

SURVEYOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE.

RABBITS.

No. *2914*

189 *3*

Date *1884. 6. 27* Received

From *Vermin proof fence*

(Victorian Border)

Subject:

*Papers connected with
V.P. Fence on Victⁿ Border.*

Vide

Acknowledged

Answered.

Enclosures

Copy of the Surveyor
General's report to the
Honorable the Commissioners
of Crown Lands relative
to Rabbit and dog fence
on the Victorian boundary

Dated March 17th 1886

W.A. place in my
envelope for SE.

W.A.
18/11/86

Alberts
27/1/1893.

During my recent visit to the South East, attention was given to the subject of rabbits and wild dogs, more or less infesting the whole of the country lying to the west of the east boundary of the Province, and between that line - the River - Murray lakes Alexandra & Albert, the Coorong and the sea coast.

I find first, that many years ago that rabbits existed upon an island called Rabbit Island on the Coorong West of Magrath's flat - they did not appear to spread however, at times all but disappearing and again affording sport to people going to the island for a little rabbit shooting.

Second. That until about 7 years ago - rabbits tho' known to be abundant on the east side of the boundary, were not seen to the west of that line.

Third. That subsequently they covered the boundary in thousands spreading over the South Australian country, settling for a time upon the grassy portions of the desert, and gradually finding their way by these and the Murray flats to the better grassed lands on the River - the lakes - the Coorong and the Coast.

Fourth. That at the present time there are but few rabbits in the scrub and heath but that numbers have made their habitat upon the grassy flats and better lands in some cases to an alarming extent.

Fifth. That on occupation some little time ago of the Mallee country and low plains in Victoria, the Wild Dogs were found to be very abundant as well as rabbits, these dogs following up the steps of the

of the rabbits gradually crossed the Border mostly within the desert country lying to the north of the Sabiana, and extending Westward and Northward to the river, with the result that large losses were incurred by the Pastoral Tenants, Mr. Gall to an extent of between two to five thousand sheep, and the Hensley's at Pinneroo nearly 20000 sheep, in fact the country has been all but abandoned, Mr. Gall having removed his stock and left the Station, Mr. Butler at Garra having also removed his, altho' the run is capable of carrying 30,000 sheep if free from Wild Dogs, and at the time of my visit to Pinneroo there were but two flocks - shepherded over country in every way unfit for such purpose, and the yards surrounded by dogs ^{during the} at night as was apparent from their howling and from the fact that the only recent tracks ^{upon the roads} were the pads of Wild Dogs, as they were unaccompanied by either man or horse tracks. -

Sixth. The means taken by the residents and lessees to destroy the rabbits and dogs are various but mostly inadequate, all are working however more or less, but they urge that the Rabbits & Dogs cross the boundary as fast as they are driven out from Victoria and that their efforts are in vain and will continue so, so long as this is permitted and crown lands adjacent to private property are infested.

Seventh. The Government have at the present time sixteen rabbit destruction parties in the south east to be increased in a few days to twenty parties, and each party at a total cost including supervision and all at an average of about £45/- per month for each party, and the means employed are all available namely poisons, traps, snares, guns, dogs nets fencing, burning.

Burning filling in holes &c

Eight, The operations of the Government parties are successful, and on the Crown lands being cleared, lessees under Miss. leases and others of that character and owners and occupants of private lands upon all of whom notices have been served, will be liable to have Government destruction parties placed upon their lands should they fail to destroy ^{the} rabbits in terms of such notices, and it is proposed to demand immediate payment for such expenses at the end of each week, and to resort to law even to the extent of the sale of the land should it be necessary. These vigorous means it is hoped will be supported by the Hon. Commissioner and result in inducing action in destruction of rabbits on private and leased lands, where, up to this time supineness or indifference have been all but invariably manifested.

Ninth. I was met at Tatiara - Bordertown - by deputations from the Shire Council of Howan in Victoria and the District Councils of Victoria Tatiara & Wirrega. The former had in view of the construction of a fence from the River Murray to Tatiara, constructed in such a manner as to keep out both dogs and rabbits, as they assert that as both are now as common to S. Australia as to Victoria, they have but little chance of success unless combined action be taken, and that as half the cost will be borne by Victoria, and the object is one of mutual advantage, without which the country on either side of the boundary cannot be successfully occupied, they hope and trust that the Government of South Australia in conjunction with the Government of Victoria will undertake to fence the Boundary in a thoroughly

a thoroughly efficient manner, and that during the present season, as delay is fraught with increased loss to both colonies and the longer the work is put off the greater will be the combined loss to the respective states .i.e. to the state by or through non-occupation of the country, and to the lessees from want of returns for the existing expenditure, and in the increased cost of construction from the fact that such work will be rendered more onerous if existing wells fall into disrepair, and the means of transport becomes more costly, by the absence of settlements.

