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ST. HELENA.

REPORT FOR 1920.

(For Report for 1919 see No. 1039.)



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No. 1084.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1920.

I.—FINANCIAL.

(A) REVENUE.

The revenue for the year, exclusive of a grant-in-aid of £2,900, amounted to £10,225 12s. 0d., being £1,854 1s. 4d. more than in the previous year, and the largest amount collected since 1905. The increase was mainly due to a surplus over estimate on Customs owing to the arrival of two vessels carrying coal, which had to land their cargo here owing to fire.

Under "Miscellaneous Receipts" an increase of £910 15s. 0d. is accounted for by contributions from the Government Flax Mill and refund of passage money.

The revenue under the head of "Post Office" suffered, as was expected, in consequence of a decrease in the demand for stamps by philatelists.

(B) EXPENDITURE.

The expenditure during the year amounted to £12,175 4s. 0d., or £742 18s. 9d. more than the total for 1919. Public Works Extraordinary came to £814 5s. 0d., as compared with £227 10s. 11d. in 1919. This excess was due to relief works taken in hand owing to post-war unemployment. The work done on the roads was, however, essential to their upkeep in any case.

(C) ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

On December 31st, 1920, the Colony's liabilities exceeded its assets by £422 3s. 5d., an improvement of £948 8s. 0d. in the Colony's financial condition, due to the surplus in the year's working.

Under Assets the sum of £4,494 1s. 6d. still stands against the wreck "Papanui," on which the Colony pays interest at bank rate. This is unsatisfactory, but the question is under consideration, and it is hoped that some satisfactory arrangement will be arrived at for the removal of this persistent charge against the Colony's revenue.

(D) CURRENCY.

Bills on the Crown Agents amounted to £16,574 11s. 3d. during the year. Imports of silver coin came to £500, and exports to £150.

II.—TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRIES.

(A) TRADE.

Revenue.

The Customs revenue for the year under report amounted to £4,424 16s. 2d., as against £2,838 4s. 9d. in the previous year, giving a substantial increase of £1,586 11s. 5d. in 1920.

This increase is due, partly to more labour being employed by the reopening of two Flax Mills (Government and "Broad Bottom") which had been closed down in the previous year, and the arrival towards the end of the year of two vessels with fire in their cargoes of coal; resulting in the coal being landed, and paying duty at 1s. 3d. per registered ton. The revenue derived from these two vessels amounting to £506. It is satisfactory also to record that small increases occurred under every sub-head of Customs Revenue.

Expenditure.

The Customs expenditure for 1920 amounted to £644 15s. 7d., as against £487 15s. 1d., showing an increase of £157 0s. 6d. This is more than accounted for by the refund of export wharfage overpaid on fibre and tow shipped during 1920. This refund amounted to £214 0s. 2d. as against £48 12s. 7d. in 1919.

Imports.

The total value of imports in 1920 amounted to £67,441, as against £44,084 in 1919, being an increase of £23,357 in 1920. This large increase in value is not only due to larger imports, but also to the greatly increased first cost of several articles. Increases in value appear under almost every item, mainly as follows: Beef and pork (salt), £585; beer, £550; butter and margarine, £481; tobacco, etc., £555; flour, £6,393; grain, seed and oilcake, £2,634; oilman's stores, £5,434; sugar, £2,503; spirits, £660; and wine, £406.

The principal decreases appear under leather, £184; lubricating oil, £156; paraffin oil, £342; rice, £500; stationery, £519; and tea, £183.

Rice could not be imported during many months in 1920, and the large decrease in stationery is mainly due to the Eastern Telegraph Company's Station here having installed automatic instruments which use less paper.

Exports.

The value of exports during the year amounted to £41,857, as against £30,878 in 1919, showing an increase of £10,979. This is principally due to more than double the amount of tow being shipped in 1920 than in the previous year.

Fibre and Tow Exports.

1919 :	603 tons valued at	27,108
1920 :	838 tons valued at	38,795

Giving an increase of £11,687

In addition 117 coils of St. Helena rope were exported, valued at £391.

(B) AGRICULTURE, STOCK, FORESTS, AND GARDENS.

The year under review was an unsatisfactory one from an agricultural point of view. The summer was exceptionally dry, only just over half-an-inch of rain falling in the two months November and December, and the winter was cold and dry. Crops altogether could only be described as fair.

