M.R.O. 1—20,002—12-8-65.

(1) Number of Pages 8.

(2) Date of repair 11.3.66

(3) Initials of the Referencer

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Rev. DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. 134 / B.P. No. — Press / Mis.

Dated 19.8.1873 196 .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department, 25th April 1872.

No. 396. Read the following letter from the Acting Superintending Engineer, 5th Division, to the Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Cuddalore, 12th March 1872, No. 269:—

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of Government, that I have just inspected the celebrated Fort of Gingee, situate in the taluq of Tindevanum, 19 miles west of the Kusbah station. Its state is truly deplorable. It is very much overgrown with jungle, and, far worse, almost all the buildings are being rapidly destroyed by the growth in them of trees, generally of the banian species.

2. A large quantity of the stones has been, I am informed, sold and removed, and a further large quantity was used in the construction of the Gingee bridge, and numerous other smaller bridges and culverts in the neighbourhood. Whether, or how far, this should be permitted, is open to argument; but it certainly should be done under the supervision of an European officer to ensure that no valuable carvings, nor portions of buildings which should remain untouched, are removed. As Government appear to desire the preservation of architectural monuments and buildings, I cannot imagine it will approve the utter neglect of this splendid relic of by-gone ages, possessed as it is of immense historical interest of very great extent, and probably the finest specimen of the kind in Southern India, and as containing also some fine stone carving.

3. South of what is called the Chuckler's Hill—itself the southern of the three hills, which are connected by fortifications and form the fortress of Gingee—is a pagoda called Pattabhiram Covil, in which is some very fine and most interesting stone carving, while scattered round it are mantapums displaying also very fine carving and glorious stone pillars. One of these mantapums in particular is the finest thing of the kind I have ever seen. All, however, are rapidly going to ruin; trees are growing in their crevices, which at no very distant time threaten to overthrow and destroy them, and the fine carvings are wantonly destroyed by the shepherd boys, who knock off the arms and legs and otherwise destroy the figures.

4. When I visited it, the pagoda was filled with straw placed there by ryots, who seem to use it as a store-house; I was therefore unable to see more of the carving than appears on the door jambs, lintels, etc., which is very fine and of great interest. I am informed that all these buildings stand on puttah land, and that the occupant claims them. That he has any right to them I cannot conceive, but it might be well to take some steps in the matter.

5. Last of all I would mention that some distance east of the last mentioned buildings, and close to the Sub-Magistrate's Cutcherry, there is the handsomest stone tank I have seen in India, and close to it a mantapum, in which is carving even finer than that before alluded to, although sadly defaced with chunam and otherwise. This tank and mantapum are, I am informed, private property, and it is therefore merely as a matter of interesting information that I refer to them.

6. With regard, however, to what is undoubtedly the property of the State, if I am correct in supposing that Government is not only willing but desirous to check the devastation that is going on, it behoves us to consider what should be done to check it, and remove the causes of it.

7. Of course the first requisite is money, as nothing can be done without that; I would therefore suggest that a sum of Rupees 500 be placed at my dispo[illegible] With this amount, judiciously and economically expended, a great deal may be done. It will not do to put a large gang of coolies at work and spend the money off-hand; on the contrary, the expenditure should be spread over a considerable time, the whole of next official year at least, and much consideration must be given to what is feasible, and how every rupee can be spent to the best advantage.

8. I am fortunate in having in Mr Graham, the Range Officer, one who is in the matter equally interested with myself, and who has a very intelligent Overseer well able to immediately superintend the work.

9. The latter should comprise the removal of rubbish, (fallen or otherwise,) bushes and rank vegetation, from the floors of the buildings, or that are heaped round them and hide their bases; the removal of the chunam and whitewash from the stone carvings, and, lastly, the removal of the roots and trees growing in the buildings which would soon completely destroy them.

10. I say *lastly* because the first two operations will not cost much, and they will achieve a great deal in allowing a better inspection of the buildings and carvings.

11. I would also suggest that orders be issued as widely as possible, through the medium of the Revenue and Police Departments, that Government view with interest the preservation of these buildings, and that severe punishment will be awarded to all who deface or destroy them; also that the puttah land within the fort and round the covil be resumed by Government.

12. In conclusion, I cannot help remarking that the mantapum alluded to in paragraph 5 is such a splendid specimen of Hindoo architecture that it well merits removal to the Presidency Town to be there placed in a conspicuous place.

13. In the Place Napoleon at Pondicherry the French have erected a number of pillars, said to have been brought from Gingee, those of which I suggest the removal are far finer.

No. 397. ORDER THEREON, 25th April 1872, No. 1,072.

CIVIL WORKS, No. 17.

A SUM of Rupees 500 is placed at the Superintending Engineer's disposal from the Reserve under Civil Buildings in the Provincial Budget for carrying out the works proposed by Captain Vertue to the Fort at Gingee, the completion of which should in due course be reported to Government when further orders will be issued if necessary.

(True Extract.)
(Signed) C. W. WALKER, Colonel, R.E.,
Officiating Secretary to Government.

To the Acting Superintending Engineer, 5th Division.
,, Controller of Public Works Accounts.
,, Financial Department.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

Govt. of {1872} Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

THE ACTING SUPERINTENDING

ENGINEER, 5TH DIVISION.

&c., &c., &c.

Dated April 25th. R 2524/73

Read. Encl.

G. O., 25th April 1872, No. 1,072.

APRIL.

Nos. 396-397

Vide Mem Revs Lr. 6.19 August 1873 No 134

Fort at Gingee.—Rupees 500 placed at the disposal of the Superintending Engineer of the 5th Division for carrying out certain works to the Fort at Gingee.

