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No. 974.

ST. HELENA.

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REPORT FOR 1917.

(For Report for 1916 see No. 933.)

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.  
*October, 1918.*



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1918.

No. 974.

## ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1917.

## I.—FINANCIAL.

## (A.) REVENUE.

The revenue collected during 1917 amounted to £7,109, being an increase of £162 on the revenue collected in 1916, and £1,591 less than the estimated revenue for 1917. This decrease on the estimated revenue was mainly due to reduction in the amount of dutiable commodities imported.

The Government Flax Mill funds contributed £120 to the general revenue of the Colony, and also gave a loan of £300 to the Government for the purpose of flax planting.

## (B.) EXPENDITURE.

The Colony's recorded expenditure for the year amounted to £15,966, or £3,175 more than the estimated expenditure. This includes a sum of £2,325 representing expenditure on the St. Helena Volunteers in 1915, passed through the account for 1917 as a final charge, and credited in the same account as an "Advance repaid." The actual expenditure for the year was therefore £13,641, or £850 in excess of estimate.

Savings amounting to £287 were effected under ten heads, whilst an additional actual saving of £25 was made under the head "Volunteers." Excess expenditure was principally incurred under "Post Office." Sea carriage for mails for 1915 and 1916 being met in 1917, and under "Public Works," due to necessary renovations of Public Buildings, repair of roads, rise in wages, etc.

The actual ordinary expenditure for 1917, exclusive of extraordinary military expenditure, was £1,266 less than for 1916.

## (C.) GRANTS IN AID.

A grant in aid of £2,200 was received from the Imperial Exchequer for general purposes.

## (D.) ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

The Colony's liabilities on 31st December, 1917, exceeded its assets by £5,199, being a set back of £4,331 as compared with the same date in 1916.

## (E.) CURRENCY.

Bills on the Crown Agents to the amount of £13,227 were issued during 1917, and remittances by money and postal orders amounted to £4,144, making a total of £17,371, as against £23,526 in 1916, being a decrease of £6,155. Considerable sums, however, were paid by means of Navy Bills for imports from South Africa.

The amount of cash, Imperial currency, and Bank of England notes in circulation at the end of the year was approximately £12,500.

## II.—TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRIES.

## (A.) TRADE.

*Revenue.*

The Customs revenue for the year 1917 amounted to £3,664 6s. 4d., or £23 17s. 11d. less than the revenue in 1916, and £1,570 13s. less than the estimated revenue for 1917. "Export Duties" on fibre and tow, totalling £438 13s., show an increase of £225 8s. 8d., due both to an increase in the amount of fibre and tow exported and to the provisions of Ordinance No. 3 of 1917, which, coming into force in September, increased the tax on both fibre and tow by 10s. per ton.

The chief decrease of revenue appears under "Wine, Beer, Spirits, Tobacco" (£538 2s. 4d.).

*Expenditure.*

The Customs expenditure for the year amounted to £589 4s. 4d., being an increase of £82 0s. 2d., as compared with 1916. This increase is due to the rebate of duty on liquor, cigars, and cigarettes consumed by the garrison.

*Imports.*

The total value of imports during 1917 amounted to £51,301, being £4,787 more than the imports in 1916. This increase is mainly due to the arrival of coal, and the higher first cost of foodstuffs. The total increased value of all foodstuffs imported amounted to £3,053.

The principal decreases in imports occurred in drugs, drapery, hardware, oilman stores, and machinery, whilst alcoholic liquors showed a decrease of £712 in value.

*Exports.*

For the first time in the history of the Colony the value of exports during the year exceeded the imports, which is highly satisfactory. Exports amounted to £54,830 as against £24,635 in 1916, an increase of £30,195.

This increase is due to the value of fibre and tow exported, £53,113, as against £21,907 in 1917, and is accounted for, not only by the higher prices obtained, but also by the increased amount exported, viz. :-742 tons, against 472 tons in 1916.

