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ANNUAL REPORT ON THE
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS
OF THE PEOPLE OF

ST. HELENA
1931

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CHAPTER I.

Geography, Climate and History.

The Colony of St. Helena consists of the Island of St. Helena with the Island of Ascension as a Dependency.

ST. HELENA.

St. Helena, 47 square miles in area, the size of Jersey, lies in latitude 15° 55' South and longitude 5° 42' West. It is about 950 miles due south of the Equator, 4,000 miles from England, and 1,700 miles from Cape Town. The voyage from England occupies about a fortnight, and from Cape Town five days.

The Island is of volcanic origin. The latest account of its geology is a report by Professor Daly of Harvard University, who visited the

Island at the end of 1921. This report appears in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 62, No. 2, March, 1927. Professor Daly is of the opinion that St. Helena dates from pre-Glacial time, and is probably pre-Pliocene.

The aspect of St. Helena from the sea is menacing. The Island rises abruptly in stark cliffs, 400 to 2,000 feet in height, pierced by deep narrow valleys. Behind these grim outworks, however, the ground advances through pleasant scenery recalling parts of England or Wales, to a serrated ridge stretched across the middle of the Island. There are three peaks with an altitude of approximately 2,700 feet on this ridge from which magnificent views are obtainable.

Situated in the heart of the South-East Trades, far from any land mass, and surrounded by the cool waters of the South Atlantic current, St. Helena possesses a mild and equable climate.

ASCENSION.

Ascension Island lies in latitude $7^{\circ} 53'$ South and longitude $14^{\circ} 18'$ West, about 700 miles north-west of St. Helena. It has an area of 34 square miles.

The Island is of volcanic origin, and, as in the case of St. Helena, the most recent account of its geology is a report by Professor Daly which appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 60, No. 1, June, 1925. Professor Daly observes that from the time of its discovery no sign of volcanic activity, not even a hot spring, has been reported though geologically the island is extremely young. He thinks it possible that the whole mass above sea-level has been erupted during post-Glacial time.

From the sea Ascension appears bleak and desolate. Green Mountain, however, 2,800 feet high, relieves with its vegetation the barren and depressing effect of the larger part of the island and affords pasture for about 600 sheep and cattle.

At the present time the Island is an important Cable Station, and its only inhabitants are English and St. Helenian employees of the Cable Company. They have admirably succeeded in importing into their surroundings a spirit of cheerfulness, and in addition to the usual forms of recreation that appeal to a community of Englishmen there is the possibility of big game fishing.

The St. Helena Development Company which has interests in the phosphate and mineral deposits on the Island has temporarily suspended local operations.

A note on the climate of St. Helena and Ascension will be found in the Report for 1929—Colonial Reports, No. 1,475. The same Report also contains a note on the history of the Islands.

CHAPTER II.

Government.

By an Act of William IV, dated the 28th of August, 1833, the Island of St. Helena, as from the 22nd of April, 1834, was transferred from the East India Company and became vested in the Crown.

Provision for the authority and appointment of Governor, for the establishment of a Council to assist the Governor, and for the making and promulgation of laws, was made by a Royal Order in Council dated the 12th day of October, 1835. This Order was revoked by an Order dated the 27th of July, 1863, and fresh provision was made.

The Executive Council as it exists at present was established by "The St. Helena Order in Council, 1929," revoking previous Orders. By Instructions issued on the 5th of June, 1929, it is provided that the Council shall consist of the Senior Military Officer in command of regular troops in the Island and of the person holding the substantive appointment of Government Secretary of the Island, as *ex-officio* members, and of such other persons as may from time to time be appointed. Provision was also included for the appointment of Extraordinary members on special occasions.

At the present time there are three Unofficial members of Council.

Subject to the reservation of power for legislation by Parliament and by the Privy Council the Order of 1863 provides for the making of laws by the Governor. It is also laid down under "The Interpretation and General Law Ordinance, 1875," that "a copy of the draft of every Ordinance shall be affixed to a board in front of the Court House for the inspection of the Public for one month before the passing thereof; . . . provided always that in any case in which the Governor-in-Council thinks it urgently necessary to dispense with such public notification . . . he may do so."

The Island is not large enough to afford scope for any system of local Government as ordinarily understood. There are, however, to be described later, a Poor Relief Board elected by ratepayers, and a Board of Health, of which three of the members are elected by ratepayers, while the duty of sickness insurance is one that the St. Helenians have for many years taken upon and managed for themselves. The ratepayers, moreover, still maintain the custom of public meeting as it existed in connexion with Vestries under the East India Company. Under the Company's By-Laws a Vestry could be held whenever it may be deemed requisite to take the sense of the meeting on any subject connected with the interest of the inhabitants.