The district councils urged that the fences be erected for both purposes, and at once, as otherwise they could not occupy and cultivate the lands with profit, they pointed out, where they had destroyed over and over again thousands of rabbits, and that the infested localities were now as numerously occupied by rabbits as before, and also where fences had been erected the absence of Rabbits on the inside of fence and numbers on the outside, was a convincing proof of the necessity of their erection where wanted, and is the strongest proof that they were most serious, they offered to pay to the Government 5% on the total expense of a barbed wire new rabbit proof fencing round the ^{two} districts this interest of course being per annum.

Fifth. I promised the deputation I would report fully to the Hon: Commissioner and recommend compliance with their request, if subsequent examination ~~satisfied me that~~ justified their statement, and I may say that careful examination satisfied me that in no cases were the statements exaggerated and that further that so far as the efficacy of the fence and

fence and its necessity was concerned, the Government of Victoria had admitted both, as contracts have been let for fencing off the Mallee country from that to the South in Victoria - to an extent of 88 miles in three tenders at from £92. to £100. per mile

Eleventh. The question to be considered is how far the Hon. Commissioner can recommend his colleagues to incur this expense, that it is desirable there is no doubt, but whether or not it is expedient to incur this cost at the present time, at all, is for the Government to decide.

Twelfth. As regards the lands to the South of the Tatiara, I cannot now advise the Government to incur any expenditure on account of a boundary fence, most of the lands for a depth of twenty miles are private property, the land first class, the owners wealthy and perfectly competent to destroy vermin, and if this duty is not undertaken by them, it can be done at their cost by the Government, in manner by law provided, a similar remark applies to the lands lying between this belt of good land and the sea, much of it is in private hands, and a good deal leased upon low terms upon condition including the destruction of Rabbits, I do not consider therefore that any expenditure should be incurred on this passing account for any of the lands lying within the schedule of Reserved districts shown by dark neutral tint upon accompanying plan marked "Boundary Plan" nor upon the land lying to the south of its production eastward to the province boundary, by the South boundaries of the Hundred of Wirrega and Tatiara, but I do recommend the Hon. Commr. to consider

to consider seriously the propriety of at once securing ^{the} cooperation of Victoria, to construct a fence capable of keeping out rabbits and Wild Dogs, from the South boundary of the District of Tatiara to join the fence erected by the Pastoral lessees on the East boundary of the province near the River Murray, and to extend that fence round the S.W. and Northern portions of the districts of Tatiara and Mirreya as suggested by their councils and upon the terms named, the cost of the fence in question from the S.E. corner of the district of Tatiara to Cudmore's fence on the East boundary a distance of one hundred and thirty eight miles will be not less than (£19,000) fifteen thousand pounds, half of which will be borne by the Government of Victoria,

Rumours say this fence can be erected at a less cost, but the Victorian contracts are from £92, to £100. per mile and Mr Cudmore's fence erected close to the River & with every convenience costs £85. per mile.

I have carefully inspected most of this country and feel sure that the work cannot be done for a less amount, and that it can be most cheaply done by the department, from the undulating and sandy nature of most of the country and from frequent fires, it is absolutely necessary that the fence should be practically proof against fires, as the country must be periodically burnt to be made use of for pastoral purposes, & to combine the two fold objects of being Rabbit and Dog proof must be made of iron standards with five wires and netting at six ^{inches} into the ground and four feet above, the Barbed wire being still further above the netting as shown in sketch upon next page, the straining and steadying

