

MAITLAND MERCURY.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 1849.

THE NEWCASTLE BREAKWATER.

IN our last we published the report brought up by the committee appointed to inquire into the state of the breakwater at Newcastle.

The result of the inquiry is, on the whole, satisfactory; for although there are at the present time no less than nine breaches in the breakwater, several of which are nearly through to low water mark, the concurrent testimony of all the witnesses examined goes to show that though immediate and extensive repairs are necessary, "the breakwater is, in all other respects, in a satisfactory condition—that every year imparts to it an increased stability—and that, consequently, the repairs, however costly, will not be thrown away, or transient only in effect." The evidence hardly leads to the conclusion that the cost of effecting the repairs immediately necessary, and of afterwards keeping the breakwater in repair, will be very heavy; for although it may take a gang of men twelve months to make good the existing breaches, a much smaller force would be sufficient to preserve the breakwater when once the necessary repairs are efficiently executed.

Be the cost, however, what it may, the government are placed in this position with regard to the work—the expense of preserving it must be incurred, or the expense of its construction must be forfeited. And the witnesses examined bear strong testimony to the beneficial effects which the breakwater has already produced on the port of Newcastle, and to the necessity for its efficient preservation with a view to the security and further improvement of the harbour.

The report shows conclusively that the trade from the Hunter and New-

the trade from the Hunter and Newcastle is sufficiently extensive to render the preservation and security of Port Hunter a matter of general importance. The amount of tonnage at present engaged in the local trade of Newcastle is considerable, and is on the increase; and when steam communication with India is established, a considerable augmentation of this branch of our commerce may safely be calculated on. No authentic records of the Hunter River trade are at present in existence; but the returns published in our own columns show that nearly one-fourth of the total quantity of wool annually exported from New South Wales Proper is shipped from the Hunter, and a still larger proportion of the tallow. The quantity of articles sent from the district to Sydney for home consumption is also very considerable: the Hunter is in fact the granary from which the metropolis chiefly draws its supplies of grain. These facts prove, we think, that the preservation of the port through which all this trade must pass is not a matter of mere local concern, but one which affects a very large number of the community, resident in Sydney and the neighbourhood, as well as in the Hunter River District. The attempt to class a work of this character with water works, or any others of purely local use, borders on the ridiculous.

We trust the government will carry out the suggestion of the committee, and cause a complete survey to be made of the breakwater and harbour, not only for its immediate guidance, but to furnish authentic data for testing, at some future period, the real effects and utility of the breakwater.

We cannot close our brief notice of the labours of the committee without acknowledging the ability and care with which the inquiry entrusted to it has been conducted. The report is distinguished by its accuracy and

has been conducted. The report is distinguished by its practical, business-like spirit, and by its entire agreement with the evidence taken by the committee, and is drawn up with very considerable ability.