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

Crops throughout the year were favourable on the whole, mealier and oats as fodder and potatoes doing well. Seed for the latter, however was scarce, owing to the restrictions on the customary import from the United Kingdom, and the fact that many growers had not saved their own seed. Two tons were obtained in September from South Africa, but proved unproductive in the climate and soil. It is unfortunate that no cereals are now grown for human consumption, as they were to some extent in the past. The unchecked depredations of rats and birds would, however, seriously militate against their success at the present time. Could the necessary funds and the co-operation of the inhabitants be ensured there seems no reason why rats should not be practically exterminated by means of one or other of the bacterial preparations now obtainable, to the great benefit of the island generally.

A satisfactory rainfall made hay crops plentiful, and pasturage good. The pasturage area, however, was somewhat reduced during the year to be put under flax, and it seems likely to be still further reduced for the same purpose. The raising of forest trees from sea I

has been satisfactory, and a number of saplings of the indigenous but disappearing Redwood tree have been obtained and are doing well. Vegetable gardens have suffered for the want of reliable seed, which in normal times is imported from England, locally saved seed seldom proving satisfactory. A certain quantity were obtained early in the year from Messrs. Sutton and Sons and issued gratis to small growers, and their produce helped to tide over shortages in food supply which occurred during the year.

### (C.) INDUSTRIES.

Fibre.—The continual rise in prices for New Zealand hemp on the London market, and the very fortunate position by which the Colony has been enabled to get practically the whole of its produce to the United Kingdom without undue delay, combined to make the year a very prosperous one for the industry. There were ten opportunities for shipments during the year as against eleven in 1916, and on two occasions only was there insufficient space to ship all that was ready, and this was got away by November.

The following figures for the years 1916 and 1917 show the satisfactory results of the working of the Government Mill

	1916.	1917.
Number of working days	278	273
Leaves milled (tons)	1,708½	1,764
Fibre produced (tons)	180	167½
Tow produced (tons)	42½	79½
Receipts from sale of produce	£9,193	£14,290
Expenditure ..	£8,061	£12,393
Average price obtained for fibre per ton	.. £49 16 0	£81 11 6
Ditto ditto tow ..	£28 5 0	£47 3 9
	<i>Expenditure.</i>	
<i>Local payments.</i>	1916	1917
Purchase of leaves ..	£4,066	£6,918
Cartage and Lighterage.	294	386
Salaries and Wages ..	1,155	1,179
Freight ..	703	715
Export Tax ..	102	121
Contribution to Colonial Revenue.. ..		120
Miscellaneous ..	146	408 *
	— £6,466	— £9,847
New construction	302	275
<i>London payments.</i>		
Freight ..	245	133
Oil	467	183
Repaid to Imperial Government .. ..		1,400
Miscellaneous ..	159	235
	871	— £1,951
New engine ..	422	
New hydraulic press ..		320
	£8,061	£12,393

\* Includes £300 loan to Colonial Government for flax planting.

Leaves were purchased from 68 different small growers, as against 61 in 1916, the total amount paid to these growers during the year being no less than £6,918. The circulation of this large sum is a measure of the prosperity of those inhabitants who grow flax, which is due alone to the inflated prices obtained for fibre and tow caused by the War. The high proportion of tow produced points to the fact that growers cut their leaves too young in order to benefit by these high prices.

The 44 h.p. suction gas plant at the Government Mill started working in the middle of February, and a very considerable saving in the cost of fuel oil has been made thereby. There is now sufficient reserve of power at the mill to increase considerably the output when the supply of leaves is increased.

Various improvements were carried out during the year at the mill, and the erection of a hydraulic press, which started working early in June, has resulted in a saving of over 35 per cent. on freight charges. Additional storage space, much needed for dry fibre, was also provided during the year at the mill.

The experiment of granting small plots of Crown land to inhabitants for the purpose of growing New Zealand flax, tried with success on a small scale in 1915 and 1916, was largely extended during 1917.

By this scheme loans have been made to those granted plots, in the form of flax suckers to the value of £5 in each case, repayment of which, together with a small rate of interest, is secured on the first crop and deducted from the proceeds of its sale to the Government Mill. The facilities thus offered have been readily taken up by would be small growers, 38 plots totalling about 33 acres having been granted by the end of 1917, on which approximately 100,000 suckers have been planted.

