

No. 1039.

ST, HELENA.

REPORT FOR 1919.

(For Report for 1918 see No. 1010.)

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

August, 1920.



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1920.

No. 1039.

ST. HELENA.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1919.

I.—FINANCIAL.

(A.) REVENUE.

The revenue for the year under review, exclusive of a grant-in-aid of £3,800, amounted to £8,369, being £730 more than the revenue collected during the previous year. This improvement was mainly due to increased Post Office receipts. The Government Flax Mill contributed a sum of £400 towards the general revenue of the Colony, being £100 more than in the preceding year.

(B.) EXPENDITURE.

The expenditure during the year amounted to £11,432, being £1,115 less than the expenditure of the previous year, due chiefly to the disbandment of the local corps of "St. Helena Rifles" on 31st March, 1919.

(C.) ASSETS AND LIABILITIES.

On the 31st December, 1919, the Colony's liabilities exceeded its assets by £1,365, which is an improvement of £743 on the figures of the previous year.

(D.) CURRENCY.

Bills on the Crown Agents to the amount of £11,663 were issued during the year.

No specie was imported or exported, and the amount of coin and treasury notes in circulation is estimated at £12,000.

II.—TRADE, AGRICULTURE, AND INDUSTRIES.

(A.) TRADE.

Revenue.

The Customs revenue for the year under report amounted to £2,838, as against £3,896 in the previous year, being a decrease of £1,058. This decrease is attributable to a variety of causes, the principal being the disbandment of the local volunteers, the withdrawal of the war garrison, and the temporary closing down of two flax mills. The unemployment thereby caused, together with the high cost of living, resulted in fewer imports. Further, as there was a large stock of food-stuffs on hand at the end of 1918, there were fewer importations in 1919. Large quantities of flax and tow remained unshipped at the end of the year owing to want of tonnage, thus considerably reducing the export duties that would otherwise have accrued to revenue.

Expenditure.

The expenditure for the year on Customs services amounted to £487, as compared with £360 in 1918. Refunds of export dues on fibre, and of duty on beer supplied to the garrison mainly account for the increase of £127.

Imports.

The total value of imports in 1919 amounted to £44,084, being £5,403 less than in 1918. Increases in value appear under drapery (£2,719), grain (£458), hardware (£530), leather (£545), and rice (£500).

The principal decreases appear under beer (£736), butter and margarine (£577), oilman's stores (£3,032), flour (£1,985), sugar (£1,797), machinery (£1,192). The last item is accounted for by the fact that two hydraulic presses, valued at £1,205, were imported in 1918.

Exports.

The value of exports during the year amounted to £30,878, as compared with £63,502 in 1918, showing a decrease of £32,624. This is due to a lesser quantity of fibre and tow having been shipped and to the fall in the market price of these two exports, as shown in the following figures :—

Fibre and Tow Exports.

1918 ..	718 tons valued at	£61,136
1919 ..	603 " " "	27,108
		£34,028
	giving a decrease of	£34,028

Exports of wool, and hides and skins show slight increases amounting to £1,209 and £227 respectively.

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

The year under review was again a bad one from an agricultural point of view, climatic conditions being unfavourable. The summer was particularly dry and was followed by an abnormally cold and wet winter. Cattle suffered severely and large owners lost heavily. On the other hand forage crops were good. Potatoes, too, did well. About 3¼ tons of high class seed were imported by the Government for poor growers. Agriculture generally appears to have been more than ever neglected owing to the more lucrative and less troublesome occupation of flax-growing.

Forestry also appears to have been much neglected. This is the more to be regretted in view of the shortage of timber for building purposes and especially of white-ant resisting kinds.

Sales of fruit from the Maldivia Garden amounted to £61 13s. 10d., against an expenditure of £47 19s. 2d., which, after paying the gardener's wages, left a balance of £13 14s. 8d.

The Government pasture lands at "Botley's Lay" produced a revenue of £105 16s. 7d., against an expenditure of £90 13s. 4d. A shed for the housing of sick cattle was erected and has proved a great boon to poor owners.

