

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT.

15th October 1881, No. 2133.

Court-houses.

Read the following papers :—

From J. F. SNAITH, Esq., Officiating District Judge, Tinnevely, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Tinnevely, 31st March 1881, No. 288 [Current No. 1070].

With reference to the correspondence marginally noted, Mr. J. W. Martin, under instructions from Colonel Beatty, has called upon me to fix upon a site for the new Sub-Court.

Mr. Carr's letters to Government, Nos. 161 and 308, dated 27th February and 25th June 1875, and the G.O., No. 958, dated the 22nd April 1875.

The place intended when Mr. Carr wrote was Kokarakulam, where at present are the District Court, the Sub-Court, the Collector's Cutcherry, the Treasury, and the Sub-Jail.

Quite apart from the question of overcrowding, I have the honor to bring to the notice of Government that these buildings are on the bank of the Tāmbraparni River, and that I cannot advise Government to erect a Sub-Court or any other building on such a site.

No doubt a Sub-Court is required.

The correspondence is dated before 1877, when the river twice, in (I think) about ten days, showed its true character.

Particulars of the ravages it made are no doubt procurable in the Government offices.

It was the opinion of Mr. J. D. Grant, a man who has, I believe, the greatest experience of any one living of this district, that there was nothing in the inundations of 1877 which may not be counted on to happen again.

There are others who believe that the causes are of a permanent character, viz., the disafforestation of the Travancore Hills for the purposes of coffee planting.

This is presumed both to affect injuriously the rainfall and the gradual absorption of the water.

Without entering on any *vexata questio*, I cannot but warn the Government that I am very seriously of opinion that no future buildings can be safely built on the banks of the Tāmbraparni River. Even last north-east monsoon I understand that the town of Srivaikuntham was within an ace of being swept away.

I think also it is most important for Government to consider the present state of their buildings at Kokarakulam, and what they have cost in repair, and what they are likely to cost in the future with a view to determine whether it is worth while to spend any more money on them.

The Collector's Cutcherry was condemned as unsafe in 1877. I do not suppose it has improved with age, or that it will stand another flood or a heavy fall of rain.

The Subsidiary Jail is new, the District Court-house (by which I mean only the place where the Court sits) is in good order.

The District Court Offices and the Sub-Judge's buildings are, I am informed, in a bad state; but I would recommend Government to take a professional opinion, as my own in such matters carries no weight.

The state of the Collector's buildings may seem beyond my province; but not really so, for if the Collector's Cutcherry is not to be retained, there is not any valid reason for keeping the Courts here.

All the public buildings should be together as far as possible. There is another reason for not erecting any fresh buildings in Kokarakulam, *i.e.*, the enhanced cost of foundation and platform, to give the necessary security.

As a private individual I should not think of storing cotton or any valuable merchandise on the banks of the river; and the present moment seems opportune for raising the question whether records and treasure should not be placed in a region more remote from danger. For it is now that it is proposed to erect new buildings, just as it were to provoke the Tāmbraparni, a proved violent river.

If the Government should be of my opinion that the experiment may prove too costly, the only possible other site is the high ground of Palamcottah.

Between here and Tinnevely there is nothing but paddy, and Tinnevely itself lies low and suffered even last year in consequence. Between here and Palamcottah is nothing but paddy.

Government will never erect costly buildings in a swamp at the cost of Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 2,000 an acre for the land.

Between here and the toll-bar the river may come any year, and between the toll-bar and the high ground of Palamcottah there is no site available, the intermediate stage being covered with buildings.

Under these circumstances, I would recommend Government to build one building for the District Court, the Sub-Judge, and the Tinnevely Munsif on the high ground of Palamcottah. It will be a convenience to have the three Courts together, and it is probable that the new buildings will prove in the end more economical than the old.

Also there will be security, and there is, in my opinion, none now. What happened twice in one year may happen twice in any other, though unfortunately we cannot tell beforehand which year may be chosen.

In connection with the whole subject the state of the Tinnevely Munsif's Court should also be considered.

The change proposed will meet with determined opposition.

The Vakils will be put out by it, the suitors are indifferent as to distance, but the Vakils can secure the suffrages of the suitors, and everything in the way of Mahazarnamahs will be put forward with a view to obstruct the change.

Natives are also naturally averse to moving on. Since I have been here I have heard of some who strongly objected to being rescued in boats sent for that purpose.

However I consider that their opposition is *per se* a reason against the proposed change.

The point for Government to determine is whether the past action of the Tāmbraparni, the present state of their buildings, the enhanced cost of new ones, and estimates for repairs do not render the change imperative and inevitable.