ASCENSION.

By Letters Patent dated the 12th of September, 1922, Ascension became a Dependency of St. Helena and it was provided that the Governor and Executive Council of St. Helena should have the same powers in relation to Ascension as they possess in relation to St. Helena.

CHAPTER III.

Population.

At the time of its discovery in 1502 St. Helena was uninhabited, and so it remained until the East India Company, a century and a half later, assumed possession and introduced settlers from England.

The English environment which was created by the English colonists has persisted ever since. There existed no indigenous social system as an alternative and the language of the island has always been English.

Thus it is that the St. Helenians of to-day, varied as they are in descent, are in their ideas and sentiments essentially English, as English as a great deal of the Island scenery. They are generally of light build and of pleasing appearance; they have a well deserved reputation for civility and courtesy and for a law-abiding disposition.

On the night of the 26th of April the decennial census of the population was taken. The population had risen since the last census from 3,715 to 3,995, an increase of 280. It is satisfactory to note that there has been an increase of 307 in the population of the country districts.

Deaths during the year numbered 59, as against 40 in 1930, a death-rate of 14.77 per 1,000. During the past ten years the death-rate has averaged 13 per 1,000.

The births registered during the year were 123 as against 120 in 1930, a birth-rate of 30.8 per 1,000 population. The number of deaths of children under one year was 19, an infant mortality rate of 154.4 per 1,000 births. The average infant mortality rate for the past ten years is 113 per 1,000 births.

There was no emigration or immigration during the year except for the arrival and departure of a few visitors.

The population of Ascension at the end of the year numbered 159 of whom 107 were St. Helenians. There were no births or deaths recorded during the year.

CHAPTER IV.

Health.

The Medical Establishment during the year consisted of a Colonial Surgeon, an Assistant Colonial Surgeon, a Surgeon Dentist, and at the Hospital two English Nurses and three St. Helena girls in training as Probationers.

The general health of the Island was good. Admissions to Hospital numbered 119, and there were ten major operations. There were mild outbreaks of measles, brought from South Africa, and of chicken-pox, and the usual recurrence of influenza of a mild type, which appears on the Island generally in February.

During the year the Hospital was vacated and handed over to the Public Works Department for repairs. Patients were transferred to the building known as the Military Hospital which for some years has been unoccupied.

The Board of Health, composed of three members elected by rate-payers and a Chairman and three members nominated by the Governor, met regularly during the year. The principal matters that came up for discussion were the town water-supply, the importation of second-hand clothing, the detention of intermediate mental cases, the inspection of school sanitary arrangements and of cowsheds.

Weekly lectures were given at the Hospital to the Probationers and also instruction in dispensing, and on the initiative of Dr. Cramer, Assistant Colonial Surgeon, a course of practical instruction in nursing was given to women in the country, which is likely to prove of value in the future.

An arrangement by which in maternity cases medicine and tablets were given free at the Hospital was taken advantage of by seventy women.

Dressing stations were established in the country at Hutt's Gate and Sandy Bay and were visited weekly.

The Poor House, under the management of a Poor Relief Board of five members elected by ratepayers and meeting every fortnight, was visited weekly by the Colonial Surgeon. The health of inmates, who number thirty, was fair.

A Lunatic Asylum is maintained under the direction and management of the Poor Relief Board, subject to the general control of the Governor. The number of inmates at the end of the year was six. It is visited weekly by the Colonial Surgeon. The health of the inmates during the year was good.

The sanitation of Jamestown was satisfactorily carried out at an expenditure of £176. The water-supply is good but at certain times in the year is apt to be restricted.

The drainage works established under "The Jamestown Drainage Ordinance, 1904" worked satisfactorily during the year.

Mr. W. Johnston, L.R.C.P., M.R.D.S., was appointed Dental Surgeon in the course of the year in succession to Mr. Murray transferred to Seychelles. He has found that in the case of the school children there is a good deal of work to be done, due probably to a deficiency of lime in the water-supply and to insufficient and wrong feeding.

CHAPTER V.

Housing.

Generally speaking housing conditions are not satisfactory, but the census returns record some slight improvement during the past ten years.

The returns show that there are 1,504 persons or 38 per cent. of the population living in not more than two rooms, and that nearly a third of that number live in one room. In 1921 the number of persons living in not more than two rooms was 1,502. On the other hand, it appears that there are 1,426 persons, or over 35 per cent. of the population, living in four rooms or more. In 1921 the number of such persons was 1,223. Taking the total figures at the last census there appear to be 4.7 persons to a "house" as against 5.3 in 1921.