Small growers suffered severely. One ton, 18 cwt. of seed potatoes were imported for their benefit, but, owing to the high cost in England, growers were able to purchase them in small quantities only. It appears very difficult to get the small farmers interested in production, and land generally is not efficiently cleaned for crops. Endeavours have been made to stimulate tree-planting, and a large number of seeds have been collected and planted in many localities. Fruit culture has been neglected, and this cannot be considered surprising in view of the immense amount of damage done to all kinds of fruit by the Peach Fly, a satisfactory antidote for whose depredations is much required. 1920, in fact, has been a year of insects, potatoes suffering badly from worm, and vegetables from grubs and caterpillars. There is no doubt that a larger quantity of many agricultural productions could be grown, such as mealies, beans, coffee, &c., which would tend to lessen the dependence of the people on imported food, and greater attention might profitably be given also to the breeding of pigs. Everything possible is being done to promote production.

The sale of fruit from the Maldivia garden, inclusive of the balance in hand on 1st January, 1920, amounted to £87 4s. 7¼d., and the payments from this fund to £84 11s. 8½d.

The Government pasture lands at "Botley's Lay" produced a revenue of £80 8s. 1½d., against an expenditure of £75 9s. 4d.

The following average number of animals was maintained on the Lay in 1920:—

<i>Sheep.</i>	<i>Oxen.</i>
372	33

(C) INDUSTRIES.

Fibre.—The Government flax mill worked for 186 days during the year 1920, as compared with 74 in 1919, producing 95 tons of fibre and 55 tons of tow, as compared with 40¼ tons of fibre and 27 tons of tow in 1919.

The average prices obtained on the London market were £54 15s. 0d. per ton for fibre, and £36 15s 0d. for tow.

As may be seen from the comparative weights of fibre and tow, flax was still being cut much too young, and in spite of the satisfactory prices obtained the supply was even then so short that the mill was only able to be employed two or three days a week. This was most unsatisfactory, as it is impossible to make a profit, even with a good market, if labour costs are continuous and production intermittent. Freights also were extremely heavy, and will become prohibitive in the near future should any fall in the price obtainable for fibre take place.

As a result of the year's working, the mill's surplus of assets over liabilities on 31st December, 1920, amounted to £9,195 15s. 11d. as compared with £11,374 12s. 10d. on the corresponding date of 1919. This shows an approximate decrease of £2,178 16s. 11d. This apparent loss in working is, however, largely accounted for by grants of £2,100 having been made to the Colonial Government from the mill during the year, viz., £400 towards the general revenue, £500 for relief works, and £1,200 to the general revenue; this last named amount having been sanctioned for the year 1918, not paid in during that year, but brought to the credit of the Colony's account in 1920.

Private Mills.—Messrs. Solomons' mill at Sandy Bay ran for 302 working days and milled 1,312 tons of leaves, producing 155 tons of fibre and 90 tons of tow. Their mill at Broadbottom worked for 126 days and milled 486 tons of leaves, producing 52 tons of fibre and 30 tons of tow.

Messrs. Solomon employed 95 males and 7 females at their two mills, while Messrs. Deason employed 82 males and 28 females.

Messrs. Deason Brothers' mill at "Hutts Gate" ran for 311 days during the year and milled 1,740 tons of leaves, which produced 140 tons of fibre and 110 tons of tow.

Lace.—Shortly after the departure of Sir Harry Cordeaux, in June, Messrs. Solomon established a lace depôt in Jamestown, and at a later date a lady opened a lace stall there. In view of these efforts to conduct the industry by private enterprise, which were considered a step in the right direction, the Government Lace School has not reopened.

(D) SHIPPING.

The number of vessels calling at the Island during the year under review was 37, being nine more than in 1919. All of these were British, with the exception of three American, one Greek, and one Norwegian. The following war vessels visited the Colony: H.M. Ships "Lowestoft," "Birmingham," and "Dublin," also H.M. Tugs "St. Aubin" and "St. Bees."

In addition, 26 vessels were sighted at the Station, of which number two traded with licensed traders.

Twenty-four vessels entered and cleared at the Port of Jamestown, shipping and discharging 7,426 tons, as compared with 3,648 tons in 1919.

The mail service was continued by the Union-Castle Company, whose vessels made 12 outward and 9 homeward calls.

III.—EDUCATION.

There are eight elementary schools in the island, of which three are Government schools.

