, we liked them very much. All the natives like potatoes and carrots very much. There are two others besides myself in my cell; it is close and the smell is bad in the morning. The officers are kind. If I observed anything of which I wished to complain I would inform the Superintendent; but I think the uncivilised natives would be afraid to complain. We never complain if the food is bad. Every native gets the same quantity and it is ample, and is equally distributed. There is no reward for good conduct; but tobacco is issued to butchers, salt-worksmen, etc. On Sunday we miss the dinner. We would like the hours of liberty (9 to 4) on Sunday extended in summer. I think Rottnest is dreaded by natives. I do not wish to come back again. I would rather work here without chains than on the mainland in chains. Natives do not like the sea voyage.

Aboriginal Native Widgie Widgie Johnnie:

I belong to "Ekacootharra," or Pyramid Station, in the North District. I am here for killing a native. I do not like Rottnest, it makes me ill. I have been two winters here. I came in the steamer. I had a chain round my neck all the way down. I was all right when I was in my own country. I used to be a pearl-diver, but latterly a shepherd. I get enough to eat of meat, the bread is too hard and too much cooked and makes me ill, the rice and tea are good. I am cold in winter, my blanket no good, it is old. I do not know when I am going back, but I shall be very glad to go. I expect to go by and by.

Aboriginal Native Charlie:

I come from the Lower Gascoyne. I have been here 4 months. I was sentenced to 6 months for stealing a pipe from Mr. R. Shaw. I picked up the pipe and gave it to a native policeman. I did not know to whom the pipe belonged. I do not like Rottnest. I am sick of it. I have been sick and do not eat much. I came in the steamer

from Gascoyne, and had a chain round my neck all the way to Champion Bay, when it was taken off. I expect to go to my country soon, and shall be very glad. I sleep in a cell with 3 others. It is cold in winter. My blanket is old and no good. I have been a pearl-diver and horse-rider for Mr. Brockman. I used to like diving, but do not now. I work in the garden with several others.

Sambo, Aboriginal Native :

I come from Gulleway, which is East of the Irwin. I was sentenced to life for killing a native. I have been here before for stealing flour some years ago. I do not like Rottnest, because it is a bad place. I do not like it because I might get bad and die. I have not been ill here. I am very cold in winter. I have not enough clothes. At night it is very cold. My blanket is old and thin. The food is not good, there is something wrong with it. The bread is not good, there is salt or something in it. No potatoes. I like potatoes. I do not know when I am to get my liberty. I do not like Rottnest at all. I would rather be away, even in chains, than here.

Brandy, Aboriginal Native :

I have been here some time. I do not like Rottnest. Too many kill'em. Too many make'em ill. I came here for killing a sheep. I saw the sheep had strayed, and my woman said to me "kill it," and I did so. I am cold here in winter. At night it is cold. I have a good blanket now, but I had a very bad one before, all the winter. I get plenty to eat.

Harry, Aboriginal Native :

I live at Victoria Plains. I came here for killing a native. I have been here twice before. I do not like Rottnest. I am afraid of catching the complaints of others here, and might get ill and die. I do not like being locked up at night. I have not been ill here lately. The food is not much good; the bread is not very good; the meat is good; the rice is not good. The food is always the same, no change, and we get tired of it. I am cold in winter; the clothes are not sufficient, and no change is provided. In winter I do not sleep well, I am too cold. I have a good blanket. I would rather be on the mainland, even in chains, than over here. This is not a good place, natives get ill here and die. The Officers are kind to natives. I like the holiday on Sunday. I have never had any vegetables, and have never seen anyone else have any. I would like them, but cannot get them.

Aboriginal Native Benjamin :

