

COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

No. 213.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1896.

(For Report for 1895, *see* No. 176.)

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty,
October, 1897.



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1897.

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ST. HELENA.

ST. HELENA.
1896.

(For Report for 1895, see No. 176 of this Series).

GOVERNOR GREY WILSON to MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

The Castle, St. Helena,

1st April, 1897.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to transmit the Blue Book of this Island for the year 1896.

As this is the last St. Helena Blue Book upon which I shall report, I propose making a somewhat more general survey than is usual.

My administration of the Government of the Island extends to very nearly ten years, and embraces the whole of the period of the Island's greatest depression, I might almost say prostration.

Only Governor Janisch's term of office has exceeded 10 years, and the only previous instance of a Governor being translated from St. Helena was when Colonel Gore Browne, C.B. was appointed in 1854 Governor of New Zealand.

The returns for 1896 happily exhibit no cessation of the gradual recovery of the last few years, although the revenue in 1896 fell somewhat below that of the previous year, in which a considerable sum was received from the sale of obsolete stamps.

The return Appendix A. shows that in 1891 the Revenue fell to the lowest recorded point, and that in 1892 the first surplus for 10 years marked that change in the tide of our financial condition that has since been maintained without interruption.

Notwithstanding the very serious nature of the depression through which the Island has passed, the liquidation of the heavy debt has been steadily continued and completed, the requirements of the very heavy pension list have been punctually

ST. HELENA, 1896. met; and the Government has faithfully and efficiently discharged the ever increasing demands which modern development and progress have made upon it. I cannot too gratefully acknowledge the services rendered, under very trying circumstances, to the Island and to me, by the Civil servants.

REVENUE.

The chief source of revenue is the Custom House. Thirty years ago the yield under this head was close upon £16,000, and last year it yielded £4,807.

During this period there has been no change in the dues, which are as follows:—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Tobacco per lb. unmanufactured - -	0	6
" " manufactured - -	1	0
Spirits per gallon - - -	10	0
Beer 36 gallons - - -	12	8
Wine per gallon - - -	2	6

On all other goods a wharfage equal to about 4 per cent *ad valorem* is levied, but as the wharves and cranes are entirely maintained at Government expense this impost cannot be regarded as a tax, and should be viewed in the light of a Dock Company's Revenue.

The financial recovery of the last few years has been in spite of the almost entire disappearance of the vessel in distress—from which source prior to 1889 a considerable annual revenue could be relied on.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.

The value of the imports was £30,950, and of the exports £4,739 including £3,993 in specie.

The decline in the price of whale oil has caused the withdrawal of the American whaling fleet.

This, though probably only a temporary one, is not the less a serious blow, as the whaling fleet gives employment to a considerable number of Islanders and spends large sums of money on Island produce.

The export of potatoes to the Cape was satisfactory and remunerative.

The Customs duties collected during the year shew an increase on previous years in the quantities of wine, beer, spirits, and tobacco.

The figures are—

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1896.

Year.	Wine.	Spirits.	Beer.		Tobacco.
			Hhds.	Doz.	
	Gallons.	Gallons.			lbs.
1891	6,088	1,489	164	212	5,923
1892	6,387	1,688	301	273	7,595
1893	7,318	2,068	366	1,603	6,453
1894	7,187	1,931	173	234	7,067
1895	5,859	2,163	326	652	6,442
1896	6,912	2,191	402	863	7,700

The Shipping and Revenue and Expenditure Returns for the last 30 years (*see* Appendices A and B) show how continuous was the decline of the Island from the fictitiously inflated times of the East India Company's administration of the Island.

So long as the Garrison maintained was in the proportion of about 1 soldier to every 10 inhabitants, no extreme pressure was felt, but it was impossible for the reduction of the large executive, which even the halcyon days could not justify, to be carried out without a dangerous straining of the financial position.

The retrenchments were never made in anticipation of the decline, but only as the result of the financial difficulties resulting from the effects of such decline, and they consequently always failed to afford any adequate relief. For it must be borne in mind that the reduction of the establishment meant the swelling of the Pension List which, as will be seen from Appendix D, reached inordinate dimensions, and the undue proportions of this expenditure, the greater part of which went to non-residents, was for very many years and still is, to a smaller extent, a heavy drain upon the resources of the Island.