A loan of £300 from the Government Flax Mill funds was utilised in clearing, fencing, and planting two Government fields at Longwood about 7½ acres in extent, with 30,000 flax suckers. Oats and vetch planted between the rows of suckers provided a very good crop of dry fodder, and seemed in no way to hinder the growth of the flax. The revenue of the Colony will undoubtedly benefit in years to come by the Government planting its own flax as funds become available.

*Private Mills.*—Messrs. Solomon & Company's mill at Broadbottom, commenced work in April. Together with their other mill in Sandy Bay, this firm milled a total of 2,355 tons of leaves from which 233 tons of fibre and 82 tons of tow were produced during the year. Messrs. Deason Brother's mill at Hutts Gate worked throughout the year, milling about 2,000 tons of leaves, from which they produced 201 tons of fibre and 98 tons of tow during the year.

At the end of 1917 there were 175 males and 42 females exclusively employed in the flax industry at the four mills, as against 150 males and 36 females at the end of 1916.\*

The estimated extent of land under flax cultivation increased during the year from 750 acres to about 900 acres.

*Lace Industry.*—Mainly owing to the impossibility of getting the proper thread for lace making, this industry is quiescent for the time being. A certain amount is made of very inferior thread and sold locally, which helps to keep the industry alive to some extent, but there would be no advantage in incurring the expense of reopening

the lace school under present conditions. The sum in the Government Savings Bank to the credit of the school on 31st December, 1917, was £146 17s. 7d., the value of work then unpaid for or unsold amounting to £31 4s. 4d..

(D.) SHIPPING.

The number of vessels calling at the Island during the year was 51, being nine more than in 1916, with a total tonnage of 213,260. These were made up of the following nationalities: viz. :—British 42, American 3, Dutch 2, Norwegian 2, Swedish 2.

The mail service was continued by the Union Castle Company, whose vessels made 21 calls from England and South Africa.

The total number of vessels sighted during the year was 78, being 40 less than in 1916. Twenty vessels entered and cleared at the Customs during the year carrying cargo for the island, shipping and discharging cargo amounting to 4,976 tons as compared with 3,876 tons in 1916.

The number of children on the rolls of the eight public elementary schools during the year was as follows :—

	Boys.	Girls.	Total
Government schools (3 in number)	157	185	342
Other schools (5 in number)	..	180	161
			341

The teaching of the usual elementary subjects and needlework has continued throughout the year. Miss Short, the head teacher, has acted as Supervisor of Schools during the whole year.

The usual classes for pupil teachers have been being regularly during the year. Ten candidates sat for examination of whom five were from Government Schools.

The long felt want of technical instruction was met in the month of August by arrangements made with the Officer Commanding Troops. Since then 18 young men and boys have received continuous instruction from skilled men of the garrison in carpentry, telephone work, plumbing and fitting, blacksmithing, and shoemaking. Many of these youths have shown good aptitude at one or other of these trades, and their progress gives them promise of lucrative employment in the future.

Owing to the ravages of white ants the Country School building has become unsafe for occupation. Since July, therefore, the school has been held at Lufkins Tower, a residence which is the property of the Government and well adapted for the purpose.

Prosecutions under the Education Ordinance numbered 24, a decrease of five on those during 1916. The appointment of an Attendance Officer from the month of September, 1917, has resulted in the better attendance of children at school and a better idea of punctuality amongst teachers.

IV.-- GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

(A.) HOSPITAL.

There were 139 admissions to the hospital during the year, 85 being males and 54 females, being a decrease of 29 as compared with 1916. The daily average of patients was 7.1.

There were 11 deaths, being a percentage of 7.9.

The Lady Superintendent returned from leave early in the year. Of the three nurses two completed their three years in the Colony in March and November respectively, but nurses could not be obtained to relieve them. The former of these remained at duty until August, when she was obliged through ill health to return to England. The latter was still on duty at the end of the year, in spite of bad health.