I come from Eyre's Sand Patch. I am here for stealing sheep; another blackfellow "coax'em" me. I have just arrived here. I little bit like Rottnest. I am going back at lambing time. I get plenty to eat. I am warm, but have a rotten blanket. I only half work'em. The Warders are kind and not sulky. I will not return to prison when I once get away from this. I walked from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany naked, with a chain on my neck. My neck was sore from chain. I knocked up from the long walk. Policeman Truslove no good. He hit me for knocking up. Policeman Wheelock a good fellow, nothing sulky. I like ship, I was not sick. I do not like walking so far. I came with a bullock chain round my neck from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany. When it rained my neck was very sore from the chain. I have the same blanket I came with a fortnight ago. I had a cold in Fremantle. The Doctor saw me at Fremantle, when I was ready to come to Rottnest. I was ill, and when I got here I was very ill. My trousers and shirt I came from Albany in are now in the Prison. I gave them to a native this morning. I did not get any from the Prison. What clothes I have on were obtained by inter-change with other natives. I had no clothes given me from Eyre Sand Patch to Albany. I was quite naked all the way, no clothes or blanket. Three of us came from Fremantle, we were a little ill. One of us was left behind at Fremantle, sick. He has now come over. My companions have the same clothes and blankets that they came with. My clothes and blanket were obtained at Albany.

Adrien H. Courderot :

I am Clerk and Superintendent of the Salt Works. I have been 15 years on the Island. I have only the six men engaged at the Salt Works under my orders. They have always been well-behaved. Natives generally are stronger after a residence on the Island. I think they pine during the first year's imprisonment most, more especially if they think they are wrongfully imprisoned. I think the officers are kind and humane to the natives, and I have never seen any ill-usage. The food issued to the natives is, in my opinion, ample. They have no vegetables, except rice. There is a book kept, showing all produce of the Island, including wheat, barley, rye, hay, and salt. I keep a book showing all stores issued; it does not, however, show which native prisoner has received the issue.

I keep an Occurrence Book, and enter the arrival of all prisoners. On the arrival of a prisoner, as a matter of course, fresh clothing and a blanket are issued to him. There have been exceptions to this rule when we are short of clothing. We are not short of clothing, and have not been so for some months. Those who come from the settled districts generally arrive with clothing, which they pass round from one to the other. I keep an account of all stores received and expended. I do not think it is absolutely necessary to have a resident medical officer on the Island.

Samuel George Butcher :

I am pilot at Rottnest. I have been nearly 3 years on the Island. I have never had anything to do with the management of the natives. I have noticed them and observed their actions. I have often brought them over from Fremantle. They were generally clothed with a blanket or bag, for decency's sake. I have often seen the natives buried. The graves are about 5ft. deep, and the corpses were wrapped in their rugs. I have never seen or heard of any cruelty to the natives. I have often known of instances of kindness to natives by the Chief Warder. I have not known of any improper acts in connection with the management of the Island. I have noticed that the natives have been badly clad in the cold weather. I have a garden and grow my own vegetables. I do not ever buy any from the Superintendent. Vegetables grow well in the winter. Every precaution is taken to keep the boats according to the Regulations. There is no truth whatever in the report as to pigs rooting up dead bodies of natives. There is sometimes a bad smell from the cess-pit, and I notice it in my quarters, but it is not often. I am allowed a

little manure for my garden, under an instruction from Governor Robinson. Potatoes I have grown on the Island keep as well as they do ordinarily. Pumpkins keep equally well as elsewhere. I have never heard of any vegetables being sold, and the Superintendent has told me that he is not allowed to sell them. I am not aware that the natives get any.

Natives sometimes borrow lines from the whites on Sundays. When the numbers had increased so much last year, I felt insecure till the guard came. Yet it was only the feeling, for I never observed anything to make me think there would be any attack. I think Rottnest could supply Fremantle with vegetables, if it were used for vegetable growing.

(Signed) S. G. BUTCHER.

John Watson :