The Pension List continues to defy the laws long since ascertained and laid down by Actuaries. Our four oldest pensioners were born respectively in 1798, 1802, 1809, and 1810, and I am glad to be able to report continue to enjoy excellent health.

That the Pension List, *see* Appendix C, has been and is a serious drain upon the limited revenue—of which it absorbed

ST. HELENA, 1896. nearly one quarter in 1896—cannot be denied ; but as it is, so far as the Government are concerned, an irreducible quantity, provision must continue to be made for it at the expense of the existing civil establishment.

PUBLIC DEBT.

The whole of the £19,500 borrowed by the Government between the years 1868 and 1872, at the rate of 7 per cent. per annum, has been repaid.

In addition to that sum the Imperial Parliament lent the Colony, in 1871-72, a sum of £5,158, free of interest, and this sum has not yet been repaid.

The expenditure has now been brought well within the revenue, and I do not anticipate that it will again exceed it.

The sum borrowed by the Government and the grants in aid from the Imperial Exchequer, were expended upon the repair of public buildings and to make good the deficiency of the revenue to meet the normal current expenditure. No public works of a remunerative nature have ever been undertaken in St. Helena, and although it would no doubt be legitimate to raise money for such a purpose as the renewal of the water service, so that the cost should fall, in part, upon those who derive benefit hereafter therefrom, yet happily this service can be more than adequately met from extraordinary revenue.

The excess of assets over liabilities on the 31st of December, 1896, was very nearly sufficient to repay the Imperial loan of £5,158, and the waterworks scheme, now ripe for execution at a cost of about £2,400, can be most legitimately defrayed from the sale of obsolete postage stamps, which I have recently sent home to the value of £8,447.

After providing for these services there should, at the close of 1897, be a balance in hand of at least 6,000*l.*, which, in my opinion, should be invested as the nucleus of a Reserve Fund to meet unforeseen emergencies.

That such emergencies will arise in St. Helena, the past places beyond controversy.

The disastrous floods which have occurred will certainly be repeated, although the defensive measures adopted may mitigate their effect, and it is probable that the wharf will, from time to time, sustain damage from the February rollers, although none of a really serious nature have occurred for many years past.

PUBLIC WORKS.

ST. HELENA,
1896.

The maintenance of public buildings, forests and roads, water supply and drainage cost £1,650, of which about £500 was expended in building a sea wall and on the extension of the wharf to provide for the erection of a new crane for coaling purposes.

In March 1894 H.M.S “Phœbe” put in to coal here on her way to take part in the Gambia operations after the disaster of that year.

Every effort was made to expedite the operations, and 420 tons were put on board in 28½ continuous hours, which at the time was deemed remarkably satisfactory.

I anticipate that the new work now completed will enable the Colony to double the rate of delivery in any future time of emergency.

LEGISLATION.

The only Ordinance of interest passed during the year was to empower the Governor in Council to fix the rates of postage, and on the 1st of October St. Helena entered the Postal Union, and acquired the long desired and long delayed boon of 2½*d.* postage to all countries of the Union.

This enormous gain to the poor of the Island, whose friends and relations are to a very large extent domiciled in South Africa, had been under consideration for long, and was dependent upon the financial exigencies.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

The Assets and Liabilities account exhibits continued improvement. (*See Appendix D.*)

Twenty years ago the Liabilities exceeded the Assets by one-and-a-half times the annual revenue of to-day ; ten years ago they exceeded the assets by rather more than half the annual revenue ; while to-day the Assets exceed the Liabilities by rather more than half the amount of the annual revenue.

The Savings Bank was established in 1866, and for very many years received only slender support. Thus in 1886, in its 20th year, there were only 84 depositors with an average holding of £69 each. During the last ten years the number of depositors has risen to 180 with an average holding of £91, and I think the progress of the last few years indicates a better appreciation of the advantages of the Savings Bank and a weakening of the reliance upon the old stocking mode of banking.

