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COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

No. 1297.

ST. HELENA.

REPORT FOR 1925.

(For Report for 1923 see No. 1224, and for Report for 1924 see No. 1251 (Price 6d. each)).



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No. 1297.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1925.

St. Helena is an island situated in the South Atlantic in latitude 15° 55' south, and longitude 50° 42' west. It was discovered by the Portuguese commander Juan de Nova Castella on St. Helena's Day, 21st May, 1502, during his return from India.

The Portuguese did not colonise the Island, but were successful in keeping secret its situation until 1588 when it was visited by Captain Cavendish on his return from a voyage round the world.

The Dutch were the first to make a permanent settlement on this Island. They held it from 1645 to 1690, when they abandoned it to establish themselves at the Cape of Good Hope. It was then taken possession of by the East India Company and a Charter for its administration was granted in 1661.

In 1665, according to some accounts, it was captured by the Dutch who were expelled the same year. Again they seized it in January, 1673, but only held it until May of that year when they were finally driven out by Captain Sir Richard Munden of the English Navy.

In December, 1673, a new charter was issued to the East India Company, and, with the exception of the term of Napoleon's exile, the Island remained under the Company until the 22nd April, 1834, when it was brought under the direct administration of the Crown.

An instrument entitled "The Laws and Constitution of the Island of St. Helena" was issued by Charles II in 1681. This document, bearing the seal of the East India Company, is still in the possession of the Governor of St. Helena, as are also most of the records of the Colony from 1678 to the present day.

The outstanding feature in the history of St. Helena is its connection with the exile of the Emperor Napoleon. The house occupied by him at Longwood, and the tomb in which his remains lay for 20 years till their removal in 1840, are maintained by the French Government, who were granted the freehold in 1858.

Apart from its Napoleonic associations St. Helena has an interesting history and the Island has fluctuated between extreme poverty and comparative prosperity almost since its occupation.

It was chiefly celebrated in the East India Company's days as a port of call and half-way-house between India and England. Large quantities of fruit and vegetables were grown for the provisioning of visiting ships. Records show that upwards of 900 ships were entered at the port annually. The opening of the Suez Canal sounded the death-knell of St. Helena as a shipping port, and from that time shipping has gradually declined. The average number of ships now calling is about 40 per annum.

St. Helena had intimate associations with the suppression of the slave trade between West Africa and the Americas. Slave ships captured by British warships were brought into St. Helena for condemnation and a settlement for freed slaves was founded at Rupert's Bay. A few of these freed slaves took service in the Island, but about 10,000 were conveyed to the West Indies and British Guiana.

During the Boer war of 1899-1901 St. Helena was used as a place of incarceration for prisoners of war and upwards of 4,000 were detained in the Island. This necessitated a garrison of about 3,000 troops.

For a few years after the repatriation of the Boer prisoners a garrison was maintained at St. Helena. Its withdrawal in 1906-7 caused considerable hardship among the population who had learnt to depend on the garrison for their livelihood. The departure of the troops was not, however, an unmitigated evil for it threw the Island on its own resources and led to the creation of the flax industry on which the prosperity of the inhabitants now so greatly depends.

A lace industry has been established since 1907, and gives employment to a number of women and children.

A small garrison of marines is at present maintained on the Island.

Financial.

REVENUE.

Revenue for the year amounted to £14,731, exclusive of any grant-in-aid; this is an increase of £2,032 over the year 1924 and £3,221 over 1923.

The increase was mainly due to large sales of flax leaves by Government and to a continued improvement in economic conditions.

There was a grant-in-aid of £7,000, but of this sum £3,000 was earmarked for the purchase of ant-resisting timber. £4,000 was granted to general revenue.

EXPENDITURE.