To be returned to the Revs Dept

13½

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department, 15th August 1873.

Read the following papers :—

No. 233. Endorsement of the Officiating District Engineer, South Arcot, dated Pondicherry, 16th June 1873, No. 45.

From F. GRAHAM, Esq., Assistant Engineer, Tindivanum Range, South Arcot, to R. E. NORFOR, Esq., Officiating District Engineer, South Arcot, dated Gingee, 9th June 1873, No. 40.

In reply to your office No. 135, of the 1st ultimo, I have the honour to inform you that a sum of Rupees 500 was expended last year in removing trees and brushwood growing near to, and within the masonry of, the various buildings in the old fort at Gingee. Wherever roots could not be extracted from wall or roof, they were well charred with a hot iron to prevent their growth as far as it may be.

2. No attempt was made to fill up the very numerous cracks and openings in the buildings. To do this well would cost something like Rupees 50,000, and what good purpose would this large outlay of money serve? It would, in my opinion, be far better to allow this venerable old pile to remain as it is with its historical records, as it were, hanging about it, than to attempt anything in the way of repairs. The touch of a restorer would, I think, destroy the fine appearance of this old fort.

3. A survey of the Gingee Fort has not yet been made. This would be a work of two months, and I have not a man to spare for this employment.

4. The trees and brushwood cut down within the fort were made over to the Deputy Tahsildar at Gingee for sale at public auction.

Submitted to Government, with reference to G. O., No. 1,072, of 25th April 1872.

(Signed) R. E. NORFOR,
Officiating District Engineer.

No. 234. From R. E. NORFOR, Esq., Officiating District Engineer, South Arcot, to Colonel G. W. WALKER, R.E., Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Cuddalore, 14th July 1873, No. 64.

In answer to your No. 245, of the 1st instant, I have the honour to report, for the information of Government, that the intentions of the late Superintending Engineer, 5th Division, as expressed in paragraph 9 of his letter, recorded with G. O., No. 1,072, of the 25th April 1872, have been strictly kept in view and carried out as far as practicable in laying out the sum of Rupees 500 sanctioned for expenditure on the Gingee fortifications.

Four Plans.

2. The work was commenced in June 1372 and completed in March 1873.

3. All brushwood and rubbish were removed from the ground within the fort wall.

4. All trees were cut down from the walls and roofs of the various buildings and from the ramparts, and where possible the roots were extracted, but in most cases it was found impossible to get at the roots without demolishing part of the structure, as they were very old trees with deep-seated roots, but all that could be done to destroy them by charring was done, to prevent them shooting out again, but I fear that in this respect very little permanent benefit has been attained.

Rubbish, brushwood, and rank vegetation have been removed from the floor of the buildings and from round their bases, and every building laid open to view.

5. Chunam and whitewash have been removed from all the stone carvings in the buildings and gateways, except those in the Puttabbiram Covil, which is in use by the ryots as a granary.

6. The trees cut down were made over to the Sub-Magistrate of Gingee by the orders of the Collector, and were sold by public auction.

7. In order to check the growth of trees in the buildings and to keep the grounds in the fort free of brushwood and rank vegetation, I would suggest, for the consideration of Government, that an annual grant of Rupees 100 be sanctioned as, unless something in this way is being constantly done, the place will soon again be in its former condition.

8. I visited these forts in March last, and saw what had been done and was satisfied with the work.

P. S.—I beg to forward also the plans which were returned with your No. 90 of the 14th March 1873.

No. 235. ORDER THEREON, 15th August 1873, No. 2,029.

CIVIL WORKS, No. 12.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council is satisfied from the report of the Acting District Engineer of South Arcot that the object the Government had in view in sanctioning the grant of Rupees 500 for conservancy of the buildings and carvings in the old fort at Gingee has been so far attained. When Range Officers are called on to report on work done by order of Government, care should be taken that they do not generalize too much, but report exactly what has been done, in order that Government may judge of its conformity with their intentions.

2. Major Vertue's letter recorded with G. O., No. 1,072, of 25th April 1872, will now be communicated to the Collector and Magistrate, through the Revenue Department, for such further action as it may be necessary to take with reference to paragraphs 11 and 12 of the same. Also to show cause why the proceeds of the trees and brushwood cut down and sold by auction should not be credited to the Public Works Provincial grant, to which the cost of clearing away the same was debited; and he will report his opinion as to the agency and means required for keeping the interior of the fort in order for the future and preserving memorials of interest in it.

(True Extract.)

W. Walker Colonel, R.E.,
Secretary to Government.

To the District Engineer, South Arcot.
,, Revenue Department, with G. O., No. 1,072, dated 25th April 1872.
,, Financial Department.
,, Officiating Controller of Public Works Accounts.

Exd: S. T. Austin.
20 Spare Copies. will be supplied from Madras office
Copies to the [illegible] No. 134 – 19 Aug. 73
[illegible] to call upon
the [illegible] to submit required report to

Revenue 1873 Dept
No 2524

Govt. of {1873} Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

To

THE DISTRICT ENGINEER, SOUTH

ARCOT.

&c., &c., &c.

Dated August 15th.

Recd. — 19th 1873 Encl. 1 Sine

to Mr Mackenzie 13/8/73

G. O., 15th August 1873, No. 2,029.

Vide Lr. No. 501 of 1874 from Board
Vide Bd Lr. No. 21 May/74 to No. 3353 Irr.

AUGUST.

Nos. 233-235

Ans 15/8/73

Fort at Gingee.—Passing orders on letter from the District Engineer, South Arcot, submitting detailed report on the work carried out to the Fort.

GA 19 Aug/73 No 134