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The somewhat slow progress of the Savings Bank is due to two causes. First, doubt as to the absolute safety of the deposits; and second, the fear that friends and relations might get to know, not only that money had been saved, but more or less the value of those savings.

The Appendix E shows the progress made by the Savings Bank since its initiation.

CALLING SHIPS.

Only 151 ships called during the year. Of these 89 were British and 64 Foreign. Of the British 10 were Men-of-war, and of the Foreign one was a Man-of-war.

The falling off from the previous year was 52, the largest percentage in any year since the opening of the Suez Canal, when the calling vessels numbered 853.

The return (*see* Appendix B), shows all vessels which have called since 1886, and it also shows the number of calling vessels, that is vessels trading with bumboat-men without obtaining pratique under the Passing Ships Ordinance, 1886.

It will be seen that the number of the "passing vessels" continues steadily to increase.

I transmit Comr. Hewetson's report upon shipping, which in his opinion must visit the Island in ever diminishing quantities until we are connected by cable with the outside world.

METEOROLOGY.

I transmit a report, by Mr. H. S. Hands, of the meteorological observations of the year. Progress has been made, and two fresh stations, "North" and "South" have been started which will contribute much to the value of those records.

Although it has long been known that the rainfall of this small Island exhibited remarkable local variation, it has always been assumed that the centre of the Island was the wettest. It now, however, appears probable that the southern station will dispute the claim of the central one in this respect.

The registered rainfall in 1896 was—

	Inches.
Centre of Island	- 40
East " "	- 27
West " "	- 25
South " "	- 41 in 11 months.
North " "	- 6 in 11 months.

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POPULATION AND VITAL STATISTICS.

The health of the Island was very satisfactory, with the exception of the infant mortality, which was high.

The death rate was 14.9 per 1,000, but these figures convey an inadequate picture of the extreme healthiness of the Island, when allowance has been made for the depletion, by emigration, of the able-bodied population.

The population was estimated at the end of 1896 to be 3,890.

CONCLUSION.

It has too long been assumed that St. Helena is incapable of progress because the fictitiously inflated Napoleonic and subsequent period have dazzled the eye and prevented a due appreciation of her value and merits. This value and these merits are, I am satisfied, of too substantial and satisfactory a nature to be permanently lost sight of. That some progress has been made I think I have demonstrated: and the intense affection with which all her sons and daughters are bound to her, even after years of separation—an affection, with which even I, a passing unit, have become strongly impregnated—afford a guarantee of further substantial progress and future prosperity.

I have, &c.,

W. GREY WILSON.

APPENDIX A.

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE, 1866 TO 1896.

Year.	Revenue.		Total Revenue exclusive of Grants and Loans.	Total Expenditure including repayment of debt.	Surplus.	Deficit.	Grants from Parliament.	Loans.
	Customs.	Other sources.						
1866	£ 17,257	£ 5,895	£ 23,152	£ 26,110	..	£ 2,958	..	£ 5,000
1867	17,159	5,867	23,026	27,113	..	4,087	..	..
1868	13,402	5,304	18,706	26,203	..	7,497	3,000	5,000
1869	15,076	5,704	20,780	24,606	..	3,846	..	5,000
1870	11,094	4,880	15,974	18,943	..	2,969	..	1,500
1871	10,621	4,937	15,558	18,439	..	2,881	..	950
1872	10,121	3,807	13,928	27,376	..	13,448	..	4,208
1873	11,138	3,842	14,980	16,699	..	1,719	..	8,250
1874	10,003	3,979	13,982	14,522	..	540	..	..
1875	10,041	3,575	13,616	14,040	..	424	..	..
1876	9,555	3,612	13,167	13,329	..	162	5,500	..
1877	9,808	2,973	12,781	18,007	..	5,226	..	..
1878	10,517	3,681	14,198	12,815	1,383	..	..	..
1879	10,470	3,685	14,155	12,486	1,669	..	..	..
1880	8,547	3,403	11,950	11,870	80	..	..	..
1881	9,198	3,223	12,426	12,801	..	375	..	..
1882	8,253	3,247	11,500	11,212	288	..	..	..
1883	7,091	3,175	10,266	11,145	..	879	Grants for Mail Service.	..
1884	6,611	3,360	9,971	10,807	..	836	450	..
1885	6,017	3,032	9,049	†13,099	..	4,050	2,050	..
1886	6,580	3,606	10,186	†11,210	..	1,024	1,914	..
1887	4,500	3,454	8,044	†11,382	..	3,338	3,000	..
1888	5,841	3,425	9,266	†10,448	..	1,182	2,275	..
1889	4,891	3,518	8,409	†8,979	..	570	100	..
							†9,789	..
1890	5,656	3,073	8,729	9,032	..	303	..	..
1891	3,04	3,170	6,874	8,288	..	1,414	..	..
1892	4,352	3,339	7,691	7,445	246	..	..	..
1893	5,046	3,500	8,546	7,637	909	..	..	..
1894	4,688	6,377	11,065	9,777	1,288	..	..	..
1895	5,023	4,639	9,762	8,063	1,699	..	..	..
1896	4,807	4,353	9,160	8,872	288	..	..	..
Total Loans and Grants in Aid							£18,289	24,658