A scheme for the restoration of some of the dilapidated Government buildings chiefly in Jamestown, and for a new Poor House and Asylum at a cost of £8,500 has been prepared, but owing to lack of funds cannot be proceeded with.

The scheme provided incidentally for accommodation of about fifty persons.

From the point of view of social welfare it may well be argued that new houses are a better investment in the country than in the town. There is more regular work in the country and in times of depression experience has shown that the country people fare better than those in the town. It is satisfactory to record therefore that in the five years 1925-1929 the number of houses built or restored in the country districts was thirty-five.

The only legislation dealing with over-crowding is a provision in "The Public Health Ordinance, 1899" which gives the Board of Health or any Justice of the Peace power to decide the number of persons who may live in any house or room, the minimum space allowed being three hundred cubic feet for each adult. The section is practically a dead letter but it provides the minimum accommodation required in new houses.

CHAPTER VI.

Production.

The welfare of St. Helena is bound up with the cultivation of the land. This was the opinion of Sir Daniel Morris in 1883. "I look entirely to the soil", he wrote, "for the elements to bring prosperity to St. Helena". Fifty years later Mr. Mason who came from South Africa to report on the Island's agriculture, came to the conclusion that St. Helena "was a country for the smallholder".

Fibre Production.—The only industry of importance at the present time is the cultivation of *Phormium tenax* (New Zealand flax) and the manufacture of fibre and tow from its leaves.

Flax first appears in the agricultural returns for 1873, when 100 acres were said to be given over to its cultivation. In the following year machinery was set up for the extraction of fibre from aloë and from *Phormium tenax*, and from 1875 to 1881 there were exports of fibre from both plants, the highest returns being 100 tons and 83 tons in 1879 and 1880 respectively. Prices then fell, and after 1881 the export ceased.

In June, 1906, a deputation consisting of Messrs. H. B. Morrice, H. J. Bovell, and H. W. Solomon interviewed the Secretary of State for the Colonies and urged the establishment of a Government flax mill in the Island. With the assistance of a grant-in-aid, flax planting was encouraged, an expert was obtained from New Zealand, and the Government mill was opened in 1907. In 1913 Solomon and Co. opened their first mill, followed three years later by Deason Brothers, and in 1923 W. A. Thorpe and Sons also began milling operations.

The area under the cultivation of *Phormium tenax* is estimated at approximately 2,000 acres. The cultivation is suitable for the smallholders and is taken up by them, but by far the greater proportion of the acreage is the property of the millowners themselves.

The Government Mill is now leased to Solomon and Company, and under the terms of their lease they are required to accept the leaves of the smallholders. At the present price obtaining for fibrous products the Government Mill is the only market the smallholders have for their leaves.

The fibre and tow is exported to England, but for some years Captain Mainwaring has been interested in the manufacture of rope and twine from the local fibre and a small export industry has arisen. Samples of the rope and twine recently submitted for examination to the Imperial Institute received encouraging reports. The development of this industry would be of the greatest benefit to the Island.

Horticulture.—In the past St. Helena was famous for its fruit, its coffee, and its vegetables. In the days of the East India Company the apples, mulberries, quinces, were said "to have come to perfection." Some St. Helena coffee shipped to England in 1845 fetched 1d. per lb. more than any other description, and a sample sent to the London Exhibition in 1851 obtained the first prize for quality. In more recent years consignments of potatoes were shipped to the Cape and a report on them in 1906 stated "there is no doubt the quality is excellent and they will command the best figure in the market." It was the opinion, moreover, of Sir Daniel Morris in 1883 that by that date if Mr. Chalmers, who had been sent from Kew in 1869, had not soon after been retrenched, the cultivation of tobacco would have become an established industry.

It is satisfactory to report in this connexion that since May the Union Castle Company have placed small but regular orders for the supply to their ships calling at St. Helena of vegetables, fruit, and eggs. The value of the commodities supplied from May to December was approximately £250.

In view of the prospects of developing the business with the Union Castle Company particular attention was given by the Horticultural Department to the cultivation of vegetables. The cultivation of flowers also received special attention and the gardens in the town and at Plantation House were made most attractive. Unfortunately the attempt at flower selling to the passengers from ships was not a success.

Samples of Island-grown coffee were submitted to the Imperial Institute for examination. It was reported under date 29th May (as published in the June Gazette) that the coffee should be saleable at about 50s. per cwt., Brazilian coffee at that date being quoted at 48s. to 53s. per cwt.

The bees have done well during the year and may now be regarded as established.