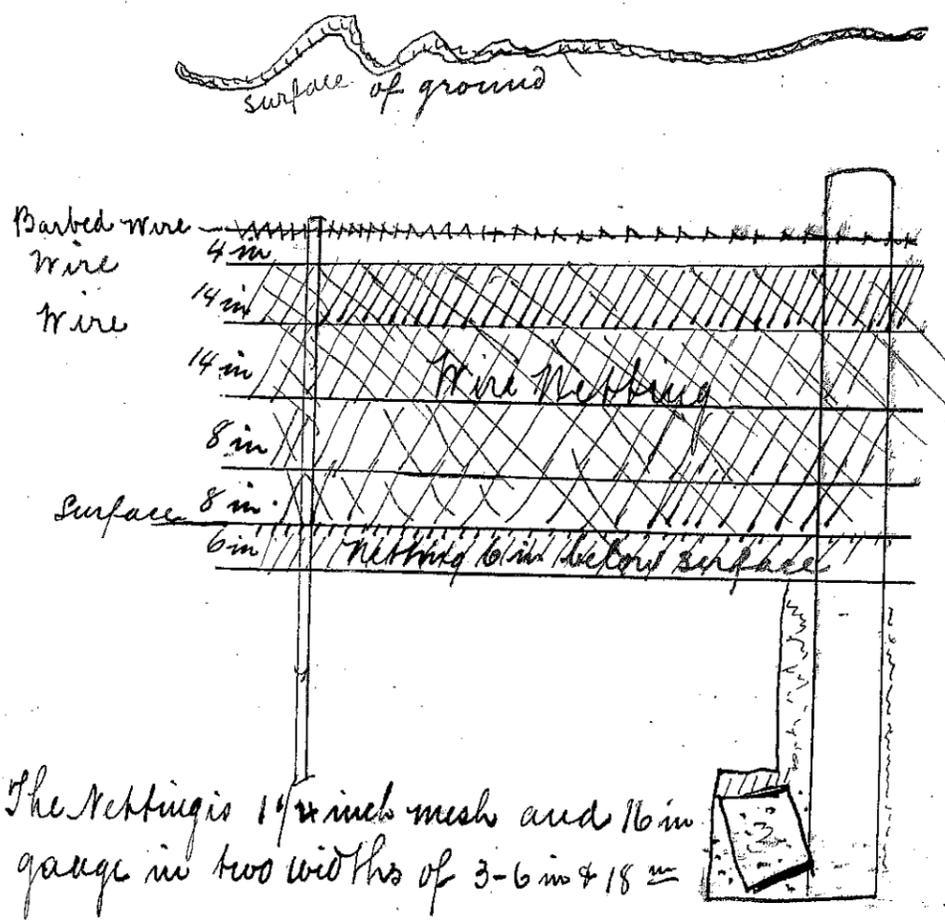
and stading posts must be of charred and barked stringy bark set 4 feet into the ground. Iron strainers and posts would not do as in many cases, the hills are steep and close together the contraction of the wire in ~~winter~~^{winter} would draw the whole concern out of the ground; ^{for yards} in the middle of the narrow valleys the enlarged sketch shews design of fence the smaller the nature of the undulations referred to, the necessity for so strong a fence, is that it must resist not only the large marsupials but also cattle and horses going at some speed, and coming suddenly in contact with the fence, in the scrubby and heathy country, the reason why stringy bark posts are suggested, is that it only chars and rarely burns by passing fires, more especially if the bark is removed, and the posts will be inserted so as to prevent much expense, and drawing by contraction of the wires.

If this country is not fenced it cannot be occupied with profit, and will be abandoned, at present the rental received from the portion affected North of reserved districts, and districts of Tatiara and Wirrepa is £4338.- a fair interest upon the amount proposed to be expended, and this sum will be increased by the extra stock carried, as tho' the country is not by any means good, there are good patches and it grows good wool. Many of the lessees near the river are fencing off the rough heath country by rabbit proof fencing but this only protects locally whilst the boundary fence will protect generally, it may be that refusal ~~of~~ on the part of the government to erect this fence may induce lessees to do so, as the cost would in some instances

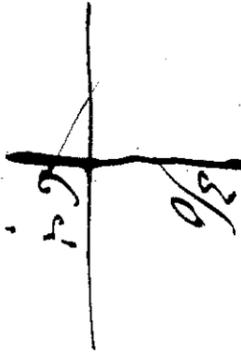
some instances be repayable by the government at the expense of the lessee as in Mr Cudmore's case, but this is doubtful and any gap left would render the district liable to be infested as before, this remark may also apply to lessees in Victoria, but this is also of doubtful result as the leasing appeared to be contingent upon the erection of the fence.

