

# **TRANSVAAL FOREST REPORT**

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Transvaal Forest Report by D. E. Hutchins

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**D. E. HUTCHINS**

**TRANSVAAL  
FOREST REPORT**



TRANSVAAL

FOREST REPORT

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## PREFACE.

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I arrived in Pretoria on August 3rd, having on the way seen some of the timber plantations near Johannesburg. On the 4th I had an interview with Lord Milner at Johannesburg. On the 5th I left on a tour through Ermelo and the New Scotland District, returning *via* Lake Chrissie, Pan, Middelburg, and the Delagoa Bay Line.

Various sites for plantations were selected, and it being urgent, on account of the lateness of the season, that these plantations should be begun at once, I submitted a preliminary report on the areas selected.

On the 14th August I proceeded to Potchefstroom for the selection of a plantation site there, returning to Pretoria on the 16th. On the 18th, I visited the Groenkloof Plantation, and on the 19th left for Pietersburg and the forest country beyond Woodbush and Haenertsburg, returning to Pretoria on the 27th August. I visited Irene the same day and again the following day regarding arrangements for the proposed central nursery there. Thence I proceeded to Johannesburg, visiting the Meteorological Office and inspecting the trees in the Park, the Lippert Plantation at Braamfontein, and Mr. Hume's Pinetum.



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## TRANSVAAL FORESTRY REPORT.

### PLANTATION SITES SELECTED.

#### ERMELO.

I visited this in company with the Director of Agriculture, and it was arranged to demarcate out from the town lands 2,000 acres for a timber plantation; in demarcating the plantation ground the depth of soil to be well tested by digging pits to not less than three feet. The rainfall at Ermelo is not such as to allow of good results on shallow soil, which, therefore, as far as possible, must be excluded from the boundaries of the plantation areas. Though a somewhat irregular area will increase the cost of fencing, it will add to the beauty of the plantation (which is an object prized at Ermelo), and an irregular boundary will afford more shelter for stock. The irregular boundary will further have the advantage of allowing the trees more space to draw from the subsoil moisture of the adjoining ground during any time of severe drought.

A good site was selected for a nursery of about 10 acres in extent. The nursery site has a sufficient supply of water and a walled enclosure where the seed tins can find the necessary shelter.

Below the ten acres of the nursery site, ten acres for lucerne or other forage crop to provide for the plantation mules was also selected. This second ten acres is low-lying and well-watered; but somewhat too frosty for nursery purposes.

*Rainfall.*—According to the returns furnished me at the Meteorological Office in Johannesburg, the mean rainfall at Ermelo amounts to only about 25 inches. I am inclined to think, however, that the actual yearly rainfall is higher, probably 30 inches, in which view Mr. Legat concurs.

The following were the figures given me by the Meteorological Office :—

1896	..	..	..	27	inches
1897	..	..	..	23	..
1898	..	..	..	29	..
1899	..	..	..	25	..
1900	..	..	..	23	..
Mean	..	..	..	25.4	inches

#### GOVERNMENT FARMS IN THE NEW SCOTLAND DISTRICT.

There are various farms in the New Scotland District, which, having a favourable rainfall and good soils, should be definitely reserved for forest purposes. The time at my disposal did not permit me to visit more than a portion of these farms. I recommend that the following should now be reserved for forest purposes, and the list be added to as soon as the Forest Department is in a position to make a more detailed inspection —

Sihanahana, Newcastle, Sunnyside, Umpilusi, Bonnybraes, Usutu, Gem, Rothesay, Ring-kink, Florence.

#### OS-HOEK AND FARMS ON THE SWAZIE BORDER.

To examine these farms individually would necessarily require some time, as the ground is precipitous, transport difficult, and the work of the examining officer necessarily slow. The point which can only be settled by a detailed examination is whether the rocky nature of the ground and the inaccessibility of the locality is compensated for by an increased rainfall. With this view the farms should be visited and reported on by a competent Forest Officer as soon as may be. If any large proportion of Os-Hoek and the adjoining farms are found suitable for forest purposes the whole block should be declared demarcated forest, and placed under the Forest Department to be utilised according to circumstances, care being taken that the revenue from grazing permits is not notably less than if the farms had been leased or sold in the ordinary way for grazing purposes. It may be possible to afforest large areas here at little cost with Swazies as "Forest Cultivators" and the natural reproduction of forest trees from small plantations on selected areas of good ground. The whole must of course be fire-protected. This, too, might be done at a cheap rate with a good Resident Forester on the spot, speaking Kaffir, and settled in a house with 20 acres of farm and garden ground to help him to live on a moderate salary, say £150 or £200 per year.

Thus, with the natural reproduction of such hardy trees as pine and wattles, together with the planting done by native forest cultivators, it may be possible to gradually clothe with forest this rugged but well-watered country. It is too inaccessible for the expense of regular plantations. From the pamphlet appended it will be seen how the Cluster-pine has spread self-sown in a similar locality in Cape Colony. I attach also a sample of the Forest Cultivators' permits used at the Cape.

*Forest Cultivators.*—Where there are natives who wish to live in the forest, they can often be turned to account to the great benefit of the forest. The most