

Political (1896) Department.

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 380

Dated 13 June 1896

INDEXED.

[Despatch Abstract.]

MEDICAL INSPECTION OF MINICOY AND ANDROTH.

Recording, proceedings, Public Department, passing orders
on report on the-----.

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593:6-9-95 Pub.
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ORDER No 380 & 13th June 1896.

Issued

Recd. 3/12/96

Encl. —

G.O., No. 563, 25th May 1896.

MAY.

Medical Inspection of Minicoy and Androth.

Passing orders on report on the —.

WITH ORDER

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

READ—again the following papers:—

G.O., No. 531, Public, dated 2nd July 1891. *mis*

ABSTRACT.—Sanctioning the proposal that a suitable young man should be selected and specially trained for service as hospital assistant at Amini.

G.O., No. 848, Public, dated 7th October 1891. *mis*

ABSTRACT.—Sanctioning the entertainment of one Muhammad Abdul Rahiman selected for training as hospital assistant at Amini.

G.O., No. 111, *col.* Public, dated 22nd February 1894. *56*

ABSTRACT.—Sanctioning the admission of Bolur Shaik Husain into the Medical College with a view to his being trained as a hospital assistant for service in the Amindivi Islands.

G.Os., Nos. { 326, Political, dated 17th May 1895.
411 „ „ 26th June „

ABSTRACT.—Regarding the administration of the Laccadive Islands.

G.O., No. 732, Public, dated 3rd September 1895. *mis*

ABSTRACT.—Recording the annual return and report of the Civil Dispensary on the island of Minicoy for the year 1894, and sanctioning the proposal that on the occasion of the next inspection of the islands the District Medical and Sanitary Officer should accompany the inspecting officer, in view to enquiries being made as to the cause of the severe outbreak of cholera on the island of Androth, and to instructions being given to the islanders to provide against a recurrence.

READ—also the following papers:—

From Surgeon-Major-General C. SIBTHORPE, F.R.C.P.I., Surgeon-General with the Government of Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 9th March 1896, No. 192.

With reference to G.O., No. 732, Public, dated the 3rd September 1895, I have the honour to state that, as directed therein, the District Medical and Sanitary Officer, Malabar, recently accompanied the Collector in his inspection of the Laccadive Islands and has submitted an interesting report which I herewith enclose for the information of Government.

2. As regards the Island of Androth, I agree with him that a certain number of wells should be converted into draw-wells and that all trees within a radius of 30 feet be removed. His suggestion regarding the fields, instead of the beach, being used for the purposes of nature should receive attention.

3. With reference to the Island of Minicoy, it will be seen from the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's remarks that the report of the hospital assistant recorded in the Government order quoted above was rather exaggerated.

4. In paragraph 3 of my letter, No. T-603, dated the 16th August 1895, I suggested that the lepers in Minicoy might be transferred to the Pallipattam Lazaretto and from the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report the men seem to be willing to be sent there, but he fears that it would be almost impossible to carry out this proposal owing to the great difficulty in obtaining the proper means of transport, as owners of the native vessels would not consent to carry them. Under these circumstances I agree with the District Medical and Sanitary Officer that the only other course open is to construct a proper building for them in the part of the island they are at present living in. The present system of allowing them to mix freely with the other population is most objectionable, and steps should, I think, be taken as soon as possible for their segregation, which can only be effectively carried out when a separate building has been constructed for them as proposed. I also approve of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's other recommendations in connection with this proposal except that, in my opinion, the hospital assistant should be held responsible for the feeding and clothing of the patients. This practice is in force in the Pallipattam Lazaretto and has worked well.

5. I particularly beg to draw the attention of Government to paragraph 16 of the report. The present system of sending a Muhammadan hospital assistant alone every year is most inconvenient, owing specially to the number of such hospital assistants in the department being very limited. As the District Medical and Sanitary Officer reports that a Native Christian will not be unacceptable, I recommend that selections be made from these two communities alternately.

6. I am glad to have the testimony of Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkins to the interest taken by the present hospital assistant, Shaik Tippu, in his work.

ENCLOSURE.

From Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. HACKETT-WILKINS, District Medical and Sanitary Officer, Malabar, to the Secretary to the Surgeon-General with the Government of Madras, dated Calicut, 19th February 1896, Dis. No. 29.

In accordance with the orders of Government of Madras, I embarked on the Steamer *Margaria* with the Collector and his staff on the 9th December 1895, intending to do the inspection of the hospital at Minicoy and to report on the condition of the lepers on the island, but from some cause or other we could not find the island after steaming in all directions for sixteen hours, and following.

2. The Collector then arranged to do the other smaller islands and to send for me when he arrived at Androth.

3. I accordingly left Calicut on Monday, the 20th January 1896, and arrived at Androth the next evening at four.

ANDROTH.

