Number of pages. 10
Date of repair. 12.68
Initials of Reference

M.R.O. 1—82 400—93-11-80

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

Read 21-5-57

G.O. No.	571	Press Mis.

16-17

Dated 26.5 18[illegible].

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Fort Saint George, Public Works Consultation of 31st March 1857.

No. 16. Read the following letter from Mr. G. W. BOOTHBY; to T. PYCROFT, Esq., Chief Secretary to the Government of Fort Saint George, dated 25th February 1857.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge having received, on my arrival at Madras a few days ago, an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 27th January 1857, on the subject of complaints made by me as to the state of the road between Aska and Injelly also regarding the embankments of the Mahanuddy in the neighbourhood of Aska.

As the decisions recorded in these Minutes of Consultation have been arrived at from statements in most respects entirely erroneous, I have the honor to request that you will be pleased to submit the following explanation of them for the consideration of the Right Honorable the Governor in Council.

It is recorded that "Major Birdwood attributes the bad state of the Aska road partly to the "carelessness of Overseer Hopkins, but chiefly to the heavy waggons employed by the Aska "factory to convey sugar to the Coast." "To the latter cause, he attributes the destruction of "the approaches to the Injelly bridge, which he states were only thrown up in May and had "not time to consolidate sufficiently to bear the heavy waggon of the Factory."

Now I most positively aver that no waggon from the Aska sugar Factory ever crossed or attempted to cross the Injelly bridge, or was ever within the distance of 8 miles from that bridge, and further that once and *only once*, was any waggon from the factory ever on any part of the Aska and Injelly road. On that occasion, when owing to the extreme badness of the road the bandy people were holding out for a greatly increased amount of hire; I proposed sending some sugar to the Coast by our own means, a waggon was loaded and sent off, but from its having been constructed to bring up long steam boilers, the length between the wheels was too great to afford sufficient strength in the frame work for a load of sugar, though this only consisted of 3½ tons and thus after proceeding with much difficulty for exactly 4½ miles towards Injelly one of the lengthway stretchers gave way and carts had to be sent to take the sugar on to the Coast, the waggon returning empty, and never before or since has any waggon of the Factory ever even been upon the Aska road.

In reply to the allegation of my having used these waggons in disregard of the warning previously given me that the road would not be in a state to stand a heavy monsoon traffic, &c. I beg to remark that no one ever either spoke or wrote to me one word on this point, and moreover I would submit that a short line of road commenced early in 1854, at least might have been fit for heavy traffic in 1856. But even if the Factory waggons had been used on this road I venture to point out that these waggons, being most perfectly constructed vehicles with wheels 7 feet diameter and *5 inches broad*, would have done infinitely less injury to the road, although carrying a considerable weight of sugar than the country carts, the wheels of which are not in the least degree accurately round and are made of thick planks joined together and fined down to a sharp edge at the outer run being thus extremely injurious to a road.

Next regarding the explanation given by Major Birdwood as to the Neeraloo drainage Nullah, I beg to state that having been on the spot at the time the flood occurred, being also a most anxious and interested observer of all that took place, and having immediately afterwards carefully examined this Nullah myself, I am able confidently to assert that the statements of Major Birdwood on this point are as erroneous as in the case of the supposed passage of Factory waggons over the Injelly bridge.

Not having here documents to refer to, I am unable to give precise dates but I can vouch for the strict accuracy of the facts which I will now relate.

The Neeraloo Nullah is a channel leading *from* the river to lower a level and *not into* the river from a higher level, as Major Birdwood supposed from an erroneous report made to him by Assistant Surveyor Colquhoun and this is the true cause of the sluice gate not being built. So far from any heavy rains having prevented this work I have seldom, during my long residence at Aska, known a season so extremely favorable for such constructions. The opening of the monsoon in June mentioned by Major Birdwood, was merely a burst of rain for about 12 hours after which the weather quite cleared up and we had nothing more than occasional heavy showers, but

no continued heavy rain, from that time till September when the flood occurred, previous to which it had been universally remarked as most unusual that the river never once rose even to nearly the height of its natural Banks. Thus at any time from June until September the sluice gate might have been built and materials for the purpose were actually made ready on the spot by Overseer Sever who more than once urgently applied for permission to construct this most necessary work, but from the reason already given, his applications were unsuccessful.

Early on the day that the flood took place, I observed with very great anxiety and apprehension a vast sheet of water of about 4 miles in length and 2 in width sweeping down from the Neeraloo Nullah upon our works, *outside* the embankments. Very soon a great part of the Factory yard was submerged and the water continued to rise with alarming rapidity, speedily attaining a *considerably* greater height than the water in the river within the embankments! This was caused by the Southern embankment of the Mahanuddy joining on to the Northern embankment of the Roosookoolea, at the junction of these rivers about a mile below the Factory, an acute angle being thus formed by the two embankments between which the whole body of water already spoken of was completely dammed up. At this time so imminent did Overseer Sever consider the danger that with most praiseworthy promptitude and decision he determined on instantly making a breach in the embankment of the Roosookoolea. On arriving at the spot where he purposed cutting the embankment, Overseer Sever found that the work had already been done for him, the force of water having effected a breach of about 100 yards wide, and then immediately the water fell with great rapidity, but had a less energetic person been in charge or had not a portion of the embankment given way, consequences of a very serious nature to the Aska works must have ensued, and all for want of a single sluice gate. With what correctness then can it be stated that the consequences of the flood would have been disastrous but for the protection of the embankment works?

