M.R.O. 1—38,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No. 2743 Press ~~Misc~~

85-86

Dated 7th October 1869.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Qns

No. 85. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 21st August 1869, No. 6,281 :—

Read the following letter from the Acting Collector of Tinnevelly, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 12th July 1869, No. 278.

Referring to Board* and Government† Proceedings as per margin, I have the honour to forward Captain Phipps's Report on the Oyster Nursery at Tuticorin, giving the result of the numerous experiments tried from the commencement.

* No. 3,354, dated 17th May 1869.
† „ 1,661, „ 11th June „

2. I have nothing to add to Captain Phipps's narrative. It confirms the opinion expressed in paragraph 2 of my leter of the 17th April last, No. 160, that the Oyster Nursery was a complete failure, and it was not worthwhile spending any more on it.

Enclosure No. 1.

From Captain G. A. PHIPPS, Superintendent of Pearl Banks, to the Acting Collector of Tinnevelly, dated Tuticorin, 2nd July 1869, No. 27.

In acknowledging the receipt of a copy of the Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, with the order thereon, dated 11th June 1869, No. 1,661, I have the honour to report that after the failure of the Pearl banks off Trichendur, from which a fishery was expected in 1863, it occurred to me in March of the same year to endeavour, by forming an artificial bank, to breed Pearl Oysters, and after keeping them in a basin or nursery for two or three years, to transfer them to the deep sea-banks. The reasons for this plan were many ; but the principal one was, that many banks were often found stocked with young oysters. Upon the next examination, these had disappeared, and the bank left bare or covered with Soorum ; and it was expected by the aid of the nursery to breed and protect them for a certain time, so that when transferred to the deep sea-banks, they should be old and strong enough to take care of themselves, it being noticed that banks of oysters which had once reached the age of three years, were seldom lost ; had this plan been successful, it was contemplated that in time the Pearl Fishery might be made to yield a permanent yearly revenue. After the subject had been carefully considered, the Government in their order, No. 650, dated 13th April 1863, sanctioned the formation of the Oyster Nursery, the commencement of which was made in November 1864, and continued during the ensuing year, it being completed and made over to my charge on the 12th May 1866. It was intended at first to construct it on a much larger scale, but on account of the quality of the material used, there was much loss, and as it was necessary to have the west end enclosed before the south-west monsoon of 1866 commenced, the original plan was curtailed to about ten acres.

2. The position selected for the nursery was a bank which laid nearly in the centre of the harbour of Tuticorin, the bottom of which was clear sand. Previous to the surrounding walls being quite completed, heaps both of Coral and hard blue-stone were put down, and as opportunities offered, all the Pearl Oysters that could be found were placed on these heaps, also on tables with slate tops ; but it was soon noticed that the bank upon which the nursery was formed, was gradually getting covered with a layer of blue mud, heaps of stone, slate-tables, etc. ; the walls of the nursery itself speedily obtained a coating of this deposit, which seemed at once to kill every Pearl Oyster with which it came in contact : at one time, it was thought that the oysters which had been placed in the nursery, were too young, and that if some of a more mature age could be procured, they might withstand the mud. The Ceylon Government having a small quantity of five-year old in shallow water in the neighbourhood of Jaffna, permission was kindly granted

me to remove 5,000 for the use of the nursery : upon arrival at the spot on the 6th February 1866, it appeared that they were not nearly so plentiful as expected ; and after taking up all I could in thirty hours, I left with 2,500, and these, upon arrival at Tuticorin on the 9th, were at once placed upon fresh heaps of stone. In a day or so, I again went to the nursery, but found that nearly all the oysters had opened out, and none had attached themselves to the stone bottom : the expense and trouble that had been incurred in this experiment had therefore resulted in a complete failure, and I was disinclined to attempt any other means for stocking the nursery. It was afterwards proposed to me to endeavour to get some of the Persian Gulf Oysters introduced, but considering the great expense of such an undertaking, and the almost certain failure in bringing them alive to Tuticorin, I did not wish to involve the Government in a further outlay ; but hoped that in due course the banks would be stocked naturally.

3. Early in the year 1867 very large quantities of what seemed to be young oysters appeared on the Tuticorin and Vypar banks, and of these, many thousands were placed in the nursery, not only on the heaps but in the crevices of the surrounding walls, in chatties, boxes, and baskets hung on poles, and wherever there was a probability of their living ; but it was of no use ; in two or three days all had disappeared.