The number of children attending these schools during 1920 was :—

			<i>Boys.</i>	<i>Girls.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Government Schools	..	..	125	136	261
Other Schools	..	..	163	140	303

Attendance at all the schools was good throughout the year, and the Attendance Officer found no cases for prosecution under the Education Ordinance.

The manners of the children appeared exceptionally good, and they seemed to take great interest in their work. Classes for pupil teachers were held every week, and were well attended. At the termination of each quarter the usual examinations were held by the Acting Supervisor with satisfactory results.

The schools were also visited frequently by the Supervisor, who was satisfied with the progress made by the children. The health of the children was good throughout the year.

IV.—GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

(A) HOSPITAL.

There were 201 admissions to the hospital during the year, a decrease of 12 as compared with 1919. There were six deaths, being a percentage of 3 as compared with 2·8 in 1919.

(B) SAVINGS BANK.

On the 31st December, 1920, there were 141 depositors having accounts with the Government Savings Bank, as against 163 in 1919.

Cash deposits amounted to £1,273 12s. 1d., as compared with £3,094 3s. 7d. in 1919. This decrease may be accounted for by the public placing their money in the National Bank of South

Africa, where they obtain a higher rate of interest. The repayments to depositors amounted to £7,302 1s. 8d., as against £3,416 8s. 5d., an increase of £3,885 13s. 3d. This increase is due to the departure from the island of several substantial depositors, and others having transferred their accounts to the National Bank of South Africa.

On the 31st December, 1920, the sum of £11,073 6s. 3d. was standing in the Colonial Treasury to the credit of depositors, as against £16,680 7s. 3d. in 1919, a decrease of £5,607 1s. 0d. Stock to the value of £12,082 0s. 10d., cost price, was invested on the 31st December, 1920.

V.—JUDICIAL STATISTICS.

(A) CRIMINAL.

Supreme Court.—One case was tried in the Supreme Court during the year, as compared with four in 1919.

Police Court.—110 cases were dealt with in the Police Court, as compared with 76 in the previous year; most of these cases were for petty larceny, and 26 for non-payment of road tax.

No doubt thefts were caused to a very large extent by the very bad economic conditions prevalent during a great part of the year. The non-payment of road tax may be also traced to this cause. I hope to have a much more satisfactory account to render at the end of the present year.

£80 10s. was collected under Dog Tax, as compared with £70 10s. in the previous year. There were no prosecutions under this head, which rather goes to prove the opinion expressed above.

There were seven cases of whipping, five of them for theft.

(B) PRISONS.

Thirty-three persons were committed to the gaol during the year as compared with 26 in 1919, and 37 in 1918. The daily average number in gaol was 4·8 as compared with 3·6 in 1919.

The cost of maintaining the gaol was £240 15s. 3d., which item, I hope, may show a considerable reduction in future.

VI.—VITAL STATISTICS.

(A) POPULATION.

The estimated civil population on the 31st December amounted to 3,718, giving an increase of 70 more than at the similar date in 1919. (I would here note that in the Annual Report for 1919 the estimated population is shown as 3,468, whereas it should read 3,648.)

Civil emigrants in 1920 numbered 83 and immigrants 101, as against 198 and 33 in 1919. This reversal of figures in the two years is partly due to 68 men who returned from work at Ascension in 1920.

The number of deaths in the civilian population amounted to 33, and births 85, as against 29 deaths and 124 births in 1919.

Seventeen illegitimate births took place in 1920, as compared with 34 in 1919.

The civil death-rate in 1920 was 8·87 per 1,000, a slight increase over 1919 (7·94), and the birth-rate was 22·6, as against 33·98 in the previous year.

Marriages solemnized in 1920 numbered 17, as against 27 in 1919.

(B) PUBLIC HEALTH.

The health of the population generally was good throughout the year.

A large number of the poorer inhabitants show distinct signs of malnutrition, the low rate of wages and high cost of living, owing to post-war conditions, are responsible for this.

The importance of a properly qualified dentist being sent here at an early date cannot be over estimated. The state of the teeth of the vast majority of the population is very bad indeed. I understand that half the time of the Colonial Surgeon and his assistant is occupied in making extractions.

(C) SANITARY.

The Board of Health have met monthly during the year and dealt with various questions as they have arisen.

A supply of properly covered sanitary refuse bins for the daily collection of street refuse is much needed, but materials for their construction are lacking here.