(C.) INDUSTRIES.

Fibre.—As anticipated in last year's report, the wholesale harvesting of short and immature leaves in order to take advantage of the high prices then obtaining led to a shortage of supply during the year under report. Consequently the Government Mill had to close down for six months of the year between April and November. The total number of working days amounted to only 74, during which 396½ tons of leaves were dealt with by the mill, producing 40¼ tons of fibre and 27 tons of tow. The average prices obtained on the London market were £40 15s. Od. for fibre and £35 for tow, as compared with £97 and £71 respectively in 1918. During the months the mill was closed, the permanent hands were all continuously employed in clearing land and planting flax, about 19 acres of land being thus dealt with. A concrete floor was laid in the stripper shed, replacing the old wooden floor which was becoming dangerous to the workmen.

As a result of the year's working, the mill's surplus of assets over liabilities on the 31st December, 1919, amounted to £11,374 as compared with a surplus of £13,100 on the corresponding date in 1918, thus showing a decrease of £1,726 on the year's working. Prospects are, however, better for next year when there should be an abundance of mature leaves to keep the mill running throughout the year, whilst the additional clearing and planting carried out during the year under review will bring in a good return in future years and help to ensure a regular rotation of crops.

Private Mills.—One of Messrs. Solomon & Company's mills and Messrs. Deason Brother's mill worked continuously throughout the year, the former miffing 1,757 tons of leaves and producing 190 tons of fibre and 45 tons of tow, and the latter milling 2,300 tons and producing 220 tons of fibre and 70 tons of tow. Messrs. Solomon & Company's mill employed 40 males and 7 females, whilst Messrs. Deason's mill employed 130 males and 50 females.

Lace.—The experience of the two years which have elapsed since the closing of the Government Lace School in 1917 has been sufficient to show that lace-making will never take its place as a permanent industry of the Island without expert supervision and organisation. There can be no doubt that the island girls possess an extraordinary aptitude for lace making and embroidery work of every description, and that the present standard of work produced, which still bears the impress of the Government Lace School, would compare favourably with the similar products of any country in the world. But without expert supervision the present high standard of work is bound to deteriorate and the number of skilled workers to diminish. Another not less important want is that of a local agent to act as a medium or connecting link between the island workers and the outside market. These two vital wants, namely, that of an expert supervisor and of a distributing agent would be ideally fulfilled by the appointment of an expert agent representing some business firm in South Africa or elsewhere. With careful supervision and organisation on business lines, lace-making in the Island might be developed so as to become a profitable industry.

ST. HELENA, 1919.

(D.) SHIPPING.

The number of vessels calling at the island during the year under review was 28, being seven less than in 1918. All of these were of British nationality, except one French and one Norwegian. Their total tonnage was 89,548. The following war vessels visited the Colony Ships "Birmingham" and "Rinaldo," and H.M. Trawlers "Silesia" and "Nivonia."

In addition to the above 23 vessels called off the port to signal or to trade with the licensed boatmen. Twenty vessels entered and cleared at the port of Jamestown, shipping and discharging 3,648 tons, as compared with 5,023 tons in 1918.

The mail service was continued by the Union Castle Company, whose vessels made ten outward and nine homeward calls.

III.—EDUCATION.

There are eight elementary schools in the Island, of which three are Government Schools. Of the remainder three are supported by the Hussey Charity Fund, one by the Benevolent Society, and one by the Bishop of the Diocese assisted by an annual grant from the Colonial Government.

The number of children attending these schools during the year was :

	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Government Schools . .	146	184	330
Other Schools . .	220	149	369

in addition to the usual elementary subjects, special attention is given to the following subjects in the higher standards :—Advanced arithmetic, history, geography, English composition, hygiene and needlework.

Examinations were held every quarter by the Acting Supervisor, and the results of the annual examination held in December show satisfactory progress.