4. This island is situated about 139 miles from Calicut and is the largest of the northern group of the Laccadive Islands. The soil is a mixture of powdered coral and vegetable matter, on the east and south-east there appears to be a larger amount of vegetable debris with the result that trees growing in these parts of the island are distinctly sturdier and better in all respects. The surface of the island is nearly covered with fallen cocoanut leaves and the cocoanut fibre, which seem to be allowed to remain till they rot. The country is flat with little mounds of earth of varying heights in places. The inhabitants are Muhammadans and the men and boys of excellent physique, but the former are a most apathetic lot. Their food consists chiefly of the following grains—rice, ragi and varagu—and fish, mutton, fowls, &c.

5. The water-supply appears to be sufficient, but the quality is not good as it is hard, and as the wells are in no way protected a great deal of vegetable matter falls into them and this is allowed to soak in the water. Besides this, nearly all the drinking-water wells are situated in the darkest and most shady parts of the island. I have suggested that a certain number of these should be converted into draw-wells and that all trees within a radius of 30 feet be removed.

Considering the important part the water-supply plays in diseases attended by gastric symptoms, this matter should receive attention. The houses are fairly large and well built, the walls being built of limestone and the roof well covered with the cocoanut leaves.

6. The conservancy of the island is sadly neglected. The compounds of the huts are filthy. The men should be persuaded to use the fields instead of the beach for the purposes of nature, and if the trench system were introduced, the soil in parts of the island might be improved. There were forty-five cases vaccinated with forty successful; the lymph had unfortunately begun to fail as it was getting old. There had been no epidemic of small-pox since 1884.

7. The chief diseases are, eye diseases, worms and rheumatism. The first is due a great deal more to the irritation of the lime in the sand than to the coir as reported before. I treated a large number of men suffering from granular lids and they seldom or ever had anything to do with the coir beating or picking.

8. When Surgeon-Major Beech visited the island in 1891 he saw five cases of leprosy; four of these have since died and a young man who appears to be well looked after and is suffering from it in its early stage is the only one surviving. He objected very much to leave the island for treatment on the mainland.

9. The real purpose of my visit to this island was to enquire into the terrible epidemic of cholera which broke out here about the end of December 1893 and continued up to February 1894. The disease is reported to me to have been introduced by traders from Mangalore; the first attacks recovered, but as the days went on the disease increased in severity and from the 10th of January there were as many as 150 deaths in a day. The total number of deaths registered was 976, but I believe there must have been twenty or thirty more. No special treatment appears to have been adopted as no medicines were available, and one may picture the misery and distress there must have been at the time when the smallness of the island is considered. The effect on the population has been to decrease it considerably, as will be seen from the following statement:—

The population taken in 1891 was	3,320
Births registered in 1891	390
This leaves a population to be accounted for, viz.	3,710
Deduct deaths during the same period	1,421
	2,289

Present remaining population as registered while I was on the island 2,289, so that a small balance of thirty had to be accounted for. This, however, shows a very serious decrease in the population and which, of course, is greatly due to the epidemic of cholera. Unless there has been some "cooking up" in the entries in the registers, this system of registration compares more favourably with that in the mainland in even large municipal towns.

10. I had a quantity of medicines for the treatment of cholera brought out for this tour and have at all the islands inspected by the Collector left them with printed instructions as to their use, and some of the more intelligent of the natives were taught most carefully and simply the steps to be taken in any future epidemic, and it is to be hoped the inhabitants will not suffer so severely in future. Two curious facts were noticeable in this island and they were the very small excess of female children to males, viz., six in the total births of five years and a mortality of 122 of females in excess of the males during the five years and 104 of these during the cholera epidemic.

11. I returned from Androth on the 28th of January and arrived at Calicut in the afternoon of the 29th and left again early on Friday morning, the 31st of January, and arrived at Minicoy on the evening of the 1st of February.

MINICOY.

12. On Sunday morning the Collector and I visited the leper settlement and had a long conversation with the poor afflicted. There were ten lepers in the Island remaining from the nineteen when Surgeon-Major Beech visited the islands, all the others having died. Of these three were admissions since 1893. Both the Collector and I were agreeably surprised to find the majority looking in fairly satisfactory condition, but this I think was chiefly due to the food supplied to them by the hospital assistant and the amin, each of them having given the lepers a bag of rice. The statements made by a late medical subordinate, though true to certain extent, appeared to the Collector and myself to be rather exaggerated. The majority of the lepers were very anxious to come across to India and be treated at the Lazaretto at Pallipattam, where I am informed there is sufficient accommodation at present, but I am afraid that it would be almost impossible to do so, for the great difficulty would be to obtain the proper means of transport, as owners of the "odees" (native vessels) would not consent to carry them. The only steps that can be taken, I think, are that they should have a proper building constructed for them in the part of

the island they are at present living, and that the hospital assistant in charge of the island dispensary be entrusted to look after them and that the Amin be directed to supply them with the food. Fresh food and vegetables might be obtained for them and sent through the Board of Trade, Colombo, and the Commanders of the lighthouse steamers which, I am told, call every six weeks at the island and bring provisions for the men in charge of the lighthouse.