I am a master carpenter, in charge of the Reformatory. I have been nearly four years on the Island. I think that the winter clothing ought to be issued earlier, not later than the beginning of May. There is no regular time for issuing clothes. I noticed that up to June this year the natives had very scant clothing: one party in particular even in rags till early in June. I do not think the winter clothing sufficient. It consists of a kilt and common cotton shirt. Some of the men are allowed a blue serge shirt, but not half of them. Some of the natives have moleskin trousers, but I should say not one-third of them have. Some have canvas jumpers, but I have known scores not to have them; the cotton shirt being the principal thing they wear. I think every native should have a good serge shirt and a pair of moleskin trousers and a covering for his head. A good many have no covering for the head. The natives are roused at daylight all the year round. I think it is too early for them in winter. I think seven o'clock in winter would be early enough, and go to work at eight a.m. I have observed that it is very cold in winter here, and the natives feel it very much. I think they should be allowed out earlier on Sunday in the summer, as the best fishing grounds at the west end are too far off for them to reach in the present hours. I think fishing lines should be provided by the Government; and if a boat were provided, in charge of a Warder, any quantity of fish could be obtained by the natives themselves during the week, and it would be a large item of food for the natives. I think the treatment of the natives is kind and humane. The treatment of sick natives is now very different to what it was some time ago. It is now good; but prior to six months ago, they never received any extra comforts when sick, but they were limited to their daily rations. I have seen pigs in the cemetery, but have never seen them rooting. I do not believe they ever rooted in the cemetery. They used to go in and out when they liked, as there was no gate. I have often seen burials of the natives; the graves are about five feet deep. The cesspit is offensive during the summer, when the wind comes from its direction. I think the Island is healthy; but the water does not agree with every one. I get my supplies from the mainland. I sometimes purchase from the Government Stores. I have a garden and grow my own vegetables; but sometimes get them from the mainland. I obtain meat from the Government Stores. Vegetables grow splendidly, all kinds, and keep as well as elsewhere. Onions grow well, but have not been much tried. Natives do not work in any of the gardens, except the Superintendent's; there is generally a party there, off and on. I think this year a Resident Medical Officer would have been an advantage to the natives, as in the winter the Medical Officer cannot always get over quickly. I am of opinion that natives can be taught to be useful as tradesmen, either as carpenters or masons. They are good hands at quarrying and building; and several have been most useful.

(Signed) JOHN WATSON.

William Dockwrey Jackson, recalled :

I hand in the following Books :—

1. Issue of stores.
2. Record of produce grown on the Island, and how disposed of.

I do not keep an Order Book. I produce the Book of General Orders for the Regulation of Rottnest Penal Establishment. I carry out the Rules as far as practicable. I have no special authority to depart these Rules, and only do so when it is not practicable to carry them out. There are no further rules than those contained in the Book of General Rules produced. All native prisoners received at the Island are accompanied by a certificate from the Visiting Surgeon to the effect that they may be admitted to the Island without risk to themselves or to the other prisoners. I recently received some prisoners sentenced from Albany. There were four. On the 10th October, I received three, and on the 25th I received one. I received the Visiting Surgeon's certificates, in accordance with Rule 33. I believe I can produce them. They had all clothing on them when they arrived, and blankets. They were allowed to retain and use the clothing and blankets, and have them still. If natives arrive with bookas or skins as clothing, it is destroyed; but if with European clothing, they are allowed to retain and use it. Rule 45 I have taken to mean the destruction of skins and bookas used by natives, and not to refer to good clothing. Clothing provided for in Rule 45 is issued to them as I think they require it, and not at stated periods. I have no stated period for changing the clothing. Every native in the prison has a blue shirt belonging to him. Cotton shirts are not issued as a rule, but at the beginning of last winter the stock of blue shirts ran out, and cotton shirts were issued in lieu thereof. I was not informed that so large a number of natives were coming, and did not know of it till they arrived at Rottnest.

The natives are not fond of vegetables, and prefer rice to potatoes.

There is no system of airing the blankets, but those of the sick are turned out daily.

Rule 42 has never been cancelled. I never keep two prisoners only in one cell, but I often put more than two. I have sometimes sold the produce of the garden on the Island for the benefit of the Government. I never have sold any garden produce except on the Island.

(Signed) W. D. JACKSON.

Samuel Nicholls Walcott, recalled :

I think the natives should have a change of clothing, so that when they get wet they would be able at once to get dry clothing, instead of having to wear their wet clothing. I also think they should have soap, and be made to wash their faces. They like to have soap to wash with and a comb for their hair. I think all this would have a civilising effect, and would be beneficial to their health. Abundance of soap ought to be provided. I think the hair should be trimmed, though not too short. I think white-washing should be regular and systematic.

(Signed) S. N. WALCOTT.

Wednesday, 28th November. Commission met at 11 a.m.