The classes for pupil teachers held by the Acting Supervisor were regularly attended by young teachers both from Government and Church Schools. At the annual examination all candidates passed creditably, and four of the number gained positions in the 1st Class Division.

Attendance at all the schools was exceptionally good throughout the year, and there were no prosecutions under the Education Ordinance.

IV.—GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

(A.) HOSPITAL.

There were 213 admissions to the hospital during the year, an increase of 49 as compared with 1918.

There were six deaths, a percentage of 2·8 as compared with eight deaths and a percentage of 4·8 in 1918.

Miss Hart, the Lady Superintendent, resigned towards the end of the year owing to failing health, after 14 years' devoted service in a positions of exceptional difficulty and responsibility, and was succeeded by Miss Bennett.

(B.) SAVINGS BANK.

On the 31st December of the year under review there were 163 depositors having accounts with the Government Savings Bank, as against 142 depositors in 1918.

Cash deposits in 1919 amounted to £3,094 3s. 7d. as against £8,895 17s. 10d. in 1918. This decrease may be accounted for by taking into consideration the sum of £4,828 13s. 0d., a deposit made by the Colonial Government to meet the Homagee defalcations discovered in 1918. Deducting this amount from the total deposits it will be found that the deposits for 1919 are £973 Os. 5d. less than in 1918.

The repayments to depositors in 1919 amounted to £3,416 8s. 5d., as against £2,166 8s. 7d. in 1918, an increase of £1,249 19s. 10d. This increase may be accounted for by the departure from the island of the war garrison and one or two substantial depositors. This also accounts for the decrease in cash deposits.

On 31st December, 1919, the sum of £16,680 7s. 3d. was standing in the Colonial Treasury to the credit of the depositors, as against £16,666 16s. 6d. in 1918. In view of the decrease in deposits and the increase of repayments the slight increase of £13 10s. 9d. does not call for any observations.

Stock to the value of £12,086 4s. 10d. cost price was invested on the 31st December, 1919—a slight increase of £4 48s. 0d. on the previous year.

 V.—JUDICIAL STATISTICS.

(A.) CRIMINAL.

Supreme Court.—Four cases were committed for trial before the Supreme Court during the year under review.

Police Court.—The Police Magistrate dealt with 76 cases as compared with 112 in the previous year—of this number 10 were prosecutions under the Drainage and Water Ordinances and one under the Spirit Licence Ordinance.

There were three cases of whipping during the year, all of which were for theft.

(B.) PRISONS.

Twenty-six prisoners were committed to the gaol during the year, being 11 less than in the previous year. The daily average number in gaol was 36. The cost of maintaining the gaol was £170 8s. 0d.

 VI.—VITAL STATISTICS.

(A.) POPULATION.

The estimated civil population on the 31st December amounted to 3,468, being 6 less than in 1918.

Civilian emigrants numbered 198 and immigrants 33 as compared with 79 and 23 in 1918. The increase in emigrants is partly due to 68 men leaving, as labourers, for Ascension.

Amongst the civilian population, deaths amounted to 29 and births to 124, as against 33 deaths and 112 births in 1918. Illegitimate births registered numbered 34 or 2 less than in the previous year.

The death-rate was 7.94 per thousand, and the birth rate 33.98, being the lowest and highest respectively since 1909.

Marriages solemnised during the year numbered 27 as against 37 in 1918.

(B.) PUBLIC HEALTH.

The general health of the Colony during the year has been remarkably good, taking into consideration the state of semi-starvation in which a large portion of the poorer classes live.

The want of a qualified dentist becomes more pressing every year. As the Colonial surgeon reports: "The state of the teeth and degree of oral sepsis found amongst the people of St. Helena, through years of neglect, is truly appalling, and is no doubt responsible for the large proportion of septic cases dealt with at the Civil Hospital. A great part of the Colonial surgeon's time in the out-patient department of the hospital is taken up with extracting teeth which in most cases could have been saved by the timely aid of a dentist." Hitherto all efforts to induce a qualified dentist to visit the Island have proved unsuccessful, mainly on the score of expense.

