M.R.O. 1—20,002—12-8-65.

(1) Number of Pages 6.

(2) Date of repair 8. 8-67

(3) Initials of the Referencer 2. 2. 18

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. 160. ~~Press~~
~~B.P. No.~~ Mis.

Dated 18. 12. 1874 ~~196~~ .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 338. Read the following letter from Colonel C. V. WILKIESON, R.E., Superintending Engineer, Coimbatore, to Colonel G. W. WALKER, R.E., Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Coimbatore, 25th November 1874, No. 107 :—

I HAVE the honor to report, for the information of the Government, that the Ponachy ghaut may be considered open for bullock traffic, as, on the 11th November 1874, I rode up without dismounting from my horse, from the bottom to the Ponachy saddle, a distance of 6¼ miles, the ascent being 1,800 or about 300 feet a mile, the height of the Ponachy saddle being nearly 3,000 feet above the sea.

2. A temporary road at a steep ascent was improvised between the 14th and 13th zigzag, as I reported in my letter No. 95, of 29th October 1874; that portion where some very nasty slab rock is to be passed is not finished; but I have no doubt if the Government give me the Rupees 2,500 applied for, the ghaut will be finished to a bridle-path with a 12-feet width at the turns throughout without any further calls.

3. Three days before I went up there was a heavy fall of rain which somewhat damaged the ghaut, causing small land slips and injuring one or two of the revetments; but about Rupees 300 will set all this right, and it can come out of the Rupees 2,500 applied for.

4. In making this report I would bring to the notice of Government how much the success of bringing this bridle-path ghaut to an almost finished state is due to the Overseer Manivalu Pillay, who, since the departure of Mr. Assistant Engineer Johnston, has had sole charge of it. In G. O., No. 1,769, of 25th July 1870, the Government confirmed the man, on Lieutenant-Colonel Farewell's recommendation, as an Overseer, 3rd class, and in the letter which the Government Order gave cover he speaks, from knowledge, of him very highly. The Overseer only now gets Rupees 60, whilst when on the Neilgherries, from which place he was transferred, he drew Rupees 20 hill allowance besides; under these circumstances, I hope the Government will give Manivalu Pillay a higher grade, to 2nd class Overseer, as a reward.

5. With reference to G. O., dated 24th September 1874, No. 2,720, I have the honor to report that the estimate of a new line of road from the foot of the Ponachy ghaut to the town of Annamally, a distance of 8¾ miles, is now ready in my office, and it amounts to Rupees 35,500 (without compensation for land, which will be heavy), including Rupees 9,100 for the Oopaur bridge and Rupees 3,450 for the Chinaur.

6. I have in person gone over the line and checked the estimate, so I hope in a few days more to forward it with report to Government direct, and not through the Local Fund Board, as it appears, from the terms of the voluminous correspondence, that it is considered a Provincial rather than a Local Fund work. If I am wrong in this surmise I hope Government will set me right.

7. With regard to the widening out the bridle-path to 12 feet throughout, I shall not be able to get the estimate in quite so soon, although in my late visit I went through the data, which is nearly ready, and also gave directions, where the Executive Engineer was in doubt, as to the best method of surmounting certain

difficulties, the face of the hills being very steep, expensive stone revetments will be required; the estimate will run to a high figure and take sometime in making out, but I hope by the end of December or beginning of January to send it in.

8. When this estimate does go in it will be time to consider if, with changed state of affairs on this lower spur of the Annamallays, the present easy, though narrow, ghaut will not suffice for many years to come, the wants of the planters.

9. I understand, when the question about the ghaut was first mooted, it was to answer two purposes:—

1st.—As a road for carrying away the coffee and other produce from the lower spur or places where coffee would be grown.

2nd.—As the best and easiest method of approach to Michael's Valley as a place which would vie with Ootacamund as a sanitarium, open out fields for tea planting, and perhaps make a good position on the upper portion of Toracuddu-aur, and for a Government colony for the "Poor Whites," about whom so much has been lately written.

10. With the first purpose, I am afraid it will be some time before anything more than the present road will be required. On the first opening out these hills, I believe thirteen coffee estates were opened out, or rather marked out, but only five had any money spent on them. At present two of these have been abandoned, a third is managed by a native, who never spends any money on it, and there only remain the Waterfall and Waverly Estates, and neither of them to my eye appears very flourishing, and would not have more, if so much, as 20 to 25 tons of coffee between them per annum.

11. The spot appears to me ill-chosen for coffee; in the valleys the wind in the monsoon is a great deal too high, and must stunt the coffee, whilst on the sides of the hills, where not exposed to the blast, or facing N. E., the hill sides are, though covered in many places with heavy jungle, too steep for profitable coffee culture. My ideas are somewhat justified by the state of the coffee interests in these parts, where, if I am to believe reports, a great deal of money has been expended and then the estates abandoned.

12. With the second purpose for which this ghaut has been worked out I will deal presently. The ghaut road now abruptly ends on a saddle at a height of about 3,000 feet. From this a small path leading down hill over the other side of the saddle to the Ponachy Estate on the banks of the Toracuddu river, owned by a native and too low to be of much value; another path, impassable for ponies but I believe used by bullocks, leads us to the Waterfall Estate, a distance of three miles zigzagging up the Ponachy hill, from which at very steep gradients it is continued to the Waverly Estate, about two miles further on. I do not suppose for many years to come, if ever, these two estates will be in a position to open out the road to the width of the present Government ghaut.