No people on earth accepts with greater resignation the inevitable than the people of this country. And if the three Courts are kept together, the inconvenience will be much lessened.

The District Court ought to be near the jail, but that will be a public advantage only.

If the Courts be moved to Palamcottah as I propose, I shall be inconvenienced myself, perhaps more than any one.

From the fact of this being a great centre of Missionary work, the buildings at Kokarakulam would possibly sell well, and the land being so easily irrigable, would fetch a good price for paddy.

The natives appreciate the present site by reason of its proximity to the river. In high floods they will perhaps be somewhat disturbed if they build dwelling-houses upon it; but I give them credit for being too shrewd to store their valuables here.

Even if they are not, it has never been an accepted European principle to trust to chance.

Also I must point out that there is no reliance to be placed on the "exceptional" theory.

The following are the enclosures, viz. :—

- (1) Mr. Martin's letter, dated 25th March 1881, showing the floods of 1877 to have been two feet four inches above the ground at the Collector's Office. The site proposed for the new Sub-Court lies lower.
- (2) Collector's letter to District Registrar regarding the collapse of his Cutcherry as a not improbable contingency, though one not immediately to be feared. This is dated March 1881.
- (3) Collector's letter to Government, No. 50, dated 1st February 1881, suggesting that the river is not an advisable site for new buildings, and that his future head-quarters may possibly be Tuticorin.
- (4) Sub-Judge's letter, No. 87, dated 28th February 1881, on the inadvisability of building on the site chosen.

These considerations make it necessary for me to advise Government not to count on the moderation of this formidable river, and to consider the whole bearing of the present question as one involving great expense and great risk to valuable property.

I have also to suggest that the buildings of the Courts at Palamcottah would leave the Munsif's Court building at Tinnevely available for the District Registrar's Office. Thus the Government would save the cost of erecting a new building.

No. 734.

Transferred to the Public Works Department for a brief report on the state of all the public buildings at Kokarakulam.

(By Order.)

(Signed) O. WOLFE-MURRAY,
Acting Assistant Secretary.

21st April 1881.

C. E. No. 1055.

Referred to the Superintending Engineer, Third Circle, for compliance.

(By Order.)

(Signed) C. C. RAWSON, Captain, R.E.,
Under Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.

27th April 1881.

From Lieutenant-Colonel J. BEATTY, R.E., Superintending Engineer, Third Circle, to the Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, dated Trichinopoly, 13th July 1881, No. 281 T.N.

With reference to your endorsement, No. 1055, of 27th April 1881, herewith returned, I have the honor to forward, in original, Mr. Martin's letter, accompanied by a sketch plan reporting in detail on the condition of the various public buildings located at Kokarakulam.

One Endorsement No. 1055, 27th April 1881.
One Executive Engineer's No. 169, 27th June 1881, with two enclosures.

2. It will be seen from the report that the Executive Engineer is strongly of opinion that the buildings at Kokarakulam should not be abandoned; but that, if possible, a site for the Sub-Court may be selected at a place where deep foundations will not be required as at Palamcottah where the ground is high and gravelly.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From J. W. MARTIN, Esq., Executive Engineer, Tinnevely Division, to the Superintending Engineer, Third Circle, dated Palamcottah, 27th June 1881, No. 169.

In reply to your letter, No. 70 T.N., dated 2nd May 1881, forwarding correspondence on the subject of constructing a Sub-Court for Tinnevely and requesting me to report as to the state of the public buildings at Kokarakulam, I have the honor to state that these buildings provide office-accommodation for the District Judge, Sub-Judge, and Collector. A survey is forwarded showing the Tāmbraparni River and the positions of the various buildings.

One original endorsement of the Under Secretary to Government, No. 1055, dated 27th April 1881, on District Judge of Tinnevely's letter, No. 288, dated 31st March 1881.

One copy of Memorandum regarding the Collector's Cutcherry and Commercial Buildings at Kokarakulam. One Survey Plan.

2. With regard to the present state of the buildings I beg to report as below, and to explain that I have not paid particular attention to the state of the roofs for, I understand, what is now wanted is a report showing the state of the walls with reference to stability apart from the question of roofs. At the same time the roofs are not in very bad order, and if kept properly repaired will, I think, last for many years.

Sessions Court—This is a comparatively speaking new building and is in excellent order, free from cracks, and without any signs of weakness.

3. *District Court Office Building*.—This is an old building and has some cracks in it, but, so far as I can judge, none of the cracks appear to be of recent date, on the contrary I am inclined to think they are of long standing. The cracks do not suggest immediate danger, and as the building has stood the effects of many floods and yet does not appear to be in a dangerous state, I think there is no reason to suppose that it will not last for many years to come.