(C.) SANITARY.

Various matters of minor importance have been considered and dealt with by the Board of Health.

Slaughter-houses, stables, and mineral water factories have been effectually supervised.

The drainage system has worked satisfactorily and the water supply has proved good and sufficient.

There have been no prosecutions under the Public Health Ordinance during the year.

(D.) CLIMATE.

METEOROLOGICAL STATION, HINTS GATE.

Barometer.—The mean pressure for the year was 28.095, 28.091 being the mean for the previous year.

Temperature.—The mean temperature was 61.2°, being practically the same (61.4°) in 1918. The absolute maximum temperature, 82.5°, was recorded on the 29th March, compared with 80.9° on the 9th March of the previous year. The lowest maximum, 68.1°, was registered on the 14th and 15th September.

50.5° was the absolute minimum reading and this was recorded on the 19th August, the 6th and 8th September, 50.9° being the lowest in the year before, recorded on the 5th September. The summer of the year under report was a particularly hot one, and the winter cold and wet.

Rainfall.—The total rainfall for the year was 41.560 inches, as against 40.130 inches in 1918. The maximum fall of 2.030 inches was recorded on the 11th July. July and September were very wet months; during the latter month rain fell every day. The number of rainy days for the year was 263, being 16 days more than in the previous year.

Wind.-The anemometer had to be dismantled for repair in September, consequently the readings for eight months only are available. The mean force for the period was 2.2, the mean force for the previous year being the same.

The direction of the wind for the eight months ending August was :--

S.S.W.	..	..	1 day.
E.S.E.		..	5 days.
E.	..	..	1 day.
S.E.	..		107 days.
S.S.E.		.	110
S	..		
Calm		.	10 ,,

VII.-POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE SERVICES.

(A) POST OFFICE.

Revenue.-The postal revenue for the year amounted to £1,65516s. 6d., being £995 Os. 3d. more than the receipts of the previous year. This increase is mainly due to a revival of the activities of stamp collectors and dealers. The sale of stamps to non-residents amounted to £1,298.

Expenditure.-The expenditure of the department amounted to £709 4s. 11d., an increase of £480 Os. 5d. as compared with 1918. This represents charges for sea carriage of mails for the years 1917 and 1918, which were paid to the General Post Office, London, during the year under review.

The net income to the Colony from postal transactions was £946 11s. 7d.

Mail Matter.-The following figures show the amount of mail matter dealt with during the year, as compared with 1918.

From the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

	1918.	1919.
Bags of mails ..	202 .	180
Parcels	1,621 .	1,956
Registered articles	916 .	1,383
Insured letters ..	..	3

To the United Kingdom.

Bags of mails ..	..	79 .	83
Parcels ..	..	232 .	379
Registered articles	..	1,718 .	2,015
Insured letters ..		1 .	1

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

	1918.	1919.
To United Kingdom	£2,351 ..	£2,222
To South Africa ..	2,114 ..	5,630
From United Kingdom	1,396 ..	1,916
From South Africa	315	1R1

Commission received on the above transactions amounted to £69 14s. 9d., as compared with £48 1s. 9d. in the previous year.

(B.) TELEGRAPHS.

There was a slight reduction in tariff charges on telegrams to Great Britain and most of the European countries. The Eastern Telegraph Company's staff was further reduced during the year and numbered eleven on the 31st December.

(C.) TELEPHONES.

Receipts for 1919 were £79 and expenditure £83, compared with £85 and £80 respectively for the previous year.

VIII.-GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

(A.) ROADS.

The amount spent on the maintenance and improvement of main roads was £848, out of which the export tax on fibre and tow contributed £301. Generally speaking, the roads are in a satisfactory condition, considering the difficult nature of the country, want of more expert supervision, and the absence of any mechanical contrivances for stone breaking and rolling, and the constant wear and tear caused by the heavy flax traffic.

