

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
4th August 1871.*

No. 25. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 5th July 1871, No. 2,737 :—

Read the following papers.

From the Collector of Tinnevely, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Mangalakurichi, 20th May 1871, No. 211.

I HAVE the honour to forward a copy of Captain Phipps's report on his recent inspection of pearl banks.

2. I have just returned from a trip to Paumben, and have made such further inspection of the banks as the state of the weather permitted. No oysters of any age were found, and until they are five years old there is no certainty of their remaining on the banks two years successively. The diver brought up the shells of dead oysters, and stones to which the cable or ligament that holds the oyster to the rocks was attached. Barnacles and Soram and Kilakoi, two varieties of muscles, were found in abundance, and it is believed that these and other enemies suck the oysters out of their shells. There are no grounds whatever for thinking that the banks are poached by the fishermen, as there are no oysters of age sufficient to produce pearls, and the Jadi Talawan, the head of the fishermen caste, has such a direct interest in a Government fishery that it is improbable that he could connive at a system of poaching which must be conducted wholesale to affect the banks materially. It must be remembered, too, that precisely the same state of affairs exists off the coast of Ceylon. In both cases the banks are covered with young oysters one year, and the next there are none at all. They then return only to disappear again, and there is no reckoning with any certainty on their getting firm hold of the ground. We can only wait and watch the banks carefully in the hope of the oysters maturing.

3. The *Margaret Northcote* is a very serviceable vessel, exactly suited for the work; but I think it a mistake to examine the banks as often as has been done of late, as constantly heaving the lead and letting down divers stones must tend to disturb the banks and keep the oysters from settling. Frequent examination till oysters are found is, I think, very desirable; but when once found they should be let alone for a year before they are again disturbed.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From Captain G. A. PHIPPS, Superintendent of Pearl Banks, to the Collector of Tinnevely, dated Tuticorin, 27th April 1871, No. 13.

I HAVE the honour to inform you that my examination of the pearl banks commenced at Paumben on the 22nd ultimo. Previous to this day I was engaged in attendance upon Mr. Robertson, the Harbour Engineer, and Colonel Farewell, etc. I am happy to say that since that time there has been a long continuance of favourable weather, and I was on the afternoon of the 21st enabled to nearly complete the work.

Captain Richardson's report of the 20th February will have already prepared Government for the failure of those pearl banks which were thought so favourably of last year, and I regret that my late examination has proved the correctness of his surmises, and that at present there is not the slightest prospect of a pearl fishery taking place on the coast of Tinnevely or Madura for some years.

On arriving at Paumben on the 22nd of March I at once proceeded to two of the banks off that place. I devoted to these all the forenoon, but found no oysters. The banks were covered

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with weed and some Kilakoi. It being late in the day when I finished, I decided to pass by the rocky ledge off Mannaui Tivu, which had been examined previously, and proceed to the westward, and the next morning examined the large bank off Keelacarry. On this the divers found a very few oysters—now and then one only, never more at a dive.

A patch of rocky ground off Valinookum point was next examined, upon which three pearl oysters were found. From this we proceeded to another bank off Nalla Panni Tivu: this proved to be quite bare. Having duties at my Office which required attention, I went on to Tuticorin.

The banks off Tuticorin and Vypar as follows were next examined successively:—

Cruzian Par.—On this a very few oysters were found.

Kooda Par.—Some oysters.

Koorichanthondoo Par.—Some oysters.

Vanthevoo Aroopagum Par.—Blank.

Alankun Par.—Blank.

Vaipar Kariar Par, Davee Par, Fernandoo Par, and Padootha Marican Par.—

When these last four banks were examined by me in the early part of 1869 a large quantity of young oysters of about a year old were found. These seem to have remained over the succeeding year, but have now nearly disappeared. I remained here for some hours; but, although oysters to a limited extent were brought up, still the quantity was so very small that these banks may be considered to have completely failed; the buoys were anchored in different parts, so that no place escaped inspection. There were a large quantity of dead pearl shells of about two and-a-half years of age, and the stones brought up showed the remains of the Byssus of those oysters that have died.