Expenditure amounted to £19,566 17s., but of this sum £5,011 5s. 11d. was expenditure of an extraordinary nature, including the purchase of the ant-resisting timber referred to overleaf. Under these circumstances only £14,555 can be regarded as being normal or recurrent expenditure. This compares favourably with a normal revenue of £14,731.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

The statement of assets and liabilities shows an excess of assets over liabilities amounting to £4,746 15s. 2d., as compared with £2,777 8s. 3d. at 31st December, 1924 and £260 7s. 2d. at 31st December, 1923.

CURRENCY.

Bills of exchange on the Crown Agents issued during the year amounted to £15,889 4s. 1d., as compared with £13,599 6s. 8d. in 1924.

There was a noticeable increase in the amount of gold in circulation during the year.

£500 in specie was exported.

Owing to the quantity of South African silver coin in circulation in the Colony, and owing to the importance of the Island's trade with South Africa, it was deemed advisable to make such coinage legal tender in St. Helena, and steps are being taken to provide that all South African gold and silver coins shall be legal tender in St. Helena.

REMITTANCES.

£4,069 7s. 3d. was remitted to the Crown Agents during the year. Remittances were in the form of Bills of Exchange on H.M. Paymaster-General or of approved cheques. There was also a small sum in Bank of England notes and £14 in mutilated Treasury notes.

CROWN AGENTS.

The Colony had an overdraft at the Crown Agents at the end of the year of £1,500, but the Crown Agents held cash to the credit of the Colony on Current Accounts amounting to £607, so that the Colony's indebtedness to the Crown Agents at 31st December was approximately £900, as compared with £1,900 at 31st December, 1924.

II.—Trade, Agriculture and Industries.

(a) TRADE.

Revenue.

The Customs Revenue for the year under review amounted to £4,294 1s., as against £3,985 6s. in 1924.

The principal increases are :—

	£	s.	d.
Wharfage dues	97	3	0
Import duties	110	4	8
Water	35	12	0
Special War dues	44	3	10
Export wharfage	148	13	3

These increases are due to a general improvement in trade during the year, fostered by a regular demand for labour, and to larger exports of fibre and tow.

Expenditure.

Customs expenditure amounted to £500 3s. 2d., as compared with £438 6s. 6d. in 1924. This is accounted for by the inclusion in the salary of the Collector of Customs of the emoluments paid on account of his office as Collector of Rents and Taxes.

Imports.

The value of imports amounted to £57,805, as against £51,421 in 1924, thus showing an increase of £6,384.

Imports by the Colonial Government (included in the above total) amounted to £4,206 and included a sum of £3,000 for ant-resisting timber.

The principal increases over 1924 are in :—

	£
Cigarettes and Tobacco	419
Drapery and Dry Goods	1,356
Flour	1,981
Grain	1,063
Oilman's Stores	724
Paraffin Oil	472
Rice	472
Spirits	277
Tea	355
Timber	2,822

The principal decreases are as follows :—

	£
Live animals	341
Butter and Margarine	226
Coal	1,004
Hardware, Metals, etc.	333
Machinery	1,260
Sugar	758
Wine	228

Exports.

The value of exports during the year amounted to £47,476, as against £36,160 in 1924, being an increase of £11,316.

The principal increases were :—

	£
Fibre	5,946
Tow	3,840
Rope, Cord and Twine	1,468
Specie	500

The weight of fibre and tow exported during the year was 923 tons and 420 tons respectively, as compared with 694 and 284 tons respectively in 1924, and is double the export of 1922.

There is also a rope manufactory producing binder twine, etc., from this fibre. The export during the year was 32 tons, as compared with less than one ton in 1924.

(b) AGRICULTURE AND GARDENS.

Botley's Lay.—The revenue derived from the Government pasture lands at Botley's Lay amounted to £145 11s. 5d., the expenditure being £94 12s. 9d. There was a credit balance to this account on 31st December amounting to £50 18s. 8d.

Maldivia Garden.—The amount derived from the sale of fruit and vegetables from Maldivia Garden amounted to £107 4s. 3d. There was an expenditure on this account of £47 7s. 4d. A credit balance of £59 16s. 11d. remained at 31st December.