Dr. O. J. Murphy arrived from England on 2nd January as Acting Colonial Surgeon.

(B.) SAVINGS BANK.

The number of depositors on 31st December was 145.

The total sum deposited during the year was £2,727 2s., whilst withdrawals amounted to £1,903 8s. 6d.

The expenditure of, the bank for the year amounted to £37-0 3s. 6d., being £19 2s. 6d. more than its revenue.

The amount standing to the credit of depositors on 31st December was £9,594 16s.

In September, Mr. J. Homagee, I.S.O., the Manager of the Bank, was taken seriously ill, and Mr. S. Cullen was appointed Acting Manager. At the end of the year Mr. Homagee resigned this and the other Government offices held by him.

VI.--JUDICIAL STATISTICS.

(A.) CRIMINAL.

*Supreme Court.*—No cases were committed for trial before the Supreme Court during the year.

*Police Court.*—210 cases were dealt with by the Police Magistrate, an increase of 107 compared with 1916. Of these 201 were summarily convicted, offences including 24 under the Education, 30 under the Road Tax, and 50 under the Poor Law Ordinances.

Seventy-seven trivial cases were dealt with by the police without bringing them into Court.

There were three cases of flogging during the year under the Juvenile Smoking Ordinance.

(B.) PRISONS.

Thirty-six persons were committed to gaol during the year, against 20 during 1916. The daily average number in gaol was 2.48.

The cost of maintaining the gaol was £122 4s. 6d.

(C.) POLICE FORCE.

The regular Police Force consists of one sergeant and four constables, one only of whom is stationed in the country districts. Special constables were employed in Jamestown for a short period to abate the nuisance of stone throwing by night.

VII.—VITAL STATISTICS.

(A.) POPULATION.

The estimated civil population on 31st December, 1917, was 3,634, as compared with 3,604 on the same date of 1916.

There were 54 emigrants and 38 immigrants during the year, as compared with 54 and 58 respectively in 1916.

Amongst the civil population, deaths amounted to 50, *i.e.*, a rate of 13.7 per 1,000, as against 51 and 13.6 in 1916.

Births numbered 96, *i.e.*, a rate of 26·41 per 1,000, as against 10& and 29·96 in 1916. Illegitimate children registered in 1917 numbered 28, against 24 in 1916.

Of the deaths registered 14 were over 70, 5 over 80, and 1 over 90 years of age. There were 29 deaths in Jamestown and 21 in the Country districts.

Marriages during the year numbered 33, an increase of 9 on 1916.

#### (B.) PUBLIC HEALTH.

Early in the year there were epidemics of dysentery and influenza, both of a mild type and causing no deaths. Later in the year these maladies reappeared in a more serious form, and directly or indirectly accounted for several deaths. A mild outbreak of chicken pox occurred in December, necessitating the closing and disinfecting of all schools. There were no cases of diphtheria or enteric fever.

Frequent shortage of food supplies, due not so much to the infrequency of steamship service as to the failure of importers to import sufficient to meet such contingencies, threatened seriously to undermine the health and stamina of the people, especially those dwelling in and around Jamestown.

The entire want of any qualified dental attention in the island, beyond the extraction of teeth by the Colonial Surgeon, tends affect the general health in an increasing degree. The enervating climate, the nature of the water, and the high consumption of sugar by the inhabitants all tend to make dental caries very rapid, and to this want of dental attention the general low stamina of the inhabitants is mainly due.

#### (C.) SANITARY.

There is nothing of importance to report from a sanitary point of view. The keeping of pigs in Jamestown for the purpose of augmenting the food supply was recommended by a majority of the members of the Board of Health, but was disallowed for medical and sanitary reasons, records showing that, in years gone by, diseases were traceable to the keeping of pigs in the proximity of dwelling houses in the tropical climate and confined limits of Jamestown Valley.

The water supply throughout the year has been ample.

There were three prosecutions and convictions under the Public Health Ordinance during the year.

#### (D.) CLIMATE.

##### METEOROLOGICAL STATION, HUTTS GATE.

*Barometer.*—The mean pressure for the year was 28.104 inches, 28'068 being the mean for the previous year.