Henry Calvert Barnett:

I am Colonial Surgeon at Fremantle and Medical Officer at Rottnest. I have been in that capacity for eleven years. I have had special opportunities of watching the health of native Prisoners at Rottnest. From my experience of Rottnest I have formed an opinion that Rottnest is not a fit place for the detention of natives belonging to the tropical portions of the Colony. My reason for this opinion is formed from the fact that last winter, a winter of exceptional severity, natives were brought from a warm climate, in over-crowded steamers, during cold and wet weather, and placed in an over-crowded prison with total change of diet, surroundings, and occupations. Depressed by confinement and sickness, and then subjected to the most remarkable and sudden variations of temperature, it is not strange that they have succumbed to this epidemic of influenza, and to the bronchitis and consumption which followed on it. I do not think a prison on the mainland in the same latitude would be preferable to Rottnest. I think imprisonment in their own districts would be less risk to their healths. During this winter the epidemic of influenza, which is usual every year, has been more severe at Fremantle among the white population.

During my experience at Rottnest, I have observed that a continued confinement—anything over 12 months—materially affects the general health and depresses the spirits of a native. This applies to all parts of Australia where I have had considerable experience of judging of the natives. The late epidemic of influenza, which was fatal to so many, broke out suddenly after the arrival of a number of natives from the North, and I think they brought it with them. Natives arriving from the North generally arrive very badly covered, having only a small blanket. They frequently arrive in an emaciated condition with colds, coughs, and sometimes more important pulmonary complaints, as they have a wretched time on board ship. On the passage from Fremantle to Rottnest natives are often exposed to rain and wet, and get a severe drenching. There is a great loss of time in going and returning to Rottnest, and on several occasions the weather has been so bad as to be too rough for the Harbor Master's boat to venture. I do not remember any case in which loss of life or other material injury has resulted from a Medical Officer not being resident on the Island, but I think better means of proceeding and returning from the Island should be provided. I have visited the Island already 16 times this year, and the visits occupied, in all, 20 days. I brought to the notice of the Government, in writing, that the prison was overcrowded some time ago, and during the influenza epidemic.

Excepting the last winter, during the period when the epidemic prevailed, the death-rate during the last 11 years has been small, and the general health of prisoners good, considering the number confined. There have been epidemics of influenza often at Rottnest before, but not nearly so severe as the last. The epidemic of measles was taken to the Island by natives who caught the disease on board the steamers. The first case of measles that came under my notice was an employe of the steamer. I always inspect natives before they are sent to Rottnest, and give a certificate that they are fit to be sent to the island. From my experience of the treatment of the natives, I consider it has invariably been kind and humane, and very great consideration is shown for them. The diet, I think, might be improved by the addition of vegetables, which could be grown on a large scale on the Island. I think also a larger allowance of animal food should be given and that no difference should be made on Sunday. I think, with a diet better arranged, the natives would be healthier and stronger for work. The diet is a very monotonous one, and if possible a change in the way of cooking should be practised. I think fishing might be carried on for the benefit of the natives. In cases of illness all needful medical comforts are provided for the natives. I think that if the Sunday rations were given out uncooked, it would be a good arrangement and very acceptable to the natives.

I think there should be two suits of clothing for each native, in order that a change may be provided for them in winter when needful. I think clothes should be washed at intervals. It is injurious to a native to work him in chains.

As Colonial Surgeon at Fremantle, I look upon all natives as paupers, and I always attend to them when they come to me or when I am informed by the police.

(Signed) H. CALVERT BARNETT,

Colonial Surgeon at Fremantle.

*Abstract Return of Aboriginal Prisoners at Rottnest Prison
from 1st January, 1878, to 30th September, 1883:—*

Year.	In Gaol 1st January.	Received during the year.	Total.	No. of deaths.	Discharged during each year.
1878	88	58	146	9	59
1879	78	28	106	3	52
1880	51	30	81	—	47
1881	34	60	94	1	31
1882	62	157	219	10	55
* 1883	149	120	269	† 59	47
				82	291

* Up to 30th September only.

† 2 in January, 1 in March, 3 in May, 3 in June, 25 in July, 24 in August, 1 in September.

Return showing the quantity of Salt sold, and the Firewood received, from 1872 to 1882, inclusive.