Flax.—The Government reaped a valuable crop of flax during the year which yielded a gross revenue of upwards of £800.

(c) INDUSTRIES.

There are six flax mills operating for the production of fibre and tow from the leaves of *Phormium Tenax* (New Zealand flax). These mills give employment to about 300 men and women.

A considerable impetus, it is hoped, has been given to the production of hand-made lace, for which St. Helena is so justly famous, and seed work (hand-bags, necklaces, etc.) as a result of the Colony's display at the British Empire Exhibition.

(d) SHIPPING.

The number of vessels calling at the Port during the year was 40, as compared with 34 in 1924. The total tonnage of the vessels sailing amounted to 173,450.

The ships calling were made up as follows :—

	War Ships	Merchant Ships
British	6	31
American	—	2
Norwegian	—	1

H.M.S. "Repulse" arrived in August bringing H.R.H. the Prince of Wales on his visit to the Colony.

H.M.S. "Birmingham," the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief of the Africa Station, also visited the Island during the year.

An interesting visitor was the United States schooner "Blossom." This vessel was engaged in scientific work, primarily zoological, and made a stay of upwards of two months.

Two whalers called during the year, one British and one Norwegian.

III.—Education.

There are three Government schools in the Colony with an average daily attendance of 123 boys and 127 girls. In addition to these schools there are five private schools, of which two are Government-aided; the average daily attendance in the Government-aided schools is 52 boys and 43 girls, and in the private schools 139 boys and 136 girls. There is a total daily attendance at the various schools of 620 children.

The Superintendent of Education reports that he has found the work consistently good, and a committee of ladies who examined the needlework of the girls, on the occasion when certificates for proficiency were awarded for the first time, spoke very highly of the quality of the work done.

It is hoped that during the year 1926 it may be possible to introduce some form of technical instruction for boys and later to extend the instruction for girls to include domestic economy.

The pupil teachers attended special classes during the year and received instruction in English, English literature, French, Arithmetic, Algebra, and Physiography. The Superintendent of Education reports that they were regular in their attendance, diligent in their work, and did well in the annual examination.

IV.—Government Institutions.

(a) HOSPITAL.

There were 104 admissions to hospital during the year, compared with 169 during 1924. The daily average number of in-patients was 7 and of out-patients 11.

(b) SAVINGS BANK.

On the 31st December of the year under review there were 219 depositors having accounts with the Government Savings Bank, as compared with 206 at 31st December, 1924.

Deposits during the year amounted to £2,754 7s. 7d., while withdrawals amounted to £2,172 18s. 7d.; these figures compare with 1924 as follows: deposits £3,452 18s. 7d., withdrawals £2,475 6s.

Stock to the value of £12,082 0s. 10d. (cost price) was held on behalf of Savings Bank depositors at 31st December.

V.—Judicial Statistics.

SUPREME COURT.

Three Criminal cases came up for trial in the Supreme Court, resulting in two acquittals and one conviction.

On the Civil side of the Court two small actions came up for trial, one for breach of contract and one for the recovery of land.

POLICE COURT.

The number of complaints noted and reported to the Police or Police Magistrate during the year was 98. Eighteen cases were dealt with in the Police Court, as compared with 32 in the previous year. One case was committed to the Supreme Court for trial, one offender was bound over to keep the peace, two were discharged for want of evidence, three were remanded and twelve were convicted. The remainder of the 98 cases handled by the Police did not necessitate action in the Police Court.

Comparative statement of Police Court convictions over a period of five years is as follows :—

	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.	1925.
Assaults and other offences against the person ..	5	15	11	4	2
Malicious damage to property	4	7	6	3	2
Offences against the Highways, etc	33	5	4	6	1
Offences against the person (other than malicious) ..	2	12	5	3	1
Other offences	18	13	4	2	6
	62	52	30	18	12

The Police Force consists of a sergeant and five men. One extra constable was taken on the strength for patrol work in the south-east part of the Island. Twelve special constables were engaged for duty during the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

GAOL.