Arber Day was celebrated by the planting of trees at Half Tree Hollow, but unfortunately the fencing was not sufficiently secure against the raids by goats.

Farming.—Farming is carried on to a limited extent to supply local needs, and as a rule meat and vegetables are purchased by His Majesty's Ships when visiting St. Helena. According to the census returns there were 876 head of cattle and 2,326 sheep on the Island, a reduction since 1921 of 166 cattle and 655 sheep. The large landowners have found the fibre industry more profitable than farming and in any case there does not appear to be a market for more stock than the Island now carries.

According to census figures there were 1,433 goats on the Island, the same number as ten years ago. There are 252 pigs and 1,221 donkeys, an increase in ten years of 38 and 98 respectively. It would appear, therefore, that the small landowner has fared not unsuccessfully.

The census returns relating to land reveal the fact that 60 per cent. of the occupied land is in the possession of two owners, and that over 70 per cent. is in the possession of three owners. There has not necessarily been any engrossing of the land with sinister intent, but it is the fact that only two or three persons on the Island have capital or enterprise for acquiring land as it comes into the market. There has certainly been no difficulty in obtaining land for public needs.

As observed earlier in the Report, the country population has increased during the past ten years, and during that period Government has granted 120 leases of small plots of land.

Fisheries.—At one time an attempt was made to start a fish-curing industry in the Island, but the project failed. It is thought that supplies of fish are not more than sufficient for local needs.

Lace-making.—This industry was started in St. Helena in 1897 by Mrs. Jackson, a resident in the Island. She had been impressed with its possibility as an industry for women and girls from the success which had attended a similar enterprise in Madagascar. In 1907 the Imperial Treasury gave a grant to assist and develop the industry, and an Association was formed under the presidency of the Bishop with a committee of ladies to assist in the management. The Association dissolved the following year and the industry passed into Government control. A Government lace school was established and Miss Girdwood was appointed Manageress. She soon came to the opinion that the talent of the St. Helenian was strongly in favour of the needle rather than the pillow. Reports on the work of the school were encouraging and it was considered worth while to adopt old Italian patterns and to aim at production of a high quality. It was stated in 1914 that the laces were of excellent quality and workmanship, were chiefly of Florentine and old Italian designs, and that but for the outbreak of war the school would have shown a substantial profit. In 1916 Miss Girdwood was compelled on account of ill-health to resign her appointment; the school then closed and has not since been reopened. Messrs. Solomon and Company have opened a depot in town where the lace can now be purchased, but the St. Helena lace finds difficulty in competing with machine-made lace and with work of cheaper quality.

ASCENSION.

The only export from Ascension at the present time is that of turtles. The number of turtles captured during the year was 186. In former years the export of turtles was on a considerable scale, 750 being exported in 1834, 600 in 1850, and 650 in 1853.

At Green Mountain the Cable Company maintain a farm for local needs. At the end of the year the stock consisted of 21 cattle, 376 sheep, and some pigs.

CHAPTER VII.

Commerce.

The value of the Colony's external trade during the year amounted to £56,650.

For the past five years the returns have been as follows :—

	£
1927	83,952
1928	80,307
1929	85,976
1930	64,256
1931	56,650

The value of imports during the year amounted to £43,883, a decrease of £500 as compared with the previous year.

The distribution of imports for the past four years has been as follows :—

	1928.	1929.	1930.	1931.
	£	£	£	£
United Kingdom ...	39,735	34,848	36,160	35,920
South Africa ...	7,595	8,051	5,101	5,218
Foreign Countries ...	1,700	4,506	3,150	2,745

Importations from South Africa and foreign countries were mainly food, drink, paraffin oil, petrol, and tobacco.

The value of exports amounted to £12,767 as compared with £19,845 in 1930. The value of specie exported was £828, as against none in 1930.

The distribution of exports during the past four years has been :—

	1928.	1929.	1930.	1931.
	£	£	£	£
United Kingdom ...	29,321	36,175	18,699	12,205
South Africa ...	1,946	2,396	1,146	562

The chief articles of export are fibre and tow and rope and twine, the latter going to South Africa, the former to England and occasionally to South Africa.

For the past five years the statistics of these exports are :—

	Tons.	Fibre.	Tons.	£	Rope and Twine.	Tons.	£
		£			£		
1927 ...	738	24,542	365	7,963	18	810	
1928 ...	770	22,515	380	6,933	26½	1,246	
1929 ...	889	26,759	505	9,191	51	2,051	
1930 ...	540	11,890	342	4,915	52	2,243	
1931 ...	644	10,975	296	3,693	23	300	

The quantity of fibre, tow, etc., exported in 1930 was 934 tons, valued at £19,048; the quantity in 1931 was 963 tons, valued at £14,968. The decrease in the value of exports thus arises from the fall in price and not in quantity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wages and Cost of Living.