SALT.					FIREWOOD.													
Date.	By whom Sold.	Quantity.		Price.		Amount.	Date.	Contractor.	Quantity.		Price.		Amount.					
		Tons.	lbs.	£	s.	£	s.	d.	Cords.	Feet.	£	s.	£	s.	d.			
1872	The Superintendent, and by the Agent, E. Solomon	130	1232	4	0	522	4		1872	From Randell & Co.	50	...	1	1	52	10	0	
1873		100	1802	...	...	403	4		1873	...	59	...	1	1	2	19	0
1874		103	2016	...	...	416	2		1874	...	72	100	1	1	76	3	9 $\frac{3}{4}$
1875		128	726	...	...	513	6		1875	...	105	76	1	1	111	17	0
1876		136	1120	...	...	546	0		1876	...	168	40	1	1	177	14	6
1877		100	1008	...	...	401	16		1877	...	107	20	1	1	112	10	0
1878		83	1904	...	...	335	8		1878	From Atwell	54	60	1	1	56	14	0
1879		First half-year by the Supt., and by the Agent, E. Solomon	82	440	328	16		1879	...	35	76	1	4	43	5	0
		Second half-year forwarded to L. Samson & Son	25	100	0										
1880		Forwarded to L. Samson & Son	69	276	0		1880	...	15	60	1	2	17	0	0
1881			101	...	3	15	377	15		1881	...	49	50	1	4	59	5	4
1882		73	...	3	15	273	15		1882	...	25	40	1	3	29	2	1	
Total sold during 11 years		1134	1462			4494	6				743	10			739	0	8	

RECEIPTS.				EXPENSES.					
		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Sold 1134 tons 1462 lbs.	...	4494	6	0	Firewood	...	739	0	8
Expenses	...	1625	7	8	Boating, at 5s. ton	...	278	10	0
Balance	...	2868	18	4	Trucking, at 1s. 6d. ton	...	42	15	0
Expenses for food	...	598	2	6	Bags	...	453	12	0
Balance	...	2270	15	10	Pans and repairs	...	111	10	0
					Total Expenses for 1134 tons Salt	1625	7	8	

October 29th, 1883.

A. H. COURDEROT,
Superintendent of Salt Works.

From H. C. Barnett, Esq., J.P., Colonial Surgeon, Fremantle.

SIR,

Fremantle, December, 1883.

I have the honor to make the following suggestions relative to the diet of native prisoners on Rottneest Island:—

Daily rations.—Flour, 16oz; meat, 16oz; vegetables, 6oz; rice, 4oz.

The supply of tea and sugar to remain as at present.

The natives who are in health, and able to take the Sunday holiday, might do their own cooking, excepting the rice, which they could not cook in the bush.

An occasional change in the method of cooking would lessen the monotony of the diet. I think the prisoners should be supplied, say every 3 or 4 months, with hooks and lines; and that, if possible, a supply of fuel should be given to them about twice a month, as an extra.

I have, &c.,

H. C. BARNETT,
Colonial Surgeon, Fremantle.

The Honorable John Forrest, C.M.G., Perth.

From Mr. John Watson, Master Carpenter in charge of Reformatory, Rottneest Island.

SIR,

Perth, 21st April, 1884.

I venture most respectfully to submit to your consideration some suggestions relative to the technical training of the aboriginal native prisoners confined in the Rottneest Penal Establishment.

I feel convinced that, if the necessary facilities were afforded me, I could teach many of them the trade of carpentry; the consequence of which would be that on their liberation they would be able to earn a good living, and would also be of the greatest use to the pioneer settlers in the more distant parts of this Colony.

What would be required to enable me to carry this idea into practical effect would be a liberty given to me to select my men, who should be not too old to learn, nor undergoing any very prolonged sentence; also a supply of tools.

I feel sure, from my knowledge of, and the interest I take in, the welfare of the native prisoners, I could guarantee to turn out several men each year, well qualified to work as bush carpenters; and this, I think, you will admit, would be a great improvement upon the present system of treatment.

My practical experience of Rottneest will, I think, be sufficient to assure you that any promises I may make would be fulfilled to the utmost of my ability.

Hoping to receive a reply at your earliest convenience.

I have, &c.,

JOHN WATSON,
Officer in charge of Reformatory, Rottneest Island.To the Honorable John Forrest, Esq., C.M.G., Surveyor General,
and Chairman of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the
treatment and condition of the Aboriginal Native Prisoners of West Australia.

Appendix II.

*Replies received to Queries regarding Native Missions and the Aborigines
of the North-West.*

Extract from letter, dated October 9th, 1883, from the Resident Magistrate of Carnarvon, C. D. V. Foss, Esq.