4. *Retiring-room for the Judge*.—This is quite a new building and, with the exception of the verandah, the end arches of which are cracked, is in very good order.

5. *Sub-Court*.—This is rather an old building; has only a few cracks in the main walls, and shows no signs of weakness, and, so far as I can see, is likely to stand for many years.

6. *Record-room*.—This is a very fine building, in capital order, and shows no signs whatever of weakness.

Collector's Office.—This is a long building with an upper-story, and is very old. From a memorandum giving a history of the building kindly furnished to me by the Collector, it appears that so far back as 1814 it was being used for a Cutcherry, and that originally it was the private residence of the first commercial resident, Mr. Martin, of these parts, and was built by him; so it seems probable the building was in existence before the commencement of the present century. In 1814 it was transferred to the Commercial Department, and then enlarged to make it suitable for being used as a Cotton Press godown, and since then many alterations have been made, the last, I believe, being the addition of the upper-story.

7. At present the building is divided longitudinally by means of cross walls into three compartments affording six rooms, viz., three on the ground-floor and three upstairs. The upstairs rooms open out on to a verandah on the front side; there is no verandah behind, but there are three buttresses. The foundations of the main or longitudinal walls are about 6' 6" deep; the bottom layer, for a height of about 2½ feet, is made with large stones filled in between with sand, and over this comes a course of stone in chunam and then brick in chunam.

8. At present there is a longitudinal crack, for about one-third of the length, along the outer edge of the upstairs verandah, and there are several cracks in the cross or partition walls. With regard to the present state of the building the Collector, in his letter, No. 187, dated 3rd June 1881, states "the Cutcherry had cracks before the flood of 1877, but they enlarged considerably after the flood, and some new and more serious ones were developed." The cracks in the partition walls may have been caused by the flood, but, I think, it is doubtful if the crack in the verandah is due to the same cause. I am inclined to think it is of longer standing and due to a different cause. The main walls are singularly free from cracks, even over the openings, and there are a great many doors and windows, there are practically no cracks. I examined with the plumbline the longitudinal walls and find that they are truly perpendicular, and, with the exception of one pillar,* so are the pillars of the upstairs verandah, and the cracks in the cross walls are probably due to the insufficiency of the foundations. The worst cracks are near the joining with the main wall, and are probably in a measure caused by unequal settlement of new and old work. With regard to the crack in floor of upstairs verandah and already alluded to, I am inclined to think

* This is very little out of the perpendicular. I think this is due to bad work or perhaps the plaster was not put on evenly. The pillar is not cracked and shows no signs of having been pushed out.

none of these pillars have any cracks in them. The cracks in the cross walls are probably due to the insufficiency of the foundations. The worst cracks are near the joining with the main wall, and are probably in a measure caused by unequal settlement of new and old work. With regard to the crack in floor of upstairs verandah and already alluded to, I am inclined to think

that this is due to the joists, which are palmyrah, being decayed at the bearings and sinking a little. If the crack were due to the foundation giving way, the roof of the verandah would show signs of cracking, but there is no appearance of this. Under all these circumstances and also bearing in mind the age of the building, and the many floods that must have occurred since its construction, I am of opinion that it is exceedingly improbable that the building will not last for many years to come, and that, too, even if it is assailed by a somewhat higher flood than the one of 1877.

9. In regard to the repairs recently executed, and what the Collector in his letter, No. 50, dated 1st February 1881, describes as "patched up," I beg to explain that the repairs had no reference to repairing damage caused by the flood, in fact in this respect the Cutcherry has not been repaired at all. What occurred was this—the tie beams of the roof trusses were found to have decayed at the bearings, and, in fact, from this cause the tie beam of one truss gave way and the truss slipped down a couple of feet without doing further injury. As providing new trusses would have led to considerable expense, and as all but the bearings of the tie beams were sound, pillars to take the tie beams, and with foundations six feet deep, were built up from the ground and close to the main wall. By this arrangement the roof now practically rests on the pillars and is independent of the main walls. At the time the tie beams were examined the ends of the joists of the upstairs verandah were also examined and were found to be very much decayed. In order to obtain ample bearing for these, stone brackets were introduced into the wall, and on these a bressummer for the joists to rest on was placed. The other repairs executed merely consisted of white and color washing.

10. *Sub-Registrar's Office and Treasury*.—These originally were part of the cotton godown. They are in fair order: there are some cracks in the walls, but they do not indicate that the buildings are likely to collapse at a comparatively early date.

11. *Subsidiary Jail*.—This is quite a new building and in very good order.

Printing Office.—The walls seem sound and in good order.