Wages for skilled and semi-skilled workmen vary from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. per day.

The Government minimum wage for adult unskilled labour is 2s. 6d. per day, amounting to 15s. for a week of forty-five hours, the half day on Saturday counting as a full day.

In the flax mills the average daily rate for men is 2s. for an eight or nine hour day. The wages paid to women are 1s. to 1s. 6d. per day.

In the rope works the wages for men average from 32s. 6d. to 13s. 6d. per week, and for women from 10s. to 7s. 6d.

The number of persons employed in the flax mills is two hundred and forty-six and in the rope works twelve.

In domestic service the monthly wage with board and lodging for housemaids varies from 10s. to £2, for cooks from 30s. to £4 5s., and for male servants from 30s. to £4 15s.

The cost of living is moderate and varied little during the year. Good meat, including fowls, is obtainable at 1s. per lb., fish is cheap and good, eggs vary, according to season, from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per dozen; fresh butter is 2s. 6d. per lb., fresh milk and fresh vegetables are usually obtainable at reasonable prices; rice, which with fish forms the staple diet of the St. Helenian, is 2½d. per lb.

There are no duties on imported foodstuffs. On wines the duty is 4s. per gallon, and on spirits under proof 27s. 6d. per gallon. The duty on cigarettes is 3s. per lb. and on pipe tobacco 2s. per lb. There is a 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty on certain articles regarded as luxuries.

From time to time accommodation is available for visitors, and St. Helena has attractions as a place of residence for those who seek a genial climate and quietude. It is estimated that two people could live comfortably and in full enjoyment of all the Island has to offer on £35 to £40 a month. With a more limited range of activity two people could live within £250 to £300 a year.

CHAPTER IX.

Education and Welfare Institutions.

Education in the Colony is limited to primary education. There are three Government schools, one for boys and one for girls in Jamestown, and a mixed school in the country. Three schools are maintained by the Hussey Charity, established in 1865 on the bequest of Rebecca Hussey, one is maintained by the St. Helena Benevolent Society founded in 1814, and one is supported out of the St. Helena Diocesan Fund which is itself dependent upon voluntary contributions.

A Government grant of £100 is given to the Hussey Charity Schools, of £20 to the Benevolent Society School, and of £15 to the Diocesan Fund School. The Government expenditure on education during the year amounted to £840.

The number of children attending the Government schools is 309, and the number at the other schools is 429.

The education is sound in its elementary character and the schools are cheerful and the children bright. The handwriting generally is good, and the girls' needlework is often excellent.

As regards technical education for boys there are some opportunities for training apprentices in the Public Works and Horticultural Departments. For girls as soon as funds are available it is proposed to establish a Domestic Science School under

a trained teacher. At present there are three appointments for them in the Hospital as Probationers, and the training there will greatly help to qualify them as children's nurses. St. Helena girls when trained make good cooks and domestic servants, and opportunities for their employment and for the employment of youths offer in Ascension, South Africa, and occasionally in England.

There is no Government insurance against old age, unemployment, or sickness.

As regards old age pensions there are according to the recent census one hundred and two persons over seventy years of age. It would thus require about £1,300 per annum to provide old age pensions of 5s. a week.

Unemployment more or less severe has to be reckoned with from time to time. It was serious during the year owing to the collapse of the fibre market, but to some extent was mitigated by the grant for roads made by the Colonial Development Committee.

There is a Poor Relief Board, established under the Poor Relief Ordinance, 1914. Its members are elected annually by the rate-payers. The annual revenue of the Board is about £900 to £1,000, derived from a 5d. rate, and a Government contribution of £82.

In the case of sickness the St. Helenians themselves to a great extent have been accustomed to provide for sick pay and also for burial expenses by insurance in one or more of the Friendly Societies, which have been for many years a feature of the social economy of the Island.

There are four Friendly Societies for men with a recorded membership of 1,569, but as already stated several persons are members of more than one Society. The male population of the Island over fourteen years of age may be estimated at approximately 1,218.

The oldest of the Societies is the Mechanics' Society founded in 1838. The membership is 381 and the amount of the invested funds is £845. The weekly subscription is 6d., and the sick relief granted is 1s. 6d. per day, decreasing after six months. The burial allowance is £4 or £8 for a member and £3 or £6 for his wife, the higher rate being payable after twelve months' membership.