“Employment of native prisoners at Carnarvon. I do not think that it would answer to employ native prisoners in this district, the expense of supervision would be very great, and the natives could only be worked in chains. I do not think that for the future very many natives will be convicted from this district, as they are now aware that if they commit crimes they will be punished.”

C. D. V. FOSS,
Resident Magistrate.

From His Lordship the Bishop of Perth.

DEAR SIR,

Bishop's House, Perth, 26th May, 1884.

In reply to your note of the 16th inst., I beg to state:—

1. That the Native and Half-caste Home in Perth has been in existence for about 14 years. The present matron will have been in charge for twelve years in October next.

2. The number of children in the Home in 1875 was twenty-three, the number since admitted has been twenty-eight, making in all fifty-one (51), viz., 20 boys and 31 girls.

At a small branch Home, established in the Vasse District in 1878, the number admitted has been 12.

3. The whole number of deaths have been ten (10). These were all pure natives, and most of them sickly when admitted, two having been cripples, and one imbecile. No half-castes have died in the Home.

4. The number that has gone out to service has been sixteen (16), viz.: nine girls, and seven boys (one of whom, a pure native, died on his first voyage at sea).

5 & 6. The number of children at present in the Perth Home is twenty-five, viz.: 14 girls, and 11 boys. The number admitted in each of the past five years has been—in 1879 two; in 1880 five; in 1881 four; in 1882 two; in 1883 seven; in 1884 one. The number that has died has been—in 1876 two; in 1877 three; in 1880 two; in 1882 two; and in 1884 one. The number at present in the Vasse Home is 12. No deaths have as yet occurred there. None have as yet gone out to service.

7. The children who have thus far gone out to service in the Colony are reported as having, in most cases, given satisfaction, though with three of the girls we have had some trouble. One girl has since married respectably, one has returned to her parents, one is in service at the Girls' College, and six are in service in families in the country. Of the boys, two are employed as shepherds on the Ashburton, two at the Printing Office at the Swan Orphanage, one has returned to his friends, and one is employed in the general farm work.

8. I enclose, herewith, the two last printed reports of the Native Home, which will give some further particulars as to their management and work. I am not quite satisfied that the system of sending out the girls at so early an age as 14 to service in the country districts is the right one. It would, I think, be better that the arrangements of the Home should allow of their remaining there some years longer under good industrial training, their labor being utilised in such ways as to make the Home to some extent self-supporting.

The above replies supply the facts asked for in reference to the Native Home only from the date of Bishop Hale's departure. I understand that several children had previously been sent by him from the Home to Poonindie, but I find no record of the number so sent.

The Honorable J. Forrest, C.M.G.

I have, &c.,
H. H. PERTH.

From the Reverend F. Dominguez, Prior of the Benedictine Native Mission at New Norcia.

DEAR MR. FORREST,

New Norcia, 30th May, 1884.

In reply to yours of the 15th, I beg to say that the number of natives at present in the Mission are 84: 35 of them are pure blood, the others half-caste. The married couples are 20. Of these some are both, man and woman, pure blood, and they have children; some are both half-blood, and they have children; others the man black and the woman half-caste, and *vice versa*, and they have children too. This year 10 children died of the effect of the measles—no adult died of measles.

Last year two died, and in the year before last, two or three. I cannot give an exact account of former years, as Bishop Salvado took with him the Memorandum Books and manuscripts, so I cannot offer you much statistics of the past.

Natives sometimes go from the Mission for a time, with leave, and generally they return at the time appointed. Sometimes I send them away when they do not do what is right, especially grown persons, and when they return I receive them again; but I never send away any of the children or very young ones. Begging to be excused if I do not satisfy enough your wishes.

I remain, &c.,
F. DOMINGUEZ.

10

From R. J. Sholl, Esquire, J.P., formerly Government Resident, North District.

MY DEAR MR. FOREEST,

Perth, Western Australia, 14th July, 1884.

In reply to your letter of 28th ult., in which you request me to state my views as to certain matters in connection with the aborigines, I beg to say that I do so with great pleasure; although, taking into consideration the names of the gentlemen composing the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the whole subject, it seems to me that my individual opinions will possess little or no value.

I will, however, endeavor to answer the questions you have submitted to me, in their proper order.

Query No. 1.—The effects of the pearling industry as a civilising agent?

