

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	231	Press
	43.44	~~Mis.~~
Dated	24 — 2 — 1857.	

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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Fort St. George, Judicial Consultation, 24th February 1857.

No. 43. Read the following letter from J. ROHDE, Esq., Inspector of Prisons; to T. PYCROFT, Esq., Chief Secretary to Government, dated 14th February 1857, No. 59.

SIR,

I have the honor to forward a letter received from Mr. Ouchterlony, the Principal Sudr Ameen of Ootacamund, on the subject of the Jail at that place. It was my intention to have left consideration of this Jail till the Honorable Court's instructions in regard to a Prison on the Hills for European and other offenders had been received, and I should have the less hesitation in still leaving the consideration of the matter till orders on that subject were received if there was a healthy Prison at Coimbatore, instead of the decidedly unhealthy one which exists. In addition to this I believe there will be found an opinion that Ootacamund is not the best place on the Hills for the European Prison. My present opinion is, that it may still be found to be so, but I have never had an opportunity of judging of other sites; still I would suggest that a Prison for Natives be erected at Ootacamund as proposed in my Report on the Jail Buildings there: I shall probably be there in the autumn before visiting the Western Coast and could then arrange with Mr. Ouchterlony, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Roupell for a good locality.

2. In my opinion out-door labor for Prisoners on the Hills is objectionable, indeed from all I learn it seems that Prisoners are far more healthy, even on the plains, [†] where they do not quit the Jail walls. I do not know if in the case of Ootacamund, a new Station, Government would feel disposed to depart from the usual routine in sanctioning such a Building as that I have proposed without reference to the Budget; nothing can be more wretched than the existing Buildings, and the necessity for a proper Jail is sufficiently obvious; if the Government should direct the work to be estimated for, I would prepare the rough plans according to my knowledge of the material procurable on the spot and submit them for approval.

[†] Doctor Mouatt mentions this in his Note and I find similar results in our more unhealthy Prisons.

(Signed) J. ROHDE,
Inspector of Prisons.

From J. OUCHTERLONY, Esq., Principal Sudr Ameen, Ootacamund; to J. ROHDE, Esq., Inspector of Prisons, dated 15th January 1857, No. 6.

SIR,

In forwarding the Jail Returns for the 31st Ultimo, I have the honor to accompany them with a few remarks on the Jail at this place.

2. The Buildings devoted to the purpose of a Prison at Ootacamund, have now had a trial of nearly six months, and the objections that exist to them have become very conspicuous. The first is on the ground of their *insecurity*.

3. The Jail consists of a range of 4 rooms, access to which is only gained from the outside. One of these rooms (the only one that has a fire-place in it) is used as a sick ward, the next as a ward for Prisoners, the third similarly if required but ordinarily as a store (and the only one) for tools, &c., and the fourth, from the dilapidated state of its door and its common "godown" character, does not admit of being turned at present to any useful account. At the back of the wards run long narrow rooms, into which the wards do not open, but which have fixed gratings in the intervening wall. These allow of the Peons, who occupy them as guard rooms, keeping a certain watch over what the Prisoners may be doing in their wards.

4. By the use of bars and chains and patent Padlocks, I have endeavoured to make these wards as secure as possible; but it must be evident that, when the fastening is on the outside and in the open air, it will always be more or less easy for a Prisoner to escape, by enlisting connivance from without. There is nothing to do but to wrench off a Padlock, and the ward is then open for egress; while, from the guard room of the Peons being on the opposite side, the first act might well occur without their knowledge.

5. In the second place the Jail is objectionable because of the utter impossibility of carrying out that first step in a good Jail discipline, the classification of Prisoners. In the course of the past year there has been in the Jail the usual mixture of male and female Convicts, men committed, civil debtors, and the sick; and the difficulty in effecting a separation amongst these

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has of course been very great. At one time one of the guard rooms had to be given up to a female Convict, a civil debtor was lodged in another guard room along with the Peons, the guard for the sick (who were tolerably numerous) had to take up their quarters every night in the sick ward itself, almost in close contact with disease, while classification as to crime has been and is, as I hardly need say, altogether out of the question.

6. The third point I will allude to, is the question of the adaptation of the Prison on the score of health. I am not disposed to say that the place is unhealthy; indeed in this climate and with the free circulation of pure air on the top of a hill, it would be almost impossible for any place to be so, abstractedly. There have been no deaths in the Jail; but at the same time the Hospital has never been empty (excepting in the three first days of the Jail being opened), and the proportion of sick has ranged from 22 to 40 per cent. as a general rule, while at one time it amounted to 64 per cent.

7. The situation of the Jail is upon one of the bleakest hills in Ootacamund, and, as I have said, there is a fire-place alone in the hospital, the consequence is, that in wet weather the other wards can never be sufficiently dried and warmed (though when the Prisoners were absent we have occasionally burnt fire in chatties on the floors), and it certainly has been an unusual hardship for the men, when returning wet from their labor in an afternoon, to have only these comfortless abodes to go into. Exposed to this inclemency of climate, the denial of animal food to the Prisoners has also been rather severe; but it has not been allowed to them under the instructions contained in your letter of the 23rd July last.