4. During the examination of the banks in 1866 and 1867, all oysters found by the divers were carefully placed upon stone in a tank on board the steamer. In most cases they quickly attached themselves to the stone, and were carefully deposited in the most favourable part of the nursery ; but in a few days they had dropped off, and the stone was covered with a thin layer of mud. It is almost impossible to state the number of times that this form of placing oysters in the nursery and their disappearing after a few days, has been gone through ; and I am fully convinced that to the mud alone must be attributed the continued failures. Oysters in aquaria have lived for months, but in these, the water has been kept pure ; on the Pearl banks, the bottom is sand, stone, and coral, and in no case, have I found oysters thrive ; if there was mud in their neighbourhood.

5. During December 1867, a bed of young oysters was discovered in the harbour of Tuticorin, and I had a large quantity gathered and spread all over the nursery ; but these and also those that composed the bed in the harbour were all lost in a short time afterwards.

6. During the late examination of the Pearl banks, the diver brought me in one day over 500 oysters of nearly-one year old ; these I had placed in the nursery, but only to disappear like the rest. After so many trials, I do not think it can be considered that the experiment of the nursery has not had a fair one, and utter failure and disappointment has followed each attempt up to this time. Mr. Puckle was disposed to favour the formation of a new nursery outside the island, but after my experience, I did not feel inclined to support another proposal.

7. In the year 1862 I placed an old canoe filled with stone on the sand bank, upon which the Oyster Nursery was afterwards built and in this Pearl Oysters were placed ; these attached themselves to the stone in the canoe, and they remained until the canoe was destroyed by the sea-worm.

8. The walls of the nursery are now in many places washed down to the sea-level ; the violence of the south-west monsoon having very much increased the damage made by the north-east wind and sea. The Collector in his letter of 17th May, No. 3,354, states that the nursery is useless, unless all the walls are kept up ; this is not quite correct ; the walls were built up high to facilitate people moving about, and to form a walk on the top : the latter idea was abandoned some years ago, as it was too expensive, and the transit from place to place has since been done in a boat : the fact of the walls having washed down would, in no way, have injured the usefulness of the nursery, had it happily proved so. I would recommend that the nursery be left in its present state, in the hope that at some future time it may be turned to some account : the value of the Coral itself is small, and the cost of removing that or the heavy stone would be nearly as much as it is worth. Hard stone is required for the new sea-wall facing the town of Tuticorin ; but I believe this can be obtained as cheap from the shipping direct as by removing it and thus permanently destroying the

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 7th October 1869.

rsery. The present establishment, at a cost of Rupees 16 per month, may be discontinued ; and
› Superintendent of the Light-house directed to prevent any person injuring or removing stone
›m the works.

2. The wood composing the small store will be useful for the new building in connection with Light-house, and can be easily removed if required.

SUBMITTED to Government with reference to their Order quoted by the Acting llector.

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86. ORDER THEREON, 7th October 1869, No. 2,743.

Miscellaneous.

UNDER the circumstances represented by Captain Phipps, the Government regret to be compelled to sanction the ndonment of Pearl Oyster Nursery experiments for the present.

2. The course proposed in paragraph 8 of Captain Phipps's letter is accordy sanctioned.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) R. A. DALYELL,

Acting Secretary to Government.

Board of Revenue.

J. Shunker.

Revt. Department

Pearl Oyster Nursery at Tuticorin

No. 2743 Fr. Madras Government
dated 21st August 1869 & No. 628

Under the circumstances
stances represented by
Captain Phipps, the pro-
posal to be completed
by abandoning the attempt
Board of Revenue
Survey establishment
the present.

The same has been
in hand 8 of Captain
Phipps' letter
dated 21st August 1869 & No. 628
is cancelling the sanctioned

Copy in a letter to Govt.
18th Oct 69 No 82. Mds

11-7-78

Govt. of {1869} Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE.

Dated October, 7th.

Encl.

Read.

G. O., 7th October 1869. No. 2,743.

OCTOBER.

Nos. 85-86.

Pearl Oyster Nursery at Tuticorin.—Abandonment of the experiments in connection with it sanctioned.