*Temperature.*—The mean temperature for 1917 was 61°·5 as against 61'6 in 1916. The absolute maximum recorded was 84°·0 on the 10th March, as compared with 84°·0 on the 17th February of the preceding year. The lowest maximum 68°·9 was recorded on the 8th and 29th October. The absolute minimum was 50°·9 on the 5th September, as against 49°·0 on the 8th May of 1916.

*Rainfall.*—The total rainfall was 49.430 inches, 31'020 being the total for 1916. The maximum fall was recorded on the 28th March and measured 1'160 inches. This month was particularly wet, the total fall being 9'160 inches in 30 days. The number of days on which

rain fell during the year was 278 being 20 days more than in the previous year. The month of December was abnormally dry when only ·760 inches of rain fell.

*Wind.*—The mean force for the year was 2.2 which is equivalent to slightly over 14 miles per hour and is the normal figure. October was the windiest month. 14 calm days were recorded during the year as follows :—2 days in January, 3 in March, 1 in April, 3 in May, and 5 in June. There were the same number of calm days in 1916.

The direction of the wind during the year was as follows :—

E.	5 days.
S.E.	256
S.S.E.	62 "
E.S.E.	14 "
S.	14 "
Calm	14

### VIII.—POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE SERVICES.

#### (A.) POST OFFICE.

*Revenue.*—The gross revenue from all sources amounted to £780 11s. 10d., being a decrease of £5 11s. 6d. on that for 1916. Sale of stamps and postcards showed an increase of £64 Os. 8d., due mainly to better sale to non-residents.

*Expenditure.*—Expenditure for the year amounted to £656 9s. 5d., an increase of £384 4s. 2d., due to the payment of £422 14s. 2d. to the General Post Office, London, for the sea carriage of mails for both 1915 and 1916.

*Mail Matter.*—There was a diminution of 62 mail bags and 1,937 parcels from, and 7 mail bags and 67 parcels to, the United Kingdom. A decrease of 20 mail bags and 53 parcels to, and 14 mail bags from, South Africa is also noted.

*Money and Postal Orders.*—Money orders for South Africa totalled £1,295 19s. 6d., an increase of £642 18s. 11d., whilst money and postal orders issued for the United Kingdom showed a decrease of £1,824 2s. 1d. Total transactions in these showed a net decrease of £2,679 for the year as compared with 1916.

#### (B.) TELEGRAPHS.

Communication by the Eastern Telegraph Company's cables was maintained throughout the year, and no changes were made in the tariff charges. The Company's staff on 31st December numbered 25.

#### (C.) TELEPHONES.

There were no changes in the administrative system, the cost of which is principally met by private subscription. Receipts for 1917 were £64 12s. 4d., expenditure £79 1s. 9d.

### IX.—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

#### (A.) NEW ZEALAND FLAX.

No industry yet attempted in the Colony has succeeded so well as the production of fibre and tow from *Phormium tenax*. With good rainfall and on friable soil it thrives with little or no attention, and no insect pest or disease has yet appeared—ideal characteristics where absence of constant care and attention have to be contended with.

By the clearing of useless undergrowth much land can yet be made available for its cultivation, and it is hoped that planting both by the Government, and small proprietors will be much extended in the near future.

#### (B.) ROADS.

The country roads suffer in proportion to the increase of the heavy flax traffic. Whereas in 1916 the actual weight of leaves, fibre, and tow in transit over the roads was 3,933 tons, in 1917 the weight amounted to 6,022 tons. Expenditure on these roads was therefore necessarily heavy, and amounted to £1,029, an average of £27 per mile for the existing 38 miles of metalled roads, besides which there are some 26 miles of minor tracks which require attention, being much used by pack animals. To help meet this necessary expenditure the export tax on fibre and tow was increased by Ordinance No. 3 of 1917, which came into force at the end of September; this increase of tax brought in £132 5s. 6d. by the end of the year, the whole of which was spent on the upkeep of the rural roads.

