M.R.O. 1—77,006—8-6-37.

(1) Number of pages 10

(2) Date of repair 14-9-40

(3) Initials of the Referencer

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Financial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1087	Press Mis.
142-143	142-143
Dated 19-5-	1875.

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Local Funds—Roads.

No. 142. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 3rd May 1875, No. 1136:—

Read the following letter from A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., President of the Local Fund Board, Coimbatore, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 4th March 1875, No. 9:—

With reference to the G. O. of 23rd January 1875, No. 189, communicated through the Board of Revenue, 8th February 1875, I have the honor to submit the following report, made after personal inspection of the localities in question.

2. The Local Fund Board, on the question of an access to the coffee estates on the Annamallai Hills being originally put before them, were not of opinion that this charge should devolve on Local Funds.

3. The improvement of the Ponachy ghaut was then undertaken by Government from Provincial Funds, Mr. Stanes having contributed Rupees 3,000. It is believed about Rupees 15,000 in all have been expended up to date.

Vide Government Order, No. 1,534, of 10th June 1873, Public Works Department.

4. The next question which arose was whether a cart-road should be made direct to the foot of the new ghaut, and, if so, whether it should take the Kotoor or Annamallai direction.

5. The present Order of Government leaves this point to the determination of the Local Fund Board.

6. An important subject of this nature seemed to require that I should make myself personally acquainted with its bearings, so I visited, not only the access to the Ponachy saddle, but the higher ranges, with a view to see whether other considerations, besides those of the existing coffee estate proprietors, might be involved.

7. These other considerations were in reference to the future advantage of the proposed expenditure. I consequently, after inspecting the coffee estates, proceeded, by a very circuitous route from them *viâ* the Poondy plateau, no other path being practicable, to the higher ranges in which Michael's Valley is situated, and, besides exploring some other valleys there, had an extended view from a mountain behind Akka, believed to be over 8,000 feet high. I may mention that I passed through a considerable extent of forest land on the Ponachy plateau, but the teak was small and stunted. There were good trees of an inferior sort, such as Vengay, &c., but to get these out a timber slip would have to be made; they could not be carted down a ghaut-road. The Shola timber on the upper ranges is not valuable.

8. I shall now state the case of the coffee plantations on the Ponachy plateau and on the higher one above it.

9. Mr. Grant sold in 1864-65 3,025 acres of forest land. There were originally, I believe, eleven applications. There are four estates now under cultivation.

Price charged. Rs.	Paid. Rs.	Arrears due. Rs.
Survey cost.		
16,746	14,361	2,385
5,507	3,641	1,866

10. The largest, the "Waterfall," is about 1,500 acres, 1,000 of which is untouched heavy Shola forest. 110 acres were cleared, of which about half failed, and the rest is not very productive. The

proprietor at present wishes to exchange his 1,000 acres of forest for an equal quantity about 1,000 feet lower down ordered to lie reserved by Government—*vide* order* on Captain Michael's report. This proposition will, if formally made, form the subject of a separate communication to the Board of Revenue.

* No. 1,154 of 1st July 1863.

11. The Waverly Estate, about a mile further up (500 feet higher than the "Waterfall"), has 80 acres under cultivation; the greater part of the estate, like the "Waterfall" one, is still in forest, and part of the clearing was a failure. Dr. Ogg's Estate, still further (about two miles higher up), is abandoned.

12. The late Mr. Nisbet's, now Ramasawmy Modelliar's, is a smaller estate below the "Waterfall," and between it and the Ponachy plateau I believe about twenty acres may be under cultivation: a deal of the clearing has relapsed into scrub.

13. The cultivated part of Ramasawmy Modelliar's Estate, held on putta, is about ten acres I should estimate, badly kept, but in a more sheltered situation on the Ponachy plateau.

14. I should put the acreage under cultivation as well within 200, or seven per cent. of the land sold ten years ago, and the weight of crop as within 50 tons present and prospective for some years.