13. (a) The following are the new admissions in the island from leprosy, with a few notes regarding their family history:—

(1) Moosa—12 years. Mother has leprosy, but for some reason or other she has not been ordered to the settlement by the khazi, and his aunt is suffering from the disease in its early stage, but he has five sisters and three brothers who are healthy.

(2) Ali—18 years. Both parents dead, but they had not suffered from leprosy. Aunt was in the settlement and died a year ago. Has three sisters, all healthy.

(3) Mahomed—age 14 years. Mother is suffering from leprosy in its incipient stage, but is living in the village. Father healthy. Has no brothers or sisters.

(b) The hospital assistant, Shaik Tippu, has been interesting himself on their behalf, and I saw several of the cases improving under treatment. The inhabitants of Minicoy have very curious ideas about leprosy, for, as long as those suffering from the disease are allowed to remain in the village by the khazi, they mix freely with them, but when once transferred to the leper settlement, they will have nothing to do with them and will not approach them within 200 yards. The khazi, who is the responsible person, evidently thinks that the disease must be very far advanced in persons before he orders their removal. If proper accommodation were built and food supplied and if the hospital assistant, khazi and amin worked together, cases would be segregated while the disease was in its incipient stage, and probably then the disease would in time be stamped out of the island.

14. I inspected the dispensary on two occasions and was pleased with the work done by the medical subordinate in charge.

15. The most common diseases appear to be rheumatism, worms, skin diseases, eye diseases and in the rainy season fevers, reported to be of a malarial type. I did not see a single case of enlarged spleen. There were a fairly large number of granular lids and opacities of the cornea and I also saw three cases of cataract. If I ever visit the islands again, I shall go prepared for a few operations on the eye.

16. The hospital assistant's quarters are very comfortable. I would strongly urge the necessity of a young man being sent. The Collector and I questioned the people as to the class of medical subordinate for the island, and the general opinion was that they objected entirely to a caste Hindu but that they had no objection to a Native Christian, though they would prefer a Muhammadan. It would not be so bad for a Native Christian to live on the island, as the men at the lighthouse are of that class and they have a stock of provisions consisting of tinned beef, mutton, vegetable, &c., which the hospital assistant may, without injuring his caste, eat, and for which he would have to pay a nominal price. I may mention here that the last meteorological clerk was a Native Christian who had lived there on very friendly terms with the islanders for four years and he did not look as if he had suffered for his residence there, and this was chiefly due to his having been able to get a variety of food and provisions from the lighthouse men. There is no doubt that the Muhammadan suffers as he can get nothing but rice, fish and fowls. No fresh meat is procurable, for goats die soon after their arrival there from the bites of the mosquitoes. It would be worth trying whether the tough-skinned buffalo would stand the climate and mosquitoes. There were in all twenty cases vaccinated and lymph was left for another fifty. It is my intention to send a supply of lymph through Colombo every second or third month. The island appears to have been free from small-pox for several years.

17. The water-supply is sufficient, but the quality is not good.

18. The island during the time of the tour was kept fairly clean. The one great drawback to sanitation is that the men will resort to the beach for purposes of nature and until the tide rises the smell is very objectionable, but after that the feculent matter is carried away by the receding tide.

19. In conclusion I have to suggest that all correspondence, postings, &c., be made *via* Colombo; the following address is the one I would suggest for the present:—Hospital Assistant, Minicoy, care of Commander, Lighthouse Steamer, Board of Trade Office, Colombo.

From Surgeon-Major-General C. SIBTHORPE, F.R.C.P.I., Surgeon-General with the Government of Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 14th March 1896, No. 222.

In continuation of my letter, No. 192, dated the 9th instant, forwarding the inspection report of Minicoy by the District Medical and Sanitary Officer, Malabar, I have the honour to state that in November last year, when the hospital assistant at

Minicoy had to be relieved, I found considerable difficulty in selecting a substitute, partly on account of the number of Muhammadan hospital assistants in the service being very limited, but mainly owing to the unpopularity of the island on account of want of free communication and other local hardships.

2. It then occurred to me that it would be a desirable plan to select a candidate from Malabar who would be willing to serve in the island for a number of years and post him there after undergoing the necessary training. With this view, I called upon the District Medical and Sanitary Officer, Malabar, to ascertain if there were any such candidates in the district and if so to forward their applications to me with his remarks on each.