The drainage system has worked satisfactorily, with the exception of two occasions on which it was found blocked with rubbish. Greater vigilance to prevent this kind of nuisance should be exercised by the police.

(D) CLIMATE.

Meteorological Station, Hutts Gate.

Barometer.—The mean pressure for the year was 28·108, as against 28·095 in 1919.

Temperature.—The mean temperature was 63·0 deg. (61·2 deg. in 1919). The absolute maximum temperature was 82·5 deg. on March 9th, the same as in 1919, on March 29th. The lowest minimum reading, 51·0 deg., was registered on July 14th and August 5th; 50·5 deg. being the absolute minimum on August 19th, September 6th and 8th, in 1919.

The seasons generally may be said to have been similar to those of 1919.

Rainfall.—The total rainfall measured at Hutts Gate was 35·240 in.; at Plantation 27·37 in., and in Jamestown 5·8 in. The maximum fall was 1·730 in. on March 28th. March was a particularly wet month, 7·410 in. falling. November and December were exceptionally dry months. The number of rainy days totalled 199 at Hutts Gate and 196 at Plantation.

Wind.—The mean force for the year was 2·0, which is equivalent to about 14 miles per hour. There were 28 calm days during the year, as compared with 10 in the previous year.

The following shows the direction of the wind :—

E.S.E.	..	..	..	..	7 days
S.E.	..	..	..	..	87 „
S.	..	..	..	..	144 „
S.S.E.	..	..	..	..	100 „
Calm	..	..	..	..	28 „

The popular conception of the weather at St. Helena has suffered from the Napoleonic legend. It appears to be regarded by the general public as a place where heavy rains and high winds are practically constant. As a matter of fact the climate is probably unequalled in any country in the world. The temperature varies little over 20 deg. summer and winter, 80 to 60 deg. being the ordinary change. A great deal more rain is required in St. Helena than in England, owing to its draining off because of the precipitous nature of the country. Most of the rain, too (which last year in the most rainy district amounted to 35 inches), falls at night. There are many more days of blue sky and bright sun than at home, and many fewer real rainy days—a day and night in which 1/100th part of an inch of rain falls being registered as a rainy day in St. Helena. The average force of wind amounts to 14 miles an hour throughout the year, a very great deal less than in the average East Coast watering place in England. There are no extremes of heat and cold; no thunder and no lightning; no wild beasts and no snakes. Altogether it may be said that St. Helena forms an ideal climate within the British Empire, only a little over a fortnight's journey from England, for any invalid to recover his health, or for any business man to seek rest.

VII.—POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE SERVICES.

(A) POST OFFICE.

Revenue.—The postal revenue for the year amounted to £917 7s. 2d., being a decrease of £738 9s. 4d. compared with the previous year (in 1918 revenue was £660 16s. 3d.), due principally to small orders from stamp collectors, viz., £417 16s. 10d. as compared with £1,298 17s. 7d. in 1919.

Expenditure.—The expenditure of the Department amounted to £502 13s. 5d., a decrease of £206 11s. 6d. as compared with 1919. This decrease is due to there having been no payment for sea carriage of mails for the year under review.

Mail matter.—The following shows the amount of mail matter dealt with in 1920 as compared with 1919 :—

From the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

	1919.	1920.
Bags of mails	180	185
Parcels	1956	1826
Registered articles	1383	1289

To the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Bags of mails	83	99
Parcels	379	519
Registered articles	2015	2122
Insured letters	1	—

Money and Postal Orders.—Transactions under this head were as follows :—

	1919.	1920.
To the United Kingdom	£2,222	£1,330
To South Africa	5,630	1,190
From United Kingdom	1,916	744
From South Africa	161	408

Commission received on the above transactions amounted to £25 16s. 1d. as compared with £69 14s. 9d.

(B) TELEGRAPHS.

The charges on telegrams to Great Britain and most of the European countries remained the same in 1920 as in the previous year. The Eastern Telegraph Company's Staff consisted of a Superintendent and 11 others.

(C) TELEPHONES.

Receipts for 1920 were £103 19s. 3d., and expenditure £81 17s., as compared with receipts £79, and expenditure £83, in 1919.

VIII.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

(A) ROADS.

The amount spent on the repairs and maintenance of main roads came to £908 14s. 4d., out of which the tax on fibre and tow contributed £341 5s. 1d.

