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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 3253	Press
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Dated 14/11	1864.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
14th November 1861.*

No. 232. Read the following Proceedings of the Madras Government in the Public
Department:—

Passing orders on the letter from the Collector of South
Arcot reporting that the station of Cuddalore and sur-
rounding country has been visited by an unprecedented
inundation. } (Here enter 2nd November 1861, No. 1,243.)

No. 233. ORDER THEREON, 14th November 1861, No. 3,253.

Communicated to the Superintending Engineer, 5th Division, whose particular attention will
be drawn to paragraph 2.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) CHARLES A. O'R, Colonel, R. E.,
Secretary to Government.

To the Superintending Engineer, 5th Division.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

No. 5. Read the following letter from C. W. READE, Esq., Collector of South Arcot; to the Honorable A. J. ARBUTHNOT, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Cuddalore, 21st October 1864, No. 68.

I have the honor to report, for the information of Government, that the station of Cuddalore and surrounding country has been visited by an unprecedented inundation.

2. On Monday the 17th, the monsoon set in, in the early morning, with heavy showers, which continued throughout the day with occasional short intervals, and during the night of the 17th, the rain was also very heavy; but throughout the day and night of the following Tuesday the 18th, and up to 2 p. m. of Wednesday the 19th, it was one incessant downpour, and after the hour named there were only showers at long intervals, and about 8 p. m., the rain entirely ceased.

3. Between 8 a. m. of Tuesday the 18th, and 2 p. m. of Wednesday the 19th, the fall of rain gauged was 10½ inches, and, as far as I have information from the interior of the District, to the south this unusual downpour must have been very general; and I am sorry to say that it has been accompanied by terrible destruction to public works of all kinds, while the population in parts have proportionately suffered from the effects of this sudden and unexpected visitation.

4. The river Guddelum which is situated to the south of Munjacoopum, or New Town, and divides it from what is known as Old Town, has its rise to the west on the Salem frontier of this District, and is fed by innumerable streams on both sides, but especially on the south. This river, which is crossed by a bridge, continued to swell rapidly from the evening of the 18th; and early on the following day, the 19th, the water was rushing round both the wing walls of the Guddelum bridge to the depth of one or two feet above the road. About half a mile, and again about 1½ above the bridge as the river swelled and overtopped the banks which are lower at those places than elsewhere, the water rapidly found an outlet on the north side and flowed over the roads and fields flooding the town of Munjacoopum in parts and rushing like a torrent in all directions; the Cantonment or Green became one vast lake, and during the day of the 19th, there was from 3 to 4 feet water over it, and in like manner every road throughout the station was flooded with the same depth of water; this state of things continued during the entire day of the 19th; but with the fall of the tide about 8½ p. m., the waters began to subside, and from that hour throughout the night they gradually decreased. The water had reached its highest point about this time, and it was then that 6 arches of the Guddelum bridge were carried away. I had crossed the bridge about 1 o'clock in the day, and it then showed signs of weakness; and when I was on it, there was an unpleasant vibratory motion, and accordingly I had stationed Policemen on both sides to prevent the public from crossing, and it is well, perhaps, that the precaution was taken. The Engineer, Mr. Harrington, was with me on the occasion when going my rounds to visit the various places in order to give the people confidence and allay their fears; and in our ride, Mr. Harrington very nearly lost his life, but happily was secured with the greatest difficulty after having been twenty minutes in the water. The cause of this accident was the falling in of a one arch tunnel of about 15 feet span which was not observable, because the walls of the bridge and the roadway on both sides were covered with 2 feet of water, and thus as we approached we had not seen the danger. Mr. Harrington, who was in front of me, fell in with his horse and was carried away down the stream in about 20 feet of water over paddy fields; but owing to his being an expert swimmer, he was mercifully saved.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
2nd November 1861.*

5. I am thankful to state that the loss of life, as far as I know, has been very slight. Two old women were drowned on the Green or Cantonment very near my own gate, but the general devastation of houses and other property here, I fear, has been very great. In Pichapallim, a large suburb of New Town, where the Taluk Cutcherry is situated, scarcely a house has escaped without damage, and every hut in the thickly populated hamlets adjacent has been swept away, and the inmates are at present homeless and foodless.