The number of persons committed to the gaol during the year was 8, as compared with 16 in 1924. Of these 8, five were committed for offences and three were on remand.

One prisoner was pardoned by His Excellency the Governor on the occasion of the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

VI.—Legislation.

Eight Ordinances were promulgated during the year namely :—

- No. 1. Elementary Education (Amendment).
- No. 2. Savings Bank (Amendment).

No. 3. Firearms.

No. 4. Wireless Telegraphy (Ascension).

No. 5. Supplementary Expenditure 1924.

No. 6. War Taxation Customs (Amendment).

No. 7. Appropriation Ordinance 1925.

No. 8. Liquor Licence (Amendment).

No. 1 supersedes Ordinance No. 2 of 1924.

No. 2 amends the Savings Bank Ordinance No. 2 of 1895 and provides for the investment of deposits and the disposal of income from securities. It further provides new Savings Bank rules.

No. 3 requires that all persons desirous of keeping firearms shall obtain a certificate of permission to keep such firearms.

No. 4 provides for the control of Wireless Telegraphy at Ascension Island.

No. 5 provides for appropriation for supplementary expenditure for 1924.

No. 6, an extension of the former War Taxation Customs Ordinance.

No. 7 provides for appropriation for expenditure for 1925.

No. 8 amends the Liquor Ordinance of 1907, and regulates the hours of the opening and closing of licensed premises and provides for exemption on special occasions.

VII.—Vital Statistics.

(a) POPULATION.

The estimated civil population at 31st December was 3,699, as compared with 3,703 at 31st December, 1924.

Deaths during the year numbered 44 against 38 in 1924. This gives a death-rate of 12·16 per 1,000, as compared with 10·23 in 1924.

Births registered numbered 111 (this does not include 3 still-born). The figures for 1924 were 106 and 4 still-born. The birth-rate is therefore 30·00 per 1,000 for 1925 and 28·62 for 1924.

There were 29 marriages in 1925, as compared with 21 in 1924.

(b) PUBLIC HEALTH.

The general health of the community has been satisfactory. A widespread epidemic of influenza occurred in February and March. Two deaths were attributable to this epidemic.

There was a satisfactory fall in the rate of infant mortality.

The water and drainage systems have proved satisfactory, and all bakeries and slaughter-houses have been inspected by the Medical Officer who reports that they satisfy the requirements of Government.

There were no prosecutions under the Board of Health Ordinance during the year.

(c) CLIMATE.

Meteorological Statistics.

Barometer.—The mean barometric pressure for the second half of the year was 952·5 mb (28·1 ins.). This was the same as for the whole of the year 1924.

Data are not available for the first half of the year as the barometer was in England for adjustment and repair.

Thermometer.—The mean temperature at Hutts Gate was 60·3° which is identical with 1924, but the record is not complete owing to the destruction of instruments. New instruments have been fitted and a complete record, it is hoped, will be available for 1926.

Rainfall.—The rainfall at Hutts Gate was 38 inches compared with 33·16 in 1924.

The rainfall in Jamestown was 6 inches as compared with 3·87 in 1924. It will be observed that 1925 was considerably wetter than the preceding year which was unusually dry.

VIII.—Post, Telegraph and Telephone Services.

(a) POST OFFICE.

Revenue.

The total revenue from all sources for the year under review amounted to £2,252 18s. 1d., being a decrease of £1,261 4s. 5d. This decrease is principally accounted for by fewer orders having been received from non-resident stamp dealers.

Expenditure.

Postal expenditure amounted to £434 17s. 8d., a decrease of £450 12s. 1d. This is mainly due to a decrease in the printing of new stamps.

The net income of the Colony for the year from all postal transactions was £1,818 0s. 5d.

Mail Matter.