12. Turning now to the correspondence and to the District Judge's report, No. 288, dated 31st March 1881, I beg to point out that it appears to me that the reports of both the Judge and the Collector are misleading and needlessly alarming, and that there is nothing in the history of the river to indicate that it is such a destructive agent as both the Judge and Collector appear to think it is. In addition to the Government buildings at Kokarakulam, there is the Judge's residence quite close to his Court, and nearly opposite on left bank of the river, and in a low situation, is the Collector's house. Both these houses are very old and have stood the effects of many floods, and still they are intact and show no signs of weakness. The flood of 1877 was a great flood, it rose to the level of the top of the basement of the Collector's house and forced him to seek refuge by, I believe, escaping in a bathing tub; this was rather bad, but beyond this the flood really did not do much damage in the vicinity of Kokarakulam. It seems to me very doubtful that there will ever be a flood much higher than the one of 1877. It should be remembered that when the water rises to the height it did that year, that a further rise of a few inches would increase the waterway very considerably, and for this reason I think it is improbable that the water will ever rise much higher than it did in 1877.

13. The Judge draws attention to the disafforestation of the Travancore Hills for the purpose of coffee planting, regarding that I will merely remark that it would be interesting to know what proportion the area cleared for coffee and lying within the drainage area of the river bears to the total hill drainage area of the river. I am inclined to think that the area cleared for coffee in comparison with the total drainage area cannot be large.

14. The Judge considers that owing to the action of the river being so uncertain and destructive that the existing Courts should be abandoned and new ones built at Palamcottah, and the Collector on similar grounds, I believe, has recommended that it would be well to take advantage of the present dullness in business at Tuticorin and purchase for offices some of the cotton godowns now being offered for sale. I need hardly say that if these proposals are carried out they will lead to great expense. In my opinion there is no sufficient reason to go to this expense. Looking to the past history of the river, and to the length of time the buildings at, and in the vicinity of, Kokarakulam have stood, I cannot come to any other conclusion than that they will stand for many years to come, and I would seriously recommend Government not to abandon them. The Judge suggests that the buildings might be bought for Missionary purposes, but I should think that what the Missionaries would give for them would be insignificant in comparison with the cost of providing new buildings.

15. Although I would not recommend the buildings at Kokarakulam to be abandoned, still, I think, unless there are very good reasons for building the Sub-Court there, it would be better to select a site that is not likely to get flooded, for this will avoid the necessity of having expensive foundations.

C. E. No. 1686 [Current No. 2159].

Transferred to the Judicial Department, and the referred papers returned.

(By Order.)

(Signed) C. C. RAWSON, Captain, R.E.,
Ag. Under Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.

19th July 1881.

ORDER THEREON, 15th October 1881, No. 2133.

The Government accept the views expressed by the Public Works Officers, that there is no proved necessity for abandoning the public buildings at Kokarakulam.

2. The Government, however, consider that, for the reasons given by the Executive Engineer, it would be desirable to erect the new Sub-Court on a different site. One at Palamcottah will be selected for the purpose.

(True Extract.)

J. Sanderson
Chief Secretary.

To the Collector of Tinnevely.
„ District Judge of Tinnevely.
„ Revenue Department.
„ Public Works Department.

Exd. T. O'Connor.

B. N. 2711 W. of 2^d Nov. 1881

Communicated
to the Superintending
Engineer 3^d Circle
(old) for information
and guidance.

R. W. Thompson

P. H. C. No. 6291
Govt. of 1881 Madras
JUDICIAL.

To
THE COLLECTOR OF TINNEVELLY,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated October, 15th.

Issued

Recd. 31 Oct. 81 Encl.

G.O., 15th October 1881, No. 2133.

S. L. C.

OCTOBER.

N. 2711 W. of 2^d November 1881

Entd. in Receipt Regr.

Court-houses.—The views expressed by the Public Works Officers, that there is no proved necessity for abandoning the public buildings at Kokarakulam, Tinnevely District, accepted; but the erection of a new Sub-Court on a site to be selected at Palamcottah, considered desirable.

with order

1788

India office.

London, 22 September 1881.

Public Works

No. 32.

Sir,

Herewith is forwarded, for your Excellency's information, copy of a letter from Mr. Parkes, C.E., relative to the expenditure on the Madras Harbour Works up to the 30th June 1881.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

your most obedient,
Humble Servant.

(Sd.) Kensington

His Excellency,

The Honourable,

The Governor in Council,
Fort St. George.

No. 2

C. No. 3-969

Public Works

22nd Sept 1881

Copy

Letter to Fort St George

No. 32

Recd 24 October 1881

B. No 2710 W-2-11-81