I have next to notice the statement that "it is explained that although it may have happened at the time of Mr. Boothby's writing to the Collector, that there was no Officer nearer than Chicacole, there were other members of the Department whose assistance that gentleman might have procured in cases of emergency."

In reply to this, I beg to state, that from the early part of June until the latter end of September, not only was no Officer stationed to look after the embankments the Aska and Berhampore roads and Injelly bridge but these works were never once during the whole of this time even visited by one, and yet it must be sufficiently obvious that it is during the monsoon when the most valuable observations can be made as to its effects on such works and also that it is then especially that they require looking after.

Shortly after I had commenced carting large quantities of Sugar and Rum to the Coast in July, I wrote to Major Birdwood pointing out that even then the road was so bad that if immediate steps were not taken, it would soon cease to exist. He replied that he had given the necessary orders, but all I can say is that they were utterly disregarded, that during the whole time we were carting Sugar to the Coast from July till October, the road was never once touched in the way of repair, except by my own people at the approaches to the Injelly bridge, where I had to send a Superintendent (no one being there in charge but a road goomastah) and employ large number of men to cut brushwood and lay it across the great quagmires on either side of the bridge so as to get a large number of my bandies across, that had been detained there many days, the water being too high for them to go through the river, which method they had been obliged to practise almost ever since the bridge was opened. Overseer Sever had no charge of the roads and twice I sent a person to Injelly specially to see Overseer Hopkins with the view of inducing him to do something in the way of repairs, but on neither occasion was he to be seen. I know not therefore from what other members of the Department I could have procured assistance.

The real cause of the road having become so wholly impassable, that bandies went along the Paddy fields in preference, arose first from the stipulated quantity of metal and gravel not having been used when the road was made, and secondly from the entire absence of repairs when large quantities of Sugar were passing over it. I am aware that orders were given for the necessary repairs, but they were never executed. I am also aware that in respect to the approaches of Injelly bridge orders were given which would have rendered that bridge available throughout the

3

Fort Saint George, Public Works Consultation of 31st March 1857.

monsoon, instead of being utterly useless; but I am equally well aware that these orders were wholly disregarded, the consequences to the Factory being that in addition to a vast amount of anxiety and difficulty we had to pay just double cartage on a very large quantity of Sugar and Rum and narrowly escaped the payment of heavy demurrage.

Had I seen any Officer on the spot *endeavouring* to render the embankments, the road and Injelly bridge serviceable, I should never have written one word of complaint as to their being otherwise, but in the entire absence of all such endeavours I felt called upon to remonstrate against such neglect, and I would now beg to submit for the further consideration of the Right Honorable the Governor in Council, that all I before advanced in the way of complaint is fully substantiated by the facts of case.

No. 17. ORDER THEREON, No. 551; dated 26th March 1857.

As the statements in the foregoing letter are at a variance with the report made by Major Birdwood to the Chief Engineer on the 14th of November 1856, the Government resolve that a copy of it be forwarded to that Officer through the Chief Engineer for any observations he may wish to offer.

(Signed) H. FORBES,
Acting Secretary to Government.

5

For Orders.

Public Works' Department № 391.

From Mr. G. W. Boothby 25th February 1857.

7

Mr Boothby's letter contains
divers contradictions of
some of Mayor Birdwood's
statements - it must be sent
to the Mayor for his
observations

Mr Boothby

PWD

N°551.

Extract from the Minutes of Consultation
Under date the 26th March 1857.

Read the following letter
from Mr G.W. Boothby.

(Here enter 25th February 1857)

As the statements
in the foregoing letter
are at variance
with the information
given in Reidwood
to the Off. Ex. on the
14th & 21st Inst. the
Govt. resolve that
a copy of it be
forwarded to that
Officer through the
Off. Govt. for any
observations he
may wish to offer

By Copies to the Chief Engr.
Civil 27th

Sig. in a Letter to England
4/17th July 1858 - 1:16:

Public Works 1857 Desp. VC
Do to Govt 31st March.

No. 551.

Extract Min. of Cons.

Dy 26th March 57.

Extract from Chief Engr 25th May 57
No. 1071 in one - 23 June

Resolving that a copy of the order relative to the state of the road between Askia & Sujally, & also regarding the punishment of the Mahamuddy near Askia, be forwarded to Major Birdwood this the Ch. Engr for any observations he may wish to offer.

1:16:17