* £5,158 lent by Imperial Government without interest. The other was at 7 per cent.

† Including payments for Mail Service amounting in the five years to £9,789.

‡ Since 1889 the Imperial Government has paid the Mail subsidy and the Colony has

APPENDIX B.

SHIPPING.

Year.	Ships sighted.	Passed without any communication.	Traded with Boatmen.	Called.	Called and Traded with Boatmen.
1886	686	290	19	377	396
1887	619	193	109	317	427
1888	641	145	166	330	496
1889	604	55	261	288	549
1890	480	73	196	211	407
1891	502	39	252	211	463
1892	562	150	189	223	412
1893	516	124	193	199	392
1894	503	87	221	195	416
1895	854	464	187	203	390
1896	No record	No record	No record	151	—

APPENDIX C.

PENSIONS.

Year.	Pensions.	Revenue.
	£	£
1866	1,312	23,152
1867	1,354	23,026
1868	1,887	18,706
1869	1,758	20,780
1870	1,736	15,974
1871	1,564	15,558
1872	2,750	13,928
1873	3,255	14,980
1874	3,189	13,982
1875	3,107	13,616
1876	2,990	13,167
1877	3,009	12,781
1878	2,984	14,198
1879	2,816	14,155
1880	2,276	11,950
1881	1,817	12,426
1882	1,805	11,500
1883	1,805	10,266
1884	2,072	9,971
1885	2,298	9,049

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1896.

PENSIONS—(continued).

Year.	Pensions.	Revenue.
	£	£
1886	2,422	10,186
1887	2,203	8,044
1888	2,053	9,266
1889	1,890	8,409
1890	1,901	8,729
1891	1,848	6,874
1892	1,758	7,691
1893	1,758	8,546
1894	1,801	11,065*
1895	1,760	9,762
1896	1,801	9,160

* Includes 1904 stamps sold and afterwards repurchased by Government.

APPENDIX D.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

Year.	Assets.*	Liabilities.*	Excess of Liabilities.	Excess of Assets.
	£	£	£	£
1877	3,999	16,405	12,406	
1878	5,785	16,035	10,250	
1879	7,456	16,048	8,592	
1880	7,208	15,523	8,315	
1881	6,969	15,192	8,223	
1882	6,821	13,305	6,584	
1883	7,164	11,343	4,179	
1884	6,251	10,748	4,497	
1885	4,490	10,272	5,782	
1886	7,170	11,879	4,709	
1887	8,762	12,733	3,971	
1888	10,117	12,213	2,096	
1889	10,248	11,683	1,435	
1890	11,831	12,268	437	
1891	12,580	13,616	1,036	
1892	13,629	14,233	604	
1893	11,600	11,268	—	332
1894	18,066	16,232	—	1,834
1895	21,157	17,010	—	4,147
1896	23,705	18,883	—	4,822

* No record of Assets and Liabilities before 1877. Prior to 1886 the arrears due to Pensioners, on the 31st of December each year, were omitted from the Liabilities.