St. Patrick's Bank off Mookoor.—I arrived on this bank at 7-30 A.M., and, having placed a buoy in its northern edge, worked across it until I came to the south and then to the west. It is a long rocky patch, extends from east to west; the canoes in company, and in signal communication; a few oysters were now and then reported, in no place did we get more than three at a dive, and oftener none. Those found were about three years old. Soram and Barnacles were found intermixed, the latter almost always adhering to any oysters that were brought up; in fact, this bank may be considered also to have failed: it corresponds to one known to us as the Vypar Periar Par, but by reason of its distance from shore it is seldom that it can be found by the native marks.

After leaving this bank I came upon two small patches of rocky ground a short distance to the west. On these some oysters were found similar in age to those on the larger bank.

Yeerathee Coodamathu Par, Rajavookoo Chippi Sothicha Par, Sahithoo Coodamathu Par, Nadookoodamathee Par, and Poodoo Par.—These five banks are situated off Pinnacoi and are all joined together, the names by which they are known being merely to distinguish them from others off that place. When examined in 1869 a considerable quantity of young oysters were found, and I was then induced to be hopeful regarding them. The banks have since been inspected by Captain Richardson, who has reported adversely, and my examination has proved the same. A few oysters (about twenty) were found, not sufficient to be of any value to Government, and that after spending two and-a-half hours on it. On that part called Nadookoodamathee Par and Poodoo Par the divers brought up a good many of one year old, but intermixed with Soram.

Kanava Par and Kadian Par.—On these also were a few oysters mixed with Soram and Kilakoi.

Chowdee Par.—This bank was first found by me in 1869. Upon referring to my daily diary of that period I find the following remark:—

"This is a large bank; the Parmandaly calls it a new one. On this found a good many oysters of 1, 2, and 3 years of age. The divers brought up six and ten at a dive."

This bank seems to have been thought more favourably of by Captain Richardson and Mr. Longley than by myself, as the fact of its having oysters of three different ages on it at one time would be sufficient to dissipate any hopes of it ever being valuable that I might otherwise have had. I certainly never expected it to yield even a small fishery, and am not surprised at the oysters having now almost entirely disappeared. I have devoted a good deal of time to its exami-

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ation, and returned to it again to try it with the dredge. This brought up no oysters at all, but it was nearly covered with old shells, stones, weed, etc. Had there been oysters in even a moderate quantity, it would assuredly have brought up some. Regarding the position of the bank there is no doubt of this, as my former compass bearings were again found correct. At the examination the divers now and then brought up a few oysters of three years age, and a number of pinna shells with the Pearl Oyster Byssus still adhering, and to which Barnacles were also attached. Almost all the dead shells had Barnacles adhering.

Karia Carooval Par.—On this bank only a very few pearl oysters.

Velangoo Carooval Par.—We drifted to and fro over this bank with a canoe ahead and astern, keeping the divers working, but no oysters were brought up.

Coodamathee Par and Selthan Par were both bare.

The large Manapad Bank.—The position of this bank is, as I have previously stated in my reports, unfavourable for the pearl oysters, although, like all other rocky beds on the coast, a small number will always be found on it. I have now again passed several hours sending the divers down in different places. A very few oysters covered with Barnacles were brought up. A buoy was placed in the centre, and the two canoes and myself worked first over the western end and then to the eastward, the divers going down every one hundred yards or so. In some parts the quantity of large Barnacles seem almost to cover the whole bottom, some alive and others dead.

Manapadoo Par.—This is only a patch of rocky ground with sandy parts running in and out. A good deal of Soram was found.

Sandiamaran Pooditha Par.—Some soram and dead shells.

Sandama Civil Pooditha Par.—One oyster found.

Poodoo Par.—Blank.

Poodotta Par.—This is a very extensive bank. I spent some time on it, but found no oysters.

Knothadiar Par.—Three oysters found with Soram and Kilakoi.