The St. Helena Poor Society was founded in 1847. It has a membership of 463, and its invested funds amount to £4,400. The monthly subscription is 6d. and it is provided that while the capital remains at £4,000 and upwards the sum of £170 may be expended in sick relief, but no member shall receive more than 5s. per month. The grant for burial expenses varies from £8 to £14 according to length of membership.

The Foresters were established in 1871. The membership is 400 and the invested funds amount to £1,650. The subscription is 3s. to 4s. a month. The sick benefit is 2s. per day decreasing according to the duration of the illness. The allowance for funeral expenses is £14 for a member and £7 for his wife.

The St. Helena Working Men's Christian Association was founded in 1875. Its membership is 325 and its invested funds amount to £530. The subscription is 6d. per week. The rate of sick relief is 1s. 6d. per day decreasing after six months. The burial allowance is £8 for a member and £4 for his wife or widow.

The Societies provide also for medical attendance and medicines. There is an entrance fee payable according to age.

For women there is the Church Provident Society established in 1878. The number of members is 356 and the funds amount to £580. There is no fixed allowance for sick relief, but while the capital remains at £300 grants of varying amounts are made.

The burial allowance is £4 and £3 for members of over or under twelve months standing. Provision is made for medical attendance and medicines.

For children there is the Children's Benefit Society which gives sick relief, and transfer to one of the Societies mentioned above when the age for joining them is reached. The membership is 265 and the amount of invested funds is £130.

CHAPTER X.

Communications and Transport.

There is regular communication once a month with England and South Africa by the Union Castle Intermediate Steamers. In addition there called at the Island during 1931 four of His Majesty's Ships, three American steamers running between New York and Cape Town, and one German sailing ship.

There are 60 miles of road maintained by the Public Works Department.

In July, 1930, the Colonial Development Fund gave a free grant of £6,350 for the improvement of the roads in the Island, and very satisfactory progress has been made in the re-surfacing of the roads. There were twenty-three private cars and nine lorries registered at the end of the year.

A loan of £1,000 was also made by the Colonial Development Committee for the reconditioning and extension of the telephone system. It was decided, however, to make use of only half this loan. A satisfactory service is now provided for the Island.

There is no wireless station in St. Helena but there is a cable station with communication to all parts of the world. There are a few private wireless reception sets from which good results appear to be obtained.

There is regular postal communication each month between the Colony and England and South Africa. Mails are also made up as other occasions present themselves.

CHAPTER XI.

Banking, Currency, Weights and Measures.

The Government Savings Bank is the only banking institution in the Colony.

The total number of depositors on the 31st December, 1931, was 228, as compared with 238 on the same date in 1930. The total deposits during the year amounted to £6,252, an increase of £2,822 over the total of the previous year.

The amount due to depositors at the end of the year was £18,770, as against £17,135 on 31st December, 1930.

Stock to the value of £8,960 is held by the Government on behalf of the depositors.

By the St. Helena Coinage Order, 1925, all coins which under the Coinage Acts of 1870 and 1891 are legal tender in the United Kingdom, and all silver coins which under the Coinage Act, 1922, are legal tender in the Union of South Africa are legal tender in the Island of St. Helena.

By the Weights and Measures Ordinance, 1905, the weights and measures for the time being lawfully in use in the United Kingdom and no others are to be used in St. Helena.

CHAPTER XII.

Public Works.

Plantation House.—The reconstruction of Plantation House was completed at the beginning of the year, and after nearly three years' absence was occupied by the Governor in February.

Owing to the depredations of white ants, the house had to be abandoned and stripped to the bare walls. The roof, ceilings, floors, were all dangerous and had to be removed. During these operations twenty-four nests of white ants were discovered in the house.

The slate roof was replaced by a roof of Robertson's Protected Metal, and steel framing was substituted for timber framing. In the place of plaster, embossed steel was used for ceilings. Ant-resisting timber was employed for the floors and for the woodwork generally, American cypress and teak being imported for the purpose. A Ransome Woodworking Machine, driven by a 6 b.h.p. Ruston and Hornsby Engine, was of great assistance in preparing the timber.

Electric lighting was installed. The plant consists of a 6 b.h.p. Petter Engine, directly coupled to a 3 Kilowatt Dynamo of 100 to 140 volts.

A hot water installation supplies the bathrooms and two radiators in the drying room.

The reconstruction has been carried out by the local staff of the Public Works Department and is a very creditable achievement on the part of St. Helena craftsmen and workmen. It has trained a staff capable of undertaking any building operations reasonably likely to be needed in the future. It has kept skilled men in good employment during a period of depression. It has shewn that good work can be done in St. Helena and by St. Helenians, and the example should encourage a spirit of confidence and optimism in place of the attitude of negation usually manifested towards suggestions for new enterprises in this Colony.