6. The water wholly abated yesterday morning the 20th, and since then its disappearance has been rapid; but up to last night the roads and Green were still partially covered and the water was still running. This morning the river is fast assuming its natural dimensions under an ordinary fresh, but the destruction of the roads throughout the station has been complete; not one is really passable for a conveyance, and in parts tunnels have burst and large chasms have formed, while in other places the whole road has been bodily carried away for many yards.

7. Mr. Maltby and Mr. Pycroft, who know Cuddalore, will comprehend the extent of the flood when I mention a few facts in illustration. In the Rasput Court and Dispensary which stand on tolerably high ground, there was upwards of 2 feet of water and all the patients from the latter building were conveyed to the gallery of the former where they were made as comfortable as practicable. The water rushed down the road in front of my house and over the Green at the depth of 3 or 4 feet during the 19th, and so also in parts of Munjassum; and in fact, I may say with truth, that from the Cuddalore Bridge up to the river, for the water rushed over every thing like a mighty torrent, and the highest point it reached was, I believe, the entrance door of my own house which stands on more elevated ground than any other dwelling. Fortunately, the Poornam river more than ordinary at this season, and for myself I had no great apprehension from that quarter; but if the rain had continued through the night of the 19th and up to yesterday, the result would have been terrible, for the flooding waters of both rivers would, possibly, then have united, when destruction of life and property must have been most disastrous. We have been spared this calamity through God's mercy; but at one time there was considerable alarm amongst the people, and undoubtedly during the 19th, every thing looked very threatening; but from my experience of this river and the sources of its floods, I did not anticipate the great rise which so many had feared and I prognosticated, and happily I was correct.

8. From the interior, as yet, I have had few details, but those few may be accepted as indicating the general destruction of public works in all parts where the flood was felt. The repairs to the large Trivally ancient which were near completion, and those in progress on the Triyapalluram ancient, both of which had been partially destroyed in December 1853, were all swept away, and the works at both will have to be raised at a great cost; meanwhile there may, I fear, be serious loss to the Revenue, not only finally and permanently in respect of temporary repairs are practicable, but also of the supply of water through the main and branch channels of the system, and on which extensive and valuable tracts of land are dependent for their cultivation. My fear is that little can be done at this season. It is not at all likely the Government will, at the end of the monsoon, so that

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further freshes and heavy rains may be again expected here very long. Besides the above two ancient, several large tanks have burst their banks, and I fear that when reports have reached me from all the Taluqs, to the south especially, the list will be very large, and many of these tanks had only just been repaired, some at a considerable outlay. It is, however, useless to speculate. At present, it is enough to recount the list of works known to have been destroyed, and these are the bridge over the Cuddalore, the two ancient mentioned, and the large tank of Trivady, with several smaller ones. Numerous large and small tunnels throughout the station, and a small bridge approaching Tripapallur on the south side of the river. Embankments and roads, wholly or in part, have been swept away; communication between Old and New Town, except by water, entirely cut off, and the whole roadway between the two places destroyed more or less. I visited Old Town to-day, and besides the foregoing, I found that two arches of the bridge crossing the canal at the entrance of the town have also fallen, and the condition of the roads around is much the same as in New Town. The services of all the convicts have already been given for repairing this damage, and in a month or so, I trust that every thing will again be in order. As it will not be practical to avail of convict labor up here, the services of the prisoners can be concentrated on the repairs of the Old Town, and thus I hope Government will be put to little or no additional expense on their account.