In addition to the above a sum of £67 was expended in keeping the streets in Jamestown in a proper state of repair.

The amount collected during the year under the Road Tax Ordinance amounted to £60 19s. Od., as compared with £58 10s. Od. in the previous year.

There were no prosecutions for non-payment of the tax.

(B.) LAND GRANTS AND GENERAL VALUE OF LAND.

Twelve grants of land, amounting to 11 acres, were made during the year for the purpose of flax planting.

The value of the land remains the same.

(C.) RATE OF WAGES AND COST OF LIVING.

As will be seen by the following comparative table the cost of essential foodstuffs greatly increased during the year under review, and as there was no increase in the rate of wages it is difficult to understand how the labouring classes exist :-

	1918.	1919.
Flour	4d. per lb...	5d. per lb.
Bread	5d. per 1½ lb. loaf	5d. per loaf.
Sugar	4d. to 5d. per lb. . .	9½d. to 10d. per lb.
Dripping ..	1s. 4d. to 1s. 6d. per lb. . .	2s. 8d. per lb.
Tea	is. 8d. to 2s. 2d. per lb. . .	2s. 4d. to 3s. per lb.
Salt	per lb.	2d. to 2½d. per lb.
Rice	3d. per lb...	4½d. per lb.

The cost of clothing, too, of an inferior quality, has increased, making the lot of the St. Helenian most unenviable.

(D.) DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

Public Works Department.

The expenditure for the year under "Works Recurrent" amounted to £2,093 9s. 1d., of which £848 was spent on the rural roads. No special works were undertaken.

Under "Works Extraordinary" a sum of £227 10s. 1d. was expended, which included the relaying of a section of the water supply for the Ruperts Valley district and a special grant of £50 towards the Peace celebrations.

Poor Board.

The revenue of the Poor Board for the year amounted to £723 11s. 5d. and the expenditure £718 8s. 4d., as compared with £852 15s. 10d. and £480 4s. 5d., respectively, in the previous year.

Public Market.

During the year under report the Board of Guardians reopened the market, a new scale of dues having been sanctioned by the Governor-in-Council. The revenue for the year amounted to £17 8s. 7d. and the expenditure £5 9s. 6d.

(E.) MISCELLANEOUS.

During the first nine months of the year under review the Government of the Colony was administered by Lieut.-Colonel Dixon, R.M.A., until my return to the Island in October.

From an economical point of view the year has been a trying one to all classes of the community, owing to the increasingly high cost of living. Under a system of recommendation certificates arranged with the Union Government Authorities, sufficient and regular supplies of the more essential foodstuffs have been obtained from South Africa, but the prices of these commodities, though lower than if they had been imported from the United Kingdom, were such as to make living almost impossible for the poorer classes, especially those in the town districts. To relieve the worst cases of distress in Jamestown a soup kitchen was opened, and this was followed in November by a Food Depot which issued a weekly ration in kind to some 50 destitute persons in the Half-Tree Hollow district. Both these institutions were generously supported by voluntary contributions and have done much to relieve the prevailing distress. Such measures, however, can only be regarded as palliative, and nothing but increased local production is likely to reduce the present high cost of living. The high prices obtained for fibre have, not unnaturally, stimulated the planting of flax to an almost reckless degree, to the neglect of other forms of agriculture, with the result that the greater portion of the money brought into the Island by the flax industry goes out again to pay for costly imported foodstuffs, many of which or their substitutes could be produced locally. The shortage of rice, though regarded as little

short of a calamity by the poorer classes, may eventually prove to be a blessing in disguise by demonstrating that what has from long habit come to be regarded as an indispensable article of diet can be replaced by cheaper and more wholesome substitutes grown at their own doors. It is hoped that the efforts now being made to encourage increased production of foodstuffs and fodder will bear good fruit next year.

H. E. S. CORDEAUX,

Governor & Commander-in-Chief.

The Castle,

St. Helena,

18th May, 1920.