Tholayiram Par.—A very large bank. The divers brought one oyster of nearly five years (in which was one small pearl) and four others of different ages, and a quantity of Soram. This was after spending three and-a-half hours on it.

Athambothoo Par.—Two oysters found.

Pathari Par.—Blank.

Passee Par.—Three oysters found.

Keelathu Par.—Blank.

Thus completed the examination of all the principal banks and of all the patches of hard ground that we have found by the lead, which in some cases have proved only coarse gravel: the result is very unsatisfactory. There seems to be an absence of even the presence of spat, some of which was generally observed in different places in former examinations. As far as I can judge the prospects of a pearl fishery are as bad now as they have been at any time during the past eight years.

The fact of a fishery having been fully reported in the ensuing year leads me to think that Captain Richardson was perhaps over-optimistic, having had little experience with pearl oysters. The finding of a few made him think more favourably of the banks than he would have had, had he gone through my repeated disappointments, having been over the ground and satisfied myself that the divers have stated the truth by using the dredge on such banks which Captain Richardson seemed to be doubtful about. I am confident that oysters do not now exist except in very small quantities, perfectly insufficient to be of any value.

There are many things to be considered before recommending a pearl fishery, first of which is the quantity of oysters. A bank to pay for fishing must contain so many oysters that at least five hundred divers can go down as often as possible and detach not less than from fifty to one hundred at each dive. This must be kept up from daylight until 2 p.m., and then for several days in succession. It will thus be seen that to permit this a bank must be thickly and completely

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covered. I learn from the divers that on no bank examined last year did they get more than ten or fifteen at a dive, and very seldom that number.

The S. S. *Margaret Northcote* is in a good order both in hull and machinery. The Engineer at present engaged is a good, steady, willing man.

The Guard Boats *Pearl* and *Edith* are now in dock, and will be re-coppered during the south-west monsoon.

The aquaria are also in good order.

The oysters placed in them during the cold weather are now all dead. A rearrangement of the light must be made before they can be again used, the room, as it is, being far too dark to permit the growth of vegetation required for the existence of animal life. At present there is no vegetation on the glasses, although some of the tanks have been full of water for months.

The Board of Revenue in a late Proceedings seem to think that there is good reason to doubt the truth of the statement of the divers, etc., on the coast. I am quite at a loss to know what object could be gained by their giving us false intelligence, and cannot think that such is the case. I am quite sure that the *Jadi Talawan* would not lend himself to any such deception. Regarding the employment of a European Diver, this I might be desirous of should there be a reasonable prospect of a pearl fishery at an early date. I am fully convinced that at present the work can be done well and truthfully with the natives. This opinion I formed long ago after having had some years' experience with European Divers. The Ceylon Government have now discontinued them. In a pearl fishery it is different; then a European Diver is useful, and he can be employed profitably. The diving apparatus so far as the helmet and pump, are in good order; but the air-tubing and dress being of Indian rubber are unserviceable.

The strong south winds which have now set in prevent further work being done. Should it be possible, I shall try and look at those banks that were left; but, as they have already been examined by Captain Richardson this season and found bare, it is unlikely that I shall be able to report anything more favourable.

From the Collector of Tinnevely, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue,
dated 5th June 1871, No. 231.

In reply to the Board's Proceedings, No. 2,075, dated 19th May 1871, I have the honour to inform you that oysters must be five years old to be fished, and we have none more than three years old; there cannot therefore be a fishery in 1872. The subject will be reported at length with reference to another Proceedings now under reply.

THE Board regret to learn that on further examination of the pearl banks on the coast of Madura and Tinnevely by Captain Phipps, and of the banks about Paumben by the Collector, there appears to be not the least hope of a successful pearl fishery for some years to come.

2. In his second letter above recorded the Collector states the reason for there being no probability of success this year.

3. It will be remembered that in the latter part of 1869 and beginning of 1870, Captain Richardson, then Acting Superintendent, carefully examined the pearl banks south and westward of Tuticorin nearly as far as Cape Comorin, and reported* favourably on banks at Vypar, some ten miles from Tuticorin, on some large banks off Manapad, formerly reported blank by Captain Phipps, but

* 2nd February 1870.