15. The estates under cultivation have their coffee carried down to the village of Kotoor by bullocks.

16. Now, as regards the access to the foot of the new ghaut, I would observe that there is in existence to the river Auliar, within three-fourths of a mile of the foot, nine miles of a very fair road from Pollachy, eight miles of which I traversed in my bullock-coach. There is no village where carts can be exchanged for bullocks nearer the foot of the ghaut than Kotoor, so that making a cart-road beyond the Auliar to the foot of the ghaut for the passage of pack-bullocks does not seem a required expenditure.

17. In fact Mr. Walsh, of the Waverly, told me he had no further wish than to have the last mile of the road leading to the river I have described put in better order, which the Tahsildar who rode with me informed me he could do for Rs. 400.

18. This being the present state of affairs, it does not appear to me that a ghaut cart-road for the annual conveyance of, say, 100 tons including stores taken up to the Ponachy saddle 800 or 900 feet lower than the two most important estates is called for, and if the ghaut be not widened to cart-traffic, the connection by a cart-road of the foot of the ghaut with the village where the transfer of loads is made would not be an effective expenditure. In fact, there is no difficulty experienced in the present mode of communication.

19. As regards the proposed junction of the foot of the ghaut with the village of *Annamallai*, reasons have been advanced against this project—*vide* Local Fund Board's Proceedings, dated 27th May 1874, and my letter, No. 18, of 28th November 1874.

20. No labor is drawn from Annamallai; no coffee interest is concerned with that village; it is a bad halting place, and involves an unnecessary detour, and, even if made, would not be used.

21. Pollachy cusbah is the great weekly market whence supplies are drawn, and the present made road runs straight thence to the river at the foot of the new ghaut.

22. The next subject which engaged my attention was the prospective need of a ghaut cart-road. I must draw attention to what experience has shown in relation to coffee-planting.

23. I was under the impression that the original pioneers had acted imprudently in their clearings, and had their want of knowledge to account for their disasters.

24. But without a knowledge of the peculiarity of the north face of the Annamallai range, so different from that of the Nilgiris, where Coonoor, Wellington, Kotagherry, and in fact all the east face, is perfectly sheltered from the south-west monsoon, the planters might have thought that the north-east frontage of the Annamallai lower range would be equally sheltered high ranges from 5,000 to 6,000 feet close in the south-west, and yet the monsoon wind comes sweeping down, strips coffee-trees of blossoms and berry in spite of overhanging mountain and sheltering forest, and scanty crop and withered trees are the result; only in very low sheltered hollows can the tree be said to have a chance; of course, there may have been bad management and deficient expenditure besides.

25. What the rainfall may be is not ascertained. The important Amravutty rises just behind the Coimbatore high ranges, waters 24,000 acres in its course of ninety miles, and exceeds by far the Moyar, which has its source in the rainiest part of the Koondahs below Makurty peak. The Moyar waters nothing before it joins the Bhowany.

26. The fact appears to be that this high range is raked by the south-west monsoon; and, though there may be most extensive and dense Shola forest, the result of clearing, so far as it has gone, has not been a success.

27. As a future sanitarium or a place of residence for Europeans, the higher ranges, though recommended by former explorers as such, labor under the drawback of being forty-five miles distant from the market town of Pollachy, seventy from the nearest railway station by a road which is difficult to keep in good order, and runs over a rolling country. The chief inhabitants of the lower plateau, the Pulliars, are few in number; those who inhabit higher up, the Moodugers, are still fewer and very timid.

With the greatly-increased cost of food owing to distance, the absence of reliable labor, the possibly severe climate during part of the year from the position of the range in reference to the south-west monsoon, the prospect of opening out a sanitarium does not appear to be so sanguine as to sanction the outlay of the Local Funds thereon.

28. After personal inspection, I entirely agree with the view of Colonel Wilkieson as shown in his letters to Government of 25th* and 30th† November 1874, paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 3, 4, 5 respectively.

* *Vide* G. O., No. 3,543, of 16th December 1874, P. W. D.