9. My first thought has been of the homeless and starving poor, and these number, at a rough calculation, about 1000. I have already called together the more wealthy Natives, and I feel sure that they will do their utmost to meet the momentary distress with promptitude, and then on whom the duty principally devolves, have been very ready, and about seven Native gentlemen have undertaken to feed 1000 souls from yesterday, until they are otherwise provided for. I also had food prepared for about 600 yesterday, and to-day arrangements are in course to feed 2000 of the really necessitous and homeless, and respecting whom all due inquiry will be made so that the charity may be as little abused as possible.

10. Every one, no doubt, will do their best, and the European residents will not fail in their efforts; still private sources might not be equal to the pressing emergency, and I have with the Committee, if necessary, to expend as far as Rupees 1000 out of Government, and I trust this aid from the public Treasury will prove fully sufficient in conjunction with the private subscriptions to effect all that will be needed to meet the temporary distress. At present I have limited assistance strictly to feed and to clothe the poor. If for pecuniary assistance may eventually be a necessity, I intend to make a full investigation of the circumstances and condition of the poor. The pressure being immediate, I have not hesitated to contribute in the name of Government as I have felt that the occasion justified it, and providing food in the most judicious manner, and in position, while relief is thus afforded, it will be of great value, it was of course necessary that it

11. Government may rely on my utmost discretion in the appropriation of this public money, and I feel that only the truly distressed and needy shall participate in the bounty. Those who have been accustomed to the aid of the wealthy amongst the Natives, and especially by the public Treasury, I hope that we shall be able to prevent the great evil that the other means of doing the more disastrous to life than the loss of the property of the poor.

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12. The roads and nullahs and other parts of the station must, of course, be immediately repaired, and, I presume, the Public Works Department are in funds for the purpose. Convict labor is not available now that the communication with the Jail in Old Town is cut off, and the only means of overcoming this difficulty would be by locating a gang of some 200 in Munjacoopum, but which, I presume, would not be allowed especially at this season; so that the entire cost must be borne by Government, and if imperial funds for the current official year be in any way deficient, the local funds are ample for the time to do what is wanted.

13. I would suggest to Government that another Engineer officer be sent to the District. The work in this 1st Range alone presided over by a single officer, Mr. Harington, far exceeds the ability of any one man properly to supervise, however active and energetic; and certainly more Overseers are, at all events, requisite to meet this sudden emergency; but I feel that this is a matter for representation by the Engineer's Department, and no doubt the Superintending Engineer, who is now on his way to South Arcot, will, after seeing for himself, be in a position to recommend any additional assistance that may be really required to carry on the various works, the oversight and responsibility of which at present devolves on one officer.

14. As soon as I have received the orders, I will be happy to do what is wanted.

11. As soon as I have received the expected reports from the District with details of the effects of the late rains in the various divisions, I will again do myself the honor of addressing you for the further information of Government.

15. I beg to add, that such has been the effect of the late flood, that every office in the place has been closed, I may say, for three entire days. The care of families and property has kept every one in their homes, and the attendance of a great many of the Public Servants has been an impossibility from their residence on the other side of the river.

No. 6. ORDER THEREON, 2nd November 1861, No. 1218.
The Governor in Council has

The Governor in Council is concerned to learn that such serious damage has been occasioned to public works and private property by the inundation which has occurred at Cuddalore. He approves of the steps taken by the Collector under the circumstances, and will be prepared to sanction the grant from the public Treasury which has been made by Mr. Read to relieve the immediate wants of those persons whose houses and property have been destroyed, on being informed of the amount actually expended.

2. Those parts of Mr. Reade's report which relate to the injury done to the public works of the District, will be considered in the Public Works Department, in which Department also the Superintending Engineer will be directed to suggest measures for preventing similar damage in future.

(True Extract.)

G. J. Constant
Chief Secretary.

To the Collector of South Arcot.
 „ Public Works Department.

Exd. T. Cartledge.

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Pro. of Govt. in the
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 station of Cuddalore and
 surrounding country has
 been visited by an un-
 precedented inundation

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With an order