Thirteenth, As regards enclosing the districts of Patara and Wirrega, this is also recommended, its necessity is painfully apparent on the ground and the Councils would doubtless do it at their own cost and charge an interest by way of rate but for their absence of means

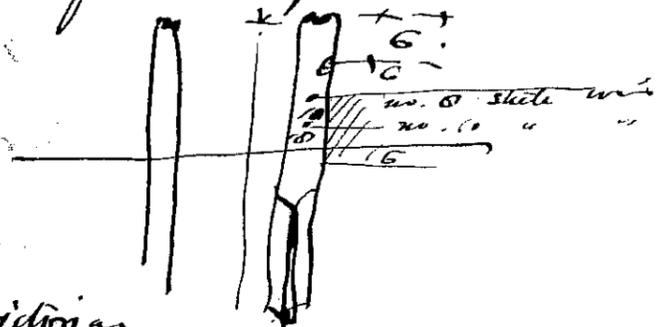
(signed) G W Cocher,
 14:3:86 Surveyor General.



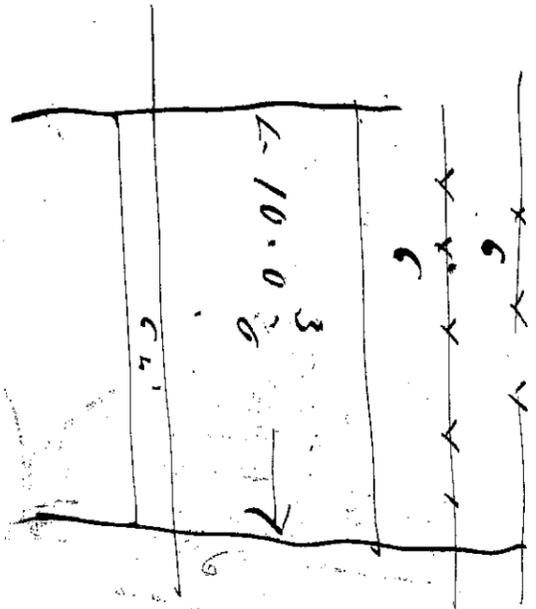
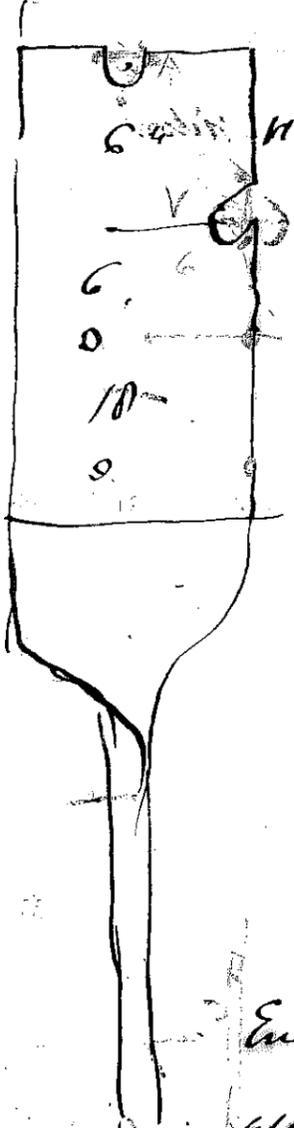
The Netting is 1 1/2 inch mesh and 16 in gauge in two widths of 3-6 in & 18 in



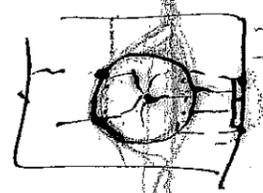
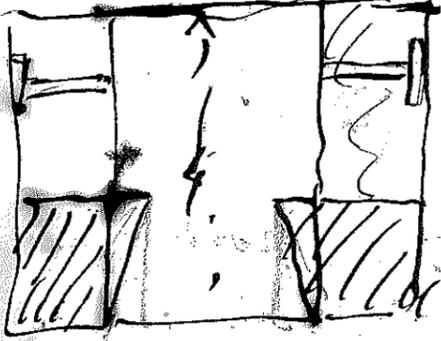
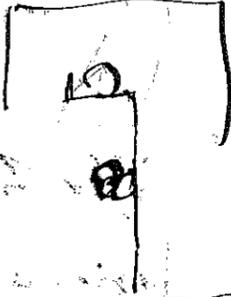
Standards 10 feet apart
 1/4 x 1/4
 pins for



Notes: 3' 6" 16 ft apart



Every 5 ch. 1 string post
 4/6 in g. 8' 6" over all



Shanty in post 1/4 in
 3' 6" in ground every

5 (80) 16
 posts to a mile 5 ch.

6600
 5200
 16
 512 standard

12" top barked & chipped
 shims

OG 6' 6" top
 shanty