Roads and bridges in Jamestown were kept in order at an expenditure of £61 2s. 11d.

The amount collected during the year under the Road Tax Ordinance was £58 4s., being £4 7s. more than in 1916. The tax was paid by 388 persons, an increase of 29 on the previous year. There were 30 prosecutions during 1917 for non-payment of the tax.

#### (C.) LAND GRANTS AND GENERAL VALUE OF LAND.

Thirty-eight grants of land amounting to about 33 acres, were made by the Commissioners of Crown Property during the year for the purpose of flax planting.

No sales of land took place during the year. It cannot therefore be stated to what extent its value has appreciated beyond that hitherto estimated, viz. :—£5 to £10 per acre for fair to good pasture land. Land suitable for flax planting, even with fibre at pre-war prices, should fetch considerably more than this, whilst the amount of pasture land broken up for flax cultivation should give an increased value to that which remains pasture land.

#### (D.) RATE OF WAGES AND COST OF LIVING.

The general rate of wages for the greater part of 1917 was 2s. a day for men and is 3d. a day for women. A general rise of 3d. per day was granted to government employees early in November on account of the rise in food prices, on the understanding that it would be discontinued when these prices resumed a more normal level.

The cost of living again increased during the year, as shown by the following retail prices of the staple articles of food which have been from time to time fixed by Proclamation since the beginning of the War :—

	1916 prices.	1917 prices.	Increase % over 1916.
Flour ..	3½d.	4d.	14.2
Rice ..	2¾d.	3d.	27.2
Sugar ..	4d.	4½d.	nil.
Bread ..	41d.	5d.	11.1
Salt Beef ..	9½d.	1/4	68.4
Lard ..	1/2	1/8	42.8

Contract price of fresh meat rose from 112d. to 1s. *lid.* per pound, and fish; the chief food of the poor, was scarce and expensive throughout the year.

#### (E.) DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

##### *Public Works Department.*

The total expenditure for the year under " Works Recurrent," inclusive of personal charges, amounted to £2,454 1s. 1d. Of this amount no less than £1,029 10s. 1d. was spent on the rural roads. The sum of £631 16s. 2d. was expended on " Works Extraordinary," which included the completion of the water supply for the Half Tree Hollow and Laddow Hill districts.

#### (F.) MISCELLANEOUS.

The interest and energy given to the fibre industry, and the fact that under war conditions the Colony has been able to ship practically the whole of its produce, has again been the pleasant feature of the year under review. The energy in this direction, however, has resulted in a gradual decline in the production of farm and dairy produce. Fresh milk is only obtainable in insufficient quantities, and at a high price, and locally made butter is generally unobtainable. This commodity, together with margarine, is now imported from South Africa in increasing quantities.

The inhabitants again suffered during the year from temporary shortages of foodstuffs of one sort or another. Old customs die hard, and importers, accustomed to a regular monthly service of steamers, could not bring themselves to import sufficient to tide over inevitable irregularities in that service. This recurring state of affairs culminated towards the end of October in a total absence of many essential foodstuffs for a period of about ten days. This however was looked upon as the fortune of war by the poorer classes, who bore it without grumbling, and it is pleasant to record the fact that there were no disturbances or demonstrations of any sort.

Owing to the restrictions on the export of foodstuffs from the United Kingdom early in the year importers turned their attention to South Africa with success. No difficulty was found in obtaining what was required from merchants in the Union, with the exception of rice, the export of which from the Union was prohibited in October. Arrangements were therefore made with the Mauritius Government, who volunteered to supply this Government, and its thanks and those of the inhabitants must be recorded for the facilities afforded by that Government.

During November instructions were received from the Secretary of State for the importation of six months supply of foodstuffs, and those importers who might finance this and who had not signified their intention of closing their business were approached, with a view to their obtaining the supply. They, however, would not undertake to do so. Arrangements were therefore made to obtain it on Government account, which has proved satisfactory to consumers generally.

W. DIXON,

The Castle,  
St. Helena,  
July, 1918.

Lt.-Colonel. R.M.A., Acting Governor.