8. Under the above circumstances, and the peculiar one during the past year, of the Jail yard being always filled with Engineer's workmen employed upon the Court House, little has been done of an efficient character in the way of Convict labour. It was desirable to get the Prisoners away from the Jail that they might not be in contact with the laborers; and they have been chiefly employed on roads about the Jail Hill. I propose, with the consent of the Collector, to make out-door work consist for awhile in digging holes for planting out trees on the Jail Hill: it will be a remunerative character of labor. For the yard work hammers have been indented for, and stones will be rolled in for breaking up; I had a European Jailer for a few months, but he was obliged to resign on the score of ill health. The supervision of a European I deem to be absolutely necessary to systematize Convict labor.

The Cochin plan of a European with 10 Rupees additional as Constable might be desirable, if the Principal Sudder Ameen does the work of the Justice of the Peace.

J. R.

ing possessing some fit adaptation to the purposes of a Jail. But, in regarding the existing Prison as a mere temporary place of confinement, I would suggest the following changes and amendments.

† It is too unhealthy for hill men as now built.

J. R.

‡ I doubt whether fire places are desirable, they induce a draft which continues after the fire goes out.

J. R.

This the Medical Officer has.

J. R.

See my remark below.

J. R.

9. To remedy all the defects that are found in the present Jail, the great requisite as it appears to me is, to remove the Prison altogether from its present site to some more sheltered situation, and to have a building possessing some fit adaptation to the purposes of a Jail. But, in regarding the existing Prison as a mere temporary place of confinement, I would suggest the following changes and amendments.

1st. I would recommend that all Convicts under a long sentence of imprisonment, say above 6 months, be sent to the Jail at Coimbatore.†

2nd. That ‡ fire-places be built in the wards, not to give Convicts a comfort that the honest laboring population hardly enjoy at nights, but for the purpose of drying these in the day and taking off their extreme chilliness.

3rd. That a discretion be given as to furnishing Prisoners with a proportion of animal food.

4th. That a place be fitted up for the residence on the spot of a European Jailer.

10. I had thought of recommending an alteration in the arrangement of the Buildings, such as closing up the present doors and allowing access to the Prisoners' wards only through the guard rooms, but this would necessitate much change and outlay for purposes of ventilation and other requirements, which this temporary Jail is hardly worth; and, with Convicts incarcerated for a comparatively short period, the same risk of escape as with those whose sentence is for a long term, will not be encountered. But I think it very desirable that some provision should be made

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for accommodating a European Jailer on the spot, and I would ask sanction for arranging this in communication with the Executive Engineer.

11. I would also observe that there is no place here, in which a European Prisoner can be confined, and that in consequence the custody of such is imperfect to a degree; consisting indeed, in Civil cases, of little more than the equivocal surveillance of a Peon. There are many

See para : 9.
The cost of all these requirements is ill laid out on 3 mud built godowns, a new building is far the most economical and the separate cells the cheapest and best.

J. R.
Inspector.

reasons why this should not continue; justice, to be respected, must be dealt out with an equal hand, and I would therefore, in this matter also, ask sanction for appropriating some place on the spot to the imprisonment of Europeans, doing such of course in communication with the Engineer. By using the private room (very needlessly) reserved for the use of the Session Judge on his rare visits to Ootacamund, as a lock-up for European Prisoners, and turning certain godowns in the yard into a temporary residence for a Jailer, I believe the objects in view might be accomplished at but a trifling expense to Government.

(Signed) J. OUCHTERLONY,

Principal Sudder Ameen.

(True Copy.)

(Signed J. ROHDE,

Inspector of Prisons.

No. 44.

ORDER THEREON, No. 231; dated 24th February 1857.

It is observed that in their review of the Inspector's General Jail Report, Extract Minutes Consultation, 7th Instant, para : 52, the Government have ordered a Plan and Estimate to be prepared for a small Prison at Ootacamund.

2. Since those orders were passed the Government have however received a Despatch from the Honorable the Court of Directors, Judicial Department, No. 1, 2nd January 1857, from which they learn that the Court have sanctioned the erection of a Jail at Ootacamund for the reception of European Convicts from the several Presidencies. The Government will probably be shortly addressed by the Supreme Government on the subject, and meanwhile the recent orders for the construction of a Prison there must remain in abeyance. The District Engineer in communication with the Inspector will, however, arrange for remedying the more prominent defects brought to notice as regards the present Jail, so far as this can be done without incurring much expense.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,

Chief Secretary.

No 231

Extract from the Mins of Cons.

Dated 24th February 1857.

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from the Inspector of Prisons.

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JP

Copys.
to the Inspector of Prisons
" PW Dept
with copy of L. & Encls }

Dispd. 5th

8-5-27

On Nov 24th 1837
Audited 1837 Accounts

Page 231

Extraneous of Items

2/24 February 1837
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- 999

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23-7-62

Notice that since entering
a claim & estimate for a small
division at Watkinson the Board
could have conducted the section
to find at Watkinson & for
Cassidy's estimate from the same
division. Since the report
order for the division to be held in
advance until having from the
estimate for the subject.

21/11/1837-38