G. O., 28th June 1870, No. 957, Revenue Department.

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where large numbers of oysters were found by Captain Richardson, and of hopes of a fishery on the banks of Trichendur in 1872. In continuation of this report Captain Richardson* submitted the result of further examination of the banks north-east from Paumben to Tuticorin.

* Report of 4th May 1870, in G. O., 15th July 1870, No. 1,086, Revenue Department.

Off Paumben, in the direction of Manaar, oysters were found, but not in quantities likely to yield a good fishery. Off Moosel Island, and in another spot four miles to the south-west, promising patches in sufficiently deep water were discovered, which it was hoped might extend and be ready in three or four years: and due south of "Uppu Tanni Tivu" what was described as the richest and best bank on the whole coast, on which were found oysters 3½ years old, some with well-formed pearls in them, in 8½ fathoms of water, was named St. Patrick's Bank, and a confident hope was expressed that these four or five extensive patches would yield a lucrative fishery for four consecutive years, from 1872 or 1873.

4. The result of Captain Phipps's examination in March and April last is as follows:—

From the banks off Vypar and Tuticorin nothing can be expected. At St. Patrick's Bank a few oysters, but not more than two or three at a dive were found, and this also is considered a failure. The unfavourable opinion of the banks off Pinnacoll, entertained by Captain Phipps in 1869 and endorsed by Captain Richardson, is again confirmed by the former.

The position of Manapad is thought unsuited to pearl oysters, though a few may always be found there. From the "Chowdee Par" Bank, reported well of by Captain Richardson and Mr. Longley, Captain Phipps never expected even a small fishery, and has no hopes of its being ever valuable.

5. Captain Phipps concludes that Captain Richardson was oversanguine owing to his want of experience of the difficulties and disappointments attendant on the pearl fishery, and that the prospects of success are as unpromising as they have ever been for the past eight years.

6. The Collector states that there are no grounds whatever for supposing that systematic poaching on a large scale is carried on by the fishermen, as there are no oysters of sufficient age to produce pearls; and concurs with Captain Phipps in thinking that there is no cause to doubt the statements of the divers and others who have nothing to gain by giving false intelligence, or to suppose that the *Jadi Talawan*, who has a direct interest in the Government fishery, would connive at any wholesale poaching.

7. A further report is promised by the Collector with reference to another Proceedings of the Board. It is presumed that this refers to their Proceedings of the 5th May last, No. 1,890, to which no reply has as yet been received, and in which the Board, before submitting their Proceedings to Government, requested the Collector's opinion as to sufficiency of Captain Phipps's explanation regarding the large quantities of shells discovered on "Nalla Tanni Tivu."

8. The Board are glad to learn that the vessel *Margaret Northcote* is found so well-suited for the purposes for which it is used.

9. With reference to the Order of Government of the 12th May 1871, No. 831, an application for employment as a diver has been made by a European who is

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recommended by the Master Attendant, and the Board are in communication with
the Collector in the subject.

No. 26.

ORDER THEREON, 4th August 1871, No. 1,336.

Miscellaneous.

ORDERED to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) A. DEC. SCOTT, Captain, R. E.,
Under-Secy., P.W.D.,
for Secy. to Govt.

25 June 1871-225-234
18 July 1871-152-103
12 July 1871-153-67
25 June 1871-102-100
3 July 1871-131-2

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PROCEEDINGS, 5TH JULY 1871, No. 2,737.

Received. 18 July 1871 Encl.

14-Sept-1871-225-234

JULY.

No. 2,737.

Pearl Banks—on coasts of Madura and Tinne-
velly.—Reports on results of further examination
of, by Superintendent of Pearl Banks and of
those about Paumben by Collector, submitted to
Government with remarks. No 1336

25-26

2 Aug 1871 R. H. H. H.

N. A. 7/1871