Civil Hospital.—Extensive repairs to the Hospital were carried out during the year.

Steel ceilings were substituted for plaster ceilings. Most of the floors, staircases, and window frames were renewed in teak or cypress; the guttering and down piping were replaced; the interior and exterior received two coats of paint or distemper; the whole of the wiring for the electric light was renewed, and a steel conduit system installed.

The Castle and Printers Shop.—The roof of the Castle and Printers Shop was found to be in a dangerous condition and had to be replaced with ant-resisting timber and corrugated iron.

The Castle interior required a good deal of attention. The joisting, partitions, floors, and window frames had to be renewed in ant-resisting wood. In fact white ants had destroyed almost all the woodwork throughout this portion of the building. The quarters were divided into two large-sized bedrooms, a dressing room and bathroom.

In the caretaker's quarters the ceilings which were of canvas were renewed with flat steel sheets.

The reconstruction of Plantation House, the repairs to the Hospital, and to the Castle and the Printers Shop comprise the "Programme of Repairs to Public Buildings" for which the sum of approximately £9,484 was sanctioned. The work started on 10th May, 1928, and was practically completed at the end of the year with a saving on the estimate of £491. In addition there was a salvage of material, e.g., old lead, and slates, to the value of £223.

Water-Supply for St. Paul's District.—The sum of £295 was sanctioned for the improvement of the water-supply in St. Paul's District. By arrangement with Solomon and Company and W. A. Thorpe and Sons water is taken from "Hardings" and "Round Tower" Springs to a tank of 16,000 gallons storage capacity. The new supply serves existing houses in the district, and will also be available for cottages and smallholdings which it is hoped will be established in the future. The scheme is a successful one and as funds become available can be repeated in other parts of the Island.

With the aid of the assistance from the Colonial Development fund referred to in Chapter X work was also carried out by the Public Works Department on the road and telephone systems of the Island.

Current repairs and minor works and maintenance services were carried out during the year at an expenditure of £2,715, of which £888 was for the Admiralty and was on repayment.

CHAPTER XIII.

Justice and Police.

Subject to all local Ordinances and Orders in force, the law of the Colony is so much of the law of England for the time being as is suitable and appropriate as far as local circumstances permit.

By Royal Order in Council of the 13th February, 1839, the Supreme Court of St. Helena was established. The Governor acts as Chief Justice and is assisted by Assessors, who may be Members of Council or Justices of the Peace. By Ordinance 4 of 1927 the Court is empowered to hold Civil and Criminal Sessions at Ascension.

There were two criminal and three civil cases before the Supreme Court during the year under review.

Police Court cases are dealt with by the Police Magistrate or by Justices of the Peace.

The number of cases reported to the Police was 137. In 54 cases action was taken in the Police Court resulting in 20 convictions. Of these convictions seven were for offences against Ordinances relating to the social economy of the Island, four for offences against the person, four were for offences against property, and the others were for minor offences.

The Police force consists in St. Helena of a sergeant and five constables and in Ascension of two constables.

There is a small Debts Court established by Ordinance No. 2 of 1905. Its jurisdiction is over all requests for the recovery of sums not exceeding £25. The Judge of this Court is usually the Police Magistrate. There were no cases brought before this Court during the year.

Gaol.—The number of persons committed to prison during the year was eight, and five were placed on remand. The number in custody on 31st December, 1930, was 4.

CHAPTER XIV.

Legislation.

Three Ordinances were passed during the year. One raised the duty on spirits, and the other two were Appropriation Ordinances.

Five Orders in Council were made. Two were under the Motor Car Ordinance, 1928, one providing for the closing temporarily a road and the other for quarterly licences. Two Orders were under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance providing for additions to the list of drugs the traffic in which is controlled. One Order made new regulations with regard to the Storage of Mineral Oil.

Two Proclamations were issued. The first was the usual Proclamation fixing the season for shooting game. Rabbits during the season are regarded as game in addition to pheasants and partridges.

The other Proclamation appointed the night of April the 26th as census night.

There is no factory legislation, nor legislation for compensation for accidents. Nor is there legislative provision for old age sickness. In the case of sickness, as explained under Chapter IV, provision is made by the various Friendly Societies.

CHAPTER XV.

Public Finance and Taxation.

The revenue for the year amounted to £12,480, showing a deficit of £4,088 as compared with the estimate. This deficit was accounted for by a shortfall amounting to £4,000 in the estimate of Royalties from the Development Company at Ascension. The Company has temporarily ceased operations in the Dependency and is concentrating on research in England.