† *Vide* G. O. No. 189, of 23rd January 1875, P. W. D.

29. A great deal has already been done for the present interests concerned, which might be rather advanced by an improved bridle-path up to the higher estates (though I rode a pony up to the highest under cultivation) than by a cart-trace, for which the present or expected traffic is wholly inadequate. The same argument applies to a cart-road to the foot of the ghaut from the Kotoor village in which no obstacle to be removed exists.

30. The foot of the ghaut can be connected with the present road, which will then be only about fourteen miles distant from the town of Pollachy. The question of further expenditure might, therefore, be deferred to a future time.

SUBMITTED to Government with reference to G.O., dated 23rd January 1875, No. 189, Public Works Department.

2. In that Order the question for the decision of the Local Fund Board was stated to be whether they would complete the connection of Pollachy with the foot of the Ponachy Ghaut by making nine miles of new road from the foot of the ghaut to Annamallai or by putting into complete order for wheeled traffic the partially-made direct road, fourteen miles in length, from Pollachy *vid* Kotoor.

3. The Local Board had already recorded their opinion in favor of the latter course, by resolution passed on the 27th May 1874, under the impression that the Annamallai road, now estimated to cost Rupees 32,000, would cost about Rupees 50,000. The cost of completing the road *vid* Kotoor is not stated, but the Board see no reason to think that the Local Board, if now consulted, would change their opinion especially in the light of the President's report above read. Mr. Wedderburn, however, should have submitted the opinion of the Local Board with his report.

4. The Board gather that the direct road is now passable for carts at least as far as the village of Kotoor, which is about four miles from the ghaut foot, and which is the point where the loads of the pack-bullocks coming down the ghaut will, in any case, be transferred to carts. In view of this consideration and of the very scanty traffic which now exists, or is likely to exist for some years, the President does not think that the ghaut-road need be made practicable for wheeled traffic, nor consequently that a cart-road to the foot of it need be constructed. It will suffice if the portion from the Auliar river to the foot of the ghaut be made easily passable by pack-bullocks, and this can be done at a small expense. Mr. Wedderburn estimates the present traffic, in produce downwards and stores upwards, at no more than 100 tons per annum. He does not think that a cart-road *vid* Annamallai, even if made, would be used.

5. The Board concur in Mr. Wedderburn's opinion, and would defer the more expensive work until increased traffic renders it necessary.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

(Signed) H. E. STOKES,
Acting Secretary.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Financial Department,
19th *May* 1875.

No. 143. ORDER THEREON, 19th May 1875, No. 1087.

The Governor in Council agrees with the Board of Revenue.

(True Extract.)

Officiating Chief Secretary.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, Public Works Department.

Ed. J. W. Fischer,

Govt. of {1875} Madras.

FINANCIAL.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated May 19th.

Issued

Recd.

G.O., 19th May 1875, No. 1087.

MAY.
Nos. 142-143.

Local Funds, Roads.—The Board of Revenue agreed with as to there being no immediate necessity for the Ponachy Ghaut road, Coimbatore Circle, being made practicable for carts.

Financial Department
Local Funds. Roads.

1875.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 3RD MAY 1875, No. 1,136.

Despt 10 May/75.
2 S.C. ~~Encl.~~

No 1127

Received 13 May/75.

MAY.

No. 1,136.

Pollachy—in Coimbatore Circle.—Report of President on the question of connecting—with the foot of Ponachy Ghaut submitted to to Government with remarks.—Mr. Wedderburn's opinion that, owing to the scanty traffic now existing, there is no immediate necessity for the ghaut road being made practicable for carts concurred in.

With order

Civil Dept. 2nd Sec.

Govt. of 1875 Madras.
Finl.

To,
The Board of Revenue
4 copies

G.O., 19th January, 1875. No. 1087.

Nos. 142-143.

Local Funds Roads. The Board of Revenue) agreed with as to there being no immediate necessity for the Ponachy Ghaut road Coimbatore Circle, being made practicable for Cart.-