I think the state of the roads generally may be considered fair, considering the small amount of money available for keeping them in order, and the hilly nature of the country. Efficient supervision of labour is badly needed, and the appointment of someone in the nature of a trustworthy ganger would be of immense benefit if funds were available for this purpose. In addition to the above sum £69 18s. was spent in keeping the streets in Jamestown in repair.

The amount collected under the Road Tax Ordinance was £84 7s., as compared with £60 19s. in 1919. There were 26 prosecutions under this Ordinance during the year.

(B) LAND GRANTS AND GENERAL VALUE OF LAND.

Four grants of land, amounting to $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, were made during the year for the purpose of flax planting. The value of land remains the same.

(C) RATE OF WAGES AND COST OF LIVING.

From the following comparative table it will be noticed that the cost of the more essential foodstuffs shows a slight rise over 1919, especially in the case of bread, tea, sugar, and rice, which may be looked upon as the staple articles of food for the working man here. Sugar at one time rose to the unprecedented price of 1s. 6d. per lb. Fish, which is much bought by the poor, in lieu of meat, was also scarce and dear in 1920.

These inflated prices became an almost impossible burden to the breadwinners in the year under review.

	1919	1920
Flour	5d. per lb. ..	4½d. per lb.
Bread	5d. per 1½lb. ..	7½d. ,,
Sugar	9½d.-10d. per lb. ..	1s. 3d. ,,
Dripping	2s. 8d. ,, ..	2s. 0d. ,,
Tea	2s. 4d.-3s. ,, ..	3s. 2d. ,,
Salt	2d. ,, ..	2d. ,,
Rice	4½d. ,, ..	5d.-5½d. ,,

I am very glad to say that there is every prospect of these prices becoming more normal in 1921.

The cost of clothing during the year was also abnormal, many people went barefoot who had never done so before.

Rate of Wages.—Towards the end of the year two vessels landed cargoes of coals on fire at Jamestown. This proved a veritable godsend to many of the labouring classes there, and employment on unloading coal at fairly good wages was provided for them for some two or three months.

It is the case that in the normal course of events much unemployment is chronic in the Island.

Having regard to the fact that there is no provision for old age and infirmity outside the Poor House in this Colony, I should like to mention the work of the Redgate Food Depôt in aid of the aged poor, which is supported by voluntary contributions and worked by a small committee of whom Mrs. Peel is President. During the year, 58 old men and women—principally women—have been given a ration of food every Friday; this food is probably of great assistance to many almost starving families over the end of the week.

Special thanks are due to the subscribers to this most deserving institution.

Such temporary measures of relief as can be provided here are, after all, only palliative, and must be regarded as such.

I am glad to say that more interest is now being taken in producing foodstuffs in gardens, which will all tend to make the labourers more self-supporting.

(D) DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

The expenditure for the year under "Works Recurrent" amounted to £2445 7s. 5d., of which £908 14s. 4d. was spent on rural roads, together with a grant from the Government Flax Mill of £500 to relieve distress, which was similarly expended.

Poor Board.

The revenue of the Poor Board for the year amounted to £824 6s. 9d., and the expenditure to £837 18s. 7d., as compared with £723 11s. 5d. and £718 8s. 4d. respectively in the previous year.

Public Market.

The Market continued under the supervision of the Board of Guardians. The revenue amounted to £18 7s. 2d., and the expenditure to £16 18s. 3d. during the year.

(E) MISCELLANEOUS.

In June of the year under review Major H. E. S. Cordeaux, C.B., C.M.G., left the Colony, having been appointed Governor of the Bahamas. On his departure Major H. G. St. G. Morgan administered the Government until my arrival in November.

Mr. J. J. Phillips, Crown Prosecutor and Police Magistrate, was transferred to St. Kitts, and left the Colony in November, the duties of Crown Prosecutor being carried on temporarily by the Colonial Treasurer and Chief Clerk.

Dr. W. J. J. Arnold, Colonial Surgeon, who had been granted special leave for service during the European War, returned to St. Helena in May.

The year was, from an economic standpoint, similar to the previous one with regard to the high cost of living, the main essential foods, imported chiefly from South Africa, being very expensive, and making the task of supporting their families extremely difficult for the poorer classes.

From an agricultural point of view, also, seasons were unsatisfactory. Crops were not good, especially potatoes, on which the people are now beginning to rely owing to post-war conditions.

ROBERT F. PEEL,
Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

The Castle,
St. Helena,
29th June, 1921.