I have no doubt but that the employment of aborigines as divers has had a beneficial effect. It has in a great measure, if not entirely, stopped constant tribal conflicts, and converted a state of continued warfare into one of comparative peace. Natives from all parts of the North district meet together on board the boats, work together, mess together, and live together. Intimacies and friendships are formed which continue when they disperse at the end of the season. Formerly, natives who visited the country of strange tribes did so at their peril; now they can do so in safety, and although acts of violence occur occasionally, yet they are the outcome of personal hatreds rather than the result of tribal custom.

Native divers have during the season regular, light, and not uncongenial work. They are well clothed and fed. For days together the state of the weather compels them to be idle, and when they do work it is only for a few hours at a time. They get their meals at stated intervals, and on board most boats have the run of the flour cask, for when fed regularly they are moderate eaters. When the boats are anchored near shore it becomes necessary, however, to place them on rations, otherwise they would steal the flour to supply their land friends and acquaintances.

By becoming habituated to industrial pursuits, by constant communication with their comrades and employers, and by the discipline necessary in all labor establishments whether afloat or ashore, they are rendered useful members of society, contributing materially to the general wealth of the community, and improving their own condition as a portion of that community.

Query No. 2.—Whether pearling is injurious to health?

I am of opinion that, as a rule, divers are more healthy than shore natives, and that deaths from disease are fewer. The nature of their occupation places them, as well as their employers, in greater peril than landmen, and accidents are, as a matter of course, more numerous; but deaths from natural causes are less frequent than on shore. Natives of weak constitution are useless as divers, and would not be engaged in that capacity.

Query No. 3.—Whether the mortality is greater among the pearling natives than among those who remain on shore?

I have, I think, already replied to this question. I may, however, add that the shore natives suffer from those diseases of the chest common to the aborigines throughout the Colony, and which are aggravated by their custom of casting off their European clothing at night, and exposing themselves to every change of weather. The mortality from bronchial and pulmonary affections is greater than from any other cause, and is greater on shore than on board the boats, principally because pearling is carried on during the hot months.

Query No. 4.—Are natives decreasing in the North-West?

At Roebourne, Cossack, and their immediate neighborhood, the number of deaths exceed that of births, owing to the irregular lives of the women, who congregate about those towns, while their husbands are away in the boats; but in the country there does not seem to be any perceptible decrease.

Query No. 5.—Whether natives should be prohibited from hanging about towns, except under proper engagement?

Speaking, as in fact I have done throughout, of the Nor' West Natives, I beg to state that they do not hang about towns, except when the towns are situated within their own country, or when they are under engagement, and therefore I consider that they should not be prohibited, but be allowed the privileges of white men in this respect. As a rule, pearling natives, during the off-season, attach themselves to their employers wherever they may reside, whether it be town or country, preferring white man's food to bush fare. They often decline to go to their own country, and when they do go, generally return after a few days absence. During the slack season they obtain employment in various capacities, principally at station-work; and good station hands they make, many being shearers, teamsters, stockmen, shepherds, milkers, fencers, knock-about-men, and domestic servants. Drunkenness, the great temptation in town, is more rare than among southern natives, thanks to the pearling; their employers finding it to their interest to prevent them from indulging, however sparingly, in drink. I allude to male natives only, the females being more prone to this vice, obtaining liquor from their white companions. The magistrates and police, however, manage generally to make an example of the principal offenders, *i.e.*, those who give the natives spirituous or fermented drink.

Having thus briefly replied to your queries, I will, in conclusion, refer to the sick and aged natives. I cannot but think that natives who have been for a number of years in the service of an employer have some claim on that employer in sickness, or when past work from old age, and I am glad to believe that this claim is in many instances recognised; but still there would remain a large majority of natives who have not been in regular employ, and who in their distress should be relieved at the public cost. They should receive medical attendance, shelter, food, clothing, blankets, and such other necessaries, or even comforts, as their condition might, in the opinion of the District Medical Officer, require.

Some 1,800 of these people are in the service of settlers and others between the Murchison and the Fitzroy. In no other part of Australia have their services been utilised to such an extent; and constituting, as they do, so important a section of our industrial population, they are surely worthy of the kindest and most favorable consideration.

Believe me, &c.,
ROBT. J. SHOLL.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1884