The mail matter dealt with at the Post Office during the year will be gathered from the following summary:—

From the United Kingdom and elsewhere :

	1924.	1925.
Bags of Mail	241	282
Parcels	2,160	2,207
Registered Articles	2,341	1,453

To the United Kingdom and elsewhere :

Bags of Mail	103	117
Parcels	476	473
Registered Articles	2,073	2,384

Money and Postal Orders.

Under this head the transactions were as follows:—

	1924.	1925.
To the United Kingdom and South Africa	£ 11,188	£ 10,364
From the United Kingdom and South Africa	2,518	2,073

The amount of commission received on the above transactions for the year was £132 17s. 9d., an increase of £5 13s. 4d., as compared with the previous year.

(b) TELEGRAPHS.

There are no inland telegraphs. There is, however, an important cable station maintained by the Eastern Telegraph Company where messages are accepted for transmission to all parts of the world.

(c) TELEPHONES.

A telephone system is maintained by private subscribers. The rates for telephone service are £5 per instrument per annum.

IX.—General Observations.

(a) REPAIRS TO BUILDINGS.

The biggest undertaking under this sub-head was the repair, renovation and refurnishing of Government House.

It was many years since repairs or refurnishing to any great extent had been undertaken at Government House, with the result that considerable dilapidation and decay had taken place, and white ants had made serious inroads into all the soft wood.

A sum of £265 was spent on repairs and renovations and £680 on refurnishing. All the work of repair was undertaken by the local staff of the Public Works Department under the direction of the Clerk of Works and the result was eminently satisfactory.

It was intended that the whole of the woodwork of the House should be replaced by ant-resisting timber, but in view of the fact that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales was visiting the Island in the month of August, it was considered inadvisable to commence work on a large scale at Government House before the visit of His Royal Highness. It was, therefore, decided to carry out only such repairs as were absolutely essential and to leave the remainder to be undertaken subsequently.

In addition to the foregoing all Government buildings were maintained at their usual standard and considerable internal painting was done at the Castle.

(b) ROADS, STREETS AND BRIDGES.

Owing to the favourable weather experienced during the year under review the work on rural roads was chiefly in the nature of patching work.

It is no exaggeration to say that the days which the Prince spent at St. Helena were days of unbounded enthusiasm and will be remembered as the happiest and proudest in the Island's history.

ASCENSION.

The Superintendent of the Eastern Telegraph Company at Ascension acts as Resident Magistrate of the Dependency and has also been appointed a member of the Executive Council of St. Helena.

The Ascension Island Phosphate and Guano Company, which holds a concession for the working of the phosphate and guano deposits in the Island, continued work during the year.

A few turtles were exported from the Island during the year; but this industry has not yet regained its former importance.

ASCENSION STATISTICS.

Population.

Men	..	..	..	..	..	277
Women	..	..	..	..	..	27
Children	..	..	..	..	..	24
						—
Total	..	..	..	..	..	328

Shipping.

Mail Boats—In	..	..	..	..	..	13
" " —Out	..	..	..	..	..	13
British Men-of-War	..	..	..	..	..	1
Other Vessels	..	..	..	..	..	5
						—
						32

Hospital.

In-patients	..	..	..	..	..	115
Out-patients	..	..	..	..	..	177

Rainfall at Green Mountain 17·18 inches. The average for the last ten years is 21·94. The rainfall at Georgetown is negligible.

Temperature—Maximum 92° F.
 „ Minimum 68° F.

There are 500 sheep on the Island, 26 head of cattle, 10 pigs and a few horses and mules.

The water supply, which depends on catchments at the Mountain, was very precarious during the year and the rainfall was insufficient to fill the tanks.

The two large tanks known as Dampier's (588 tons) and Bates (284 tons) are being repaired in order that advantage may be taken of the occasional heavy rains to store water which at these periods runs to waste.

H. J. PINK,

Colonial Treasurer.

THE CASTLE,

1st May, 1926.