3. The District Medical and Sanitary Officer reports that five candidates applied and of these only two appeared for the competitive examination which he wished to hold to select the most suitable one. Of these two men, the District Medical and Sanitary Officer is of opinion that Ibrahim Khan is of good physique and will make a good subordinate. This man is according to his own statement about twenty years of age and by appearance about twenty-eight. He is now employed as a compounder in the district and appears to have served in a similar capacity for two years in Minicoy, during which period he is said to have studied the language of the island and made himself acquainted with the customs and habits of the people. He holds a certificate from the District Medical and Sanitary Officer and Assistant Surgeon, Malabar, who examined him in September 1889, to the effect that he passed an examination in *Materia Medica* and *Pharmacy* with great credit and is quite qualified to perform the duties of a compounder. As regards his general educational qualification, he has not passed any examination, but says that he studied up to the Matriculation standard. If selected, he may be sent to the Madras Medical College for the necessary medical training and, on passing the final examination, posted to Minicoy, where he is willing to stay for any period he may be ordered to do.

4. I may state that a similar course was adopted in respect of the medical requirements of the Aminidivi Island: *vide* G.O., No. 848, Public, dated the 7th October 1891.

5. I however understand that it is in contemplation to hand over the Laccadive Islands to the Rajah of Cannanore. Unless this is a fact and the Rajah is not likely to continue to keep up the hospital at Minicoy, I recommend that Ibrahim Khan may be selected for service in the island and, on signing the usual bond, trained in the Medical College as a civil medical pupil on the scale of stipend admissible to such pupils.

From the Surgeon-General, No. T.-16, dated 18th April 1896.

ORDER—No. 563, Public, dated 25th May 1896.

The Marine Department will be requested to obtain and furnish an explanation as to the reason of the failure to find the island of Minicoy during the first trip of the steamer *Margarita*.

Paragraph 1 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.

2. The Revenue Department will be requested to take such action upon the following suggestions made by Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel Hackett-Wilkins and the Surgeon-General as may be deemed necessary:—

(i) that a certain number of drinking-water wells in the island of Androth should be converted into draw-wells and that all trees within a radius of 30 feet of them should be removed,

Paragraph 5 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 2 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

(ii) that measures should be taken to induce the islanders, both in Androth and Minicoy, to use the fields instead of the beach for purposes of nature, and

Paragraphs 6 and 18 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 2 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

(iii) that a suitable building should be constructed for the lepers in Minicoy, with a view to their early segregation from the rest of the population.

Paragraphs 12 and 13 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 4 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

3. As regards the last suggestion, it would probably be more economical to purchase or construct an "odee" or native vessel and transport to the main land "the majority of the lepers, who were anxious to come across to India" than to erect a new building for them on the island,

Paragraph 12 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.

and convey medicines, food and other provisions once in six weeks through a circuitous course, as proposed by the District Medical and Sanitary Officer. If the hospital assistant, khazi and amin explained to the islanders the facilities provided at the Palliport Lazaretto for this class of patients, their complete segregation from the island at the incipient stage of the disease might be effected, with benefit to themselves and their families and at less expense to Government.

Paragraph 13 (b) of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.

4. The Government has no objection to the Surgeon-General's proposal that the hospital assistant should be held responsible for the feeding and clothing of the patients remaining in the island.

Paragraph 13 (a) of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 4 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

Paragraph 1 of report on page 4 of G.O., No. 593, Political, dated 6th September 1895.
Paragraph 12 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 3 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

5. It is presumed that the defects in the dispensary buildings and other sanitary arrangements reported on by the medical subordinate in January 1895 have since been remedied.

6. In lieu of the Surgeon-General's recommendation that the hospital assistant should be selected from Muhammadans and Native Christians *alternately*, the Government considers it more expedient to rule that he may belong to either of these classes.

Paragraph 16 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 5 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

7. Sanction is accorded to the proposal that Ibrahim Khan should be selected for service in Minicoy, and trained in the Medical College as a Civil Medical pupil, on signing the usual bond. If his services cannot, when his education is completed, be utilised in the Laccadives, they can be elsewhere.

Paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 222.

8. It is presumed that the two pupils ordered to be trained in G.O., No. 848, dated 7th October 1891, and No. 111, dated 22nd February 1894, will likewise be available for service in these islands in due course.

Paragraphs 12 and 14 of the District Medical and Sanitary Officer's report.
Paragraph 6 of the Surgeon-General's letter No. 192.

9. The Government notes with satisfaction the good work done by the hospital assistant and amin in Minicoy.

(True Extract.)

W. D. Thillip
Chief Secretary.

To the Political Department.

" Revenue "
" Marine "
" Surgeon-General.
" Accountant-General.

Exd. C. M. Thumbeeswamy.

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READ AGAIN G.O., No.
189

DATED

CURRENT No.

ENCLOSURES TO C. No

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT

A A A A A A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

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