In addition to the revenue, the Colony received a grant-in-aid of £7,000, and grants from the Development Committee of £5,600 for Roads (£600 of this grant, however, is for the first quarter expenditure of 1932) £640 to improve the telephone system, and £50 for the investigation of the geological records of St. Helena.

The funds available, therefore, during the year amounted to £25,220.

The expenditure for the year amounted to £23,819. Included in this total is the sum of £171 being the cost of furniture purchased two years ago for renting to officials and now brought to charge. Excluding this charge there was a surplus amounting to £1,572 of funds available for the year as against expenditure.

The principal items of revenue were:—

	£
Customs	4,622
Taxes and Licences	741
Fines, Fees, etc.	1,208
Post Office	846
Agriculture, etc.	108
Rent of Government land	916
Investments	433
Ascension	3,514

Under Fines and Fees is included the sum of £888 re-imbursments for work carried out on behalf of the Admiralty. In 1927-29 the Post Office Revenue averaged £3,000 per annum due to the sale to stamps to dealers. Recently this demand has greatly diminished.

The principal items of expenditure are :—

	£
Pensions	920
Governor, etc.	1,102
Secretariat	1,100
Treasury and Customs	671
Savings Bank	421
Police	592
Medical and Sanitary	2,683
Education	840
Post Office	378
Agriculture and Forestry	1,188
Miscellaneous	903
Public Works Department	1,169
Public Works Recurrent	2,715
Extraordinary	3,181
Ascension	2,012
Development Committee Grants	3,713

Under Public Works Recurrent is included work for the Admiralty.

For the past five years the revenue, grants, and expenditure have been as follows :—

	Revenue.	Grants-in-aid, etc.	Funds available.	Expenditure.
	£	£	£	£
1927	17,986	2,500	20,486	16,674
1928	15,549	—	15,549	19,671
1929	16,456	4,000	20,456	22,385
1930	12,570	6,000	18,570	25,819
1931	12,480	12,740	25,220	23,819

The Colony has no public debt.

As regards the assets and liabilities of the Colony there was on 31st December, 1931, a deficit of £2,982 in assets compared with liabilities as against a deficit of £4,982 at the end of 1930.

Customs and Taxes.

The chief source of Customs revenue are wharfage dues and duties.

Wharfage dues vary from 6d. on a small package to 12s. on a case measuring 60 cubic feet and upwards. The yield of these dues are approximately £1,430.

The duties on spirits are £1 9s. 6d. per gallon if over-proof and £1 7s. 6d. if under-proof; on beer the duty is 1s. per 12 reputed pints; on cigarettes it is 3s. per lb., on cigars 4s. per lb. and on other manufactured tobacco 2s. per lb. The yield from these duties is about £2,200.

There are also export duties on fibre and tow at the rate of 10s. and 5s. respectively, yielding about £400.

An *ad valorem* duty of 10 per cent. yielding £160 is placed on certain articles regarded as luxuries, such as silk, chocolates, sporting requisites, talking machines.

Shipping dues at the rate of 1s. per ton yield a revenue of about £250.

Taxes are on carriages and cars at the rate of 10s. per wheel; horses and dogs pay 10s., boats according to their capacity, up to £3 for a boat capable of carrying twenty passengers.

Licences under the Liquor (Licensing) Ordinance, 1907, are fifty pounds for a hotel or tavern licence in Jamestown, and twenty-five pounds for a licence in the country. A wholesale licence is twenty-five pounds and a temporary retail licence is ten shillings.

Water-rates vary from 2s. 6d. on a house whose rental value is under £10 to £2 when the rental value is £80 or over.

The yield from these licences and taxes is approximately £750.

There is no income tax and no excise tax, and the yield from stamp duties as prescribed under the Stamp Ordinance, 1922, is trivial.

CHAPTER XVI.

Miscellaneous.

Lands.

Sir Daniel Morris estimated the area of St. Helena to be 28,000 acres, "Of this area probably 20,000 acres or more than two-thirds are composed of barren rocky wastes or clayey slopes totally unfit in their present condition for any agricultural operations." More recent estimates give the area of agricultural and pastoral lands as 10,000 acres.

The number of properties on the Government rent roll amount to about 420, representing approximately £1,000 in rents.

It is difficult owing to the paucity of transactions to arrive at the market value of land.

The only legislation dealing with land is "The Conveyancing and Registration Ordinance, 1893," which simplifies conveyancing and provides for registration.

General.

During the year an officer from the Colonial Audit Department visited the Colony to report on the system of accounting.