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APPENDIX E.

SAVINGS BANK.

Year.	No. of Depositors.	Due to Depositors 31st December.	Interest due for the year.
		£	£
1866	25	100	3
1867	47	254	7
1868	54	777	12
1869	68	1,270	30
1870	57	740	37
1871	42	737	28
1872	54	1,130	31
1873	62	1,374	37
1874	69	2,025	46
1875	76	2,319	54
10th Year. 1876	66	2,199	55
1877	66	3,480	75
1878	71	3,878	93
1879	75	4,005	68
1880	77	3,657	63
1881	68	4,032	65
1882	80	3,529	70
1883	80	3,519	74
1884	83	3,928	70
1885	72	4,153	74
20th Year. 1886	84	5,518	93
1887	84	5,862	142
1888	91	7,908	*158
1889	94	8,256	195
1890	112	10,608	215
1891	112	10,371	246
1892	108	12,144	274
1893	121	9,996	271
1894	145	13,615	303
1895	164	15,016	350
30th Year. 1896	180	16,409	388

* Bank safe stolen 1888.

SHIPPING REPORT FOR 1896.

T. HELENA.
1896.St. Helena,
5th February, 1897.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit the shipping statistics for 1896, which I regret to say shews, as compared with 1895, a decrease of 52 vessels or in tonnage 58,860 tons.

The American Whalers having ceased to make the Island their head quarters, fewer coolie ships and the increase of steamers, must account, in a measure, for the falling off in the shipping, but in my opinion the continued absence of a cable renders St. Helena almost valueless as a port of call for merchant vessels and war ships.

I have, &c.,

W. HEWETSON,
Commander R.N.
Harbour Master, &c.

To His Excellency,
W. Grey-Wilson, C.M.G.,
Governor of St. Helena.

METEOROLOGY, 1896.

Rainfall.

Hitherto the record of rainfall has only been registered in the Central, Eastern and Western Districts of the Island, but in the beginning of the year the Meteorological Council in England were generous enough to supply the instruments, and the record was started in the Northern and Southern Districts on the 1st February.

Notwithstanding the record was only taken for 11 months at the Southern Station, it exceeded the total for the whole year at the Central Station (the next wettest locality) by nearly half an inch, as will be seen from the following :—

	Inches.	
St. Matthew's Vicarage (Central)	40·509—8 $\frac{1}{4}$	more than 1895.
Longwood (East)	27·47—6 $\frac{1}{2}$	” ” ”
Woodlands (West)	25·38—1 $\frac{1}{2}$	” ” ”
Mount Pleasant (South)	40·98	} 11 months.
James Town (North)	6·38	

The greatest daily record 1·41 inches was recorded at the St. HELENA. Central Station on the 26th March. 1896.

The fall during the month of December was unusually heavy, being no less than 150 per cent. in excess of the average for the last 10 years.

Barometer.

The absolute range of the Barometer at St. Matthew's Vicarage was only 0·270 inches, the maximum 28·296 inches was attained on the 18th July, and the minimum 28·026 inches on the 15th January and 12th March.

The mean for the year at the same Station, at 9 a.m. was 28·137 inches.

Temperature.

The mean temperature at 9 a.m. at the Central Station was 61·5°, and the absolute maximum and minimum at the same Station was 77·6° and 50·2° on the 2nd March and 10th September, respectively.

No record was kept at Woodlands during the year, where the absolute readings are generally registered.

Wind.

The results from the Anemograph were similar to the preceding year, and on the whole a more continued record was secured.

The greatest daily force at 9 a.m. at St. Matthew's Vicarage was 6, corresponding to a pressure of 5·75 lbs. on the square foot, and the mean for the year equalled on the average a pressure of 1·6 lbs. on the square foot.

The daily variation was principally between the South and South South East, 47 per cent. being recorded from the former and 36 per cent. from the latter, with 13·2 per cent. from other quarters, and 3·8 per cent. of calm days.

H. S. HANDS.