13. It now comes for me to ask for instructions and to know what are the intentions of Government; am I to leave this ghaut road terminating abruptly on the Ponachy saddle, or am I to continue the trace to Michael's Valley, in order that intended settlers may come to prospect up there?

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
16th December 1874.

14. The Secretary to Government, who I believe knows the country well, proposes to make the trace on the left or south-western side of the Toracuddu-aur where there are difficulties in the shape of very steep sides and rocky precipices to be tackled with, but can of course be overcome; whilst on the right or north-eastern side there is a gentle rise and a fine open grassy jungle, but then by going to that side it would increase the distance very much, as when you come past the bottom of Tungachee Mullay on the opposite side, at the crossing of the river, you would only have gained 4,600 feet and still have at least 2,400 feet to gain before reaching Michael's Valley. So I put that side out of the question.

15. To carry the trace on the left bank from the top of the Ponachy saddle, the first spot to gain would be the top of the waterfall below the Waterfall Estate, a height of 700 feet above the saddle, or a total height above the sea of about 3,700 feet, a distance of a little over two miles. The present line to this estate rises and then falls down to the estate and is three miles, the cottage being 3,800 feet.

16. From this point there will be no difficulty in making a trace, though the jungle in places is very heavy, to Michael's Valley, I should hope without a zigzag.

17. I put out of the question the going round between Tungachee Mullay and the river Toracuddu, a difficult course, as it is very precipitous high up the mountain, and I am doubtful, if it is feasible, close down to the ravine, as marked out in the map by dotted line; again, in that way the distance would be greatly increased, as the trace would have to come a long way almost at a level.

18. The top of the waterfall is 3,700 feet, whilst Michael's Valley is said to be about 7,000 feet, or we have 3,300 feet to get up at 300 feet a mile, which makes a distance of eleven miles only.

19. In the map the stream that runs through the first O in the word Poonachy Amam Covil is the one with the waterfall; from this point I would trace out the path round the hill and up the valley where the next stream runs in, then round a very prominent bluff point just opposite to the A in the word aur, from whence there are two large valleys on either side of the hill called Olimbaculmullay, or rather where the O is in that word, and it would be nearly the 11 miles to Ukka Mullay, if the map is right, climbing up gradually at 300 feet a mile, and then, according to circumstances, as we find the lay of the land we could go either over the saddle between the Ukka and Tungachee Mullay, or to the south of Ukka Mullay. I have no doubt this generally is the proper line, very likely in carrying out the trace we should be stopt by a precipice and have to modify the slope, but these are difficulties that can be overcome. I may find of course that I shall be obliged to keep down nearer the river and go as the dotted line shown in the map; but then, if it is so, the length of the ghaut will be much increased, as, when you round the point Tungachee Mullay, the river is only 4,600 or only 900 feet above the waterfall, and the distance seven or eight miles instead of three miles, and we shall have still some 2,400 feet to gain 7,000 feet, or at least eight miles more.

20. I have made these remarks in my present visit to the hills, where I could not do as I intended to, explore into Michael's Valley, but I was stopt at the Waterfall bungalow; it was impossible at this season of the year to get on further;

coolies would not go for the same reason that I was stopt by leeches and long grass, but I was able daily to go myself to prospect and get a good deal of valuable information from the Pooliars, Coravers and the Manager of the Waterfall Estate.

21. Should Government determine to finish this work so well begun, I hope I shall be given the services of an officer to trace this line, which he can do under my own personal inspection. Nothing however can be attempted until February at the earliest; in fact, when the grass has been burnt down.

22. I could not find out that any part of the upper plateau of the hills was ever feverish, except at the coffee-blossoming season, when it is always feverish.

23. The map I have referred to is one kindly lent to me by the Secretary to Government, and was, I think, originally issued with Major Michael's report.

No. 339. ORDER THEREON, 16th December 1874, No. 3,543.

CIVIL WORKS, No. 24.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council is not prepared at present to go into the question of any extension of the road to the head of the Ponachy ghaut in the direction of the higher plateau of the Annamallays until something more shall have been done for widening the good trace now nearly completed, so that carts may use it, and for connecting it with existing roads in the low country. He awaits therefore the submission of the estimates already called for in G. O., Nos. 848 of 25th March, 2,720 of 24th September, and 3,346 of 26th November.

2. The case of Overseer Manivalu Pillay will be taken into consideration by the Chief Engineer.

(True Extract.)

Colonel, R.E.,
Secretary to Government.

To the Superintending Engineer, Coimbatore.

Rev Dept.
Fd Dept

Exd. S. T. Austin.

3 Spare Copies

No. 4472
Revenue Department

Govt. of 1874 Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

To

THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,

COIMBATORE.

Dated December 16th.

Rcvd. — 17th Dec. Encl.

G. O., 16th December 1874, No. 3,543.

DECEMBER.

No. 338-339

Ponachy Ghaut, Coimbatore District.—Intimating that the question of any extention of the road to the head of the Ponachy ghaut, in the direction of the higher plateau of the Annamallay, cannot be entered into until something more shall have been done for widening the good trace now nearly completed, and awaiting the submission of the estimates already called for in certain orders.

No. 160
Comm.r to the
Board of Revenue

18th Dec/74.

1 Encl. Board of Revenue 22 Dec.