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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

14th June 1877, No. 140 R.

Railway.

Read the following papers:—

No. 69. Extract from the *Madras Mail*, dated 19th May 1877.

The Hubli Railway not a "Relief" Work.

A "LOOKER ON," writing from Bellary, says:—

"I am surprised not to see in your paper any account of the execution of the Hubli Railway. Government ordered this work not to be given out on contract; yet it has been so given out. The cooly is obliged to excavate 12 cubic yards and carry it to the embankment, and the contractor is allowed 1 Rupee for $7\frac{1}{2}$ yards; $4\frac{1}{2}$ yards are allowed the latter for supplying water and doing some other work. When the excavation is near the surface and the embankment low, the tank-diggers can earn over 2 Annas a day. When the excavation deepens and the embankment gets high, they can hardly earn this amount. Other coolies unaccustomed to excavate cannot earn half as much as the tank-diggers. Thousands upon thousands have been sent here from various parts of the Bellary District, but they found they could not earn enough for their support, and many of them returned to their villages, saying 'we will die of starvation here, and it is better for us to return to our villages and die there.' Last Saturday week 4,000 coolies were employed on the railway. Last Saturday they had dwindled down to less than 1,500. Last Sunday fortnight 4,000 coolies were sent to the work from the Bangalore road, but 100 of them did not stop on the works. The Division Officer sent 3,000 coolies, but scarcely one remained on the work. Last Monday week 2,000 came from the Alur Taluq with the same result, and in the same way from other places. Some of these coolies have been employed on the Coodathany road, but the majority must be wandering over the country in a starving condition. His Grace the Governor ought to visit the railway and see where the fault lies and apply a remedy."

No. 69-A. Endorsement of the Consulting Engineer for Railways, dated 30th May 1877.

From Major K. A. JOPP, R.E., in charge of Bellary-Hubli Railway, to Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. M. SHAW-STEWART, R.E., Consulting Engineer for Railways, dated Bellary, 28th May 1877, No. 245.

As directed in your telegram of 24th instant, I have the honor to comment on the Article which appeared in the *Madras Mail* of Saturday, 19th idem.

2. I believe I am not wrong in assuming that the writer is a member of the Committee for the distribution of the funds raised by charity in Bellary for famine relief, and a contractor who is not employed on this railway. His information, as far as the subject of rates paid, was gained from my own subordinates during a visit paid to my works by himself and two other members of the same Committee.

3. The system obtaining is that of paying through head gangsmen, which to a "looker on" must appear the same as a contract system. I attach a copy of my orders regarding the employment of head gangsmen.

4. The prevailing rate of the district for embankment in the lightest or easiest soil is Annas 2-3 per cubic yard, or nearly $7\frac{1}{2}$ cubic yards for a rupee as stated by "looker on." The head gangman gets this rate, and has to pay famine labor for excavating, to keep up a gang of men to break up large clods of earth and dress the bank, to supply water in carts for drinking purposes, and to provide supervision and establishment for making payments. In this easy soil he pays the coolies at the rate of 1 Rupee for 12 cubic yards or Annas 1-4 per cubic yard. "Looker on" means the same thing when he says, "The cooly is obliged to excavate 12 cubic yards" (for a rupee, not in one day, is to be understood) "and carry it to the embankment, and the contractor is allowed 1 Rupee for $7\frac{1}{2}$ cubic yards; $4\frac{1}{2}$ yards are allowed the latter for supplying water and doing some other work." His statements regarding the amounts earned on these rates are incorrect, inasmuch as it has been found that the cooly "unaccustomed to excavate" (such as a Weaver from Adoni) can earn over 2 Annas a day, and the tank-digger much more.

5. "Looker on" has omitted to mention that on the visit of the deputation of the Committee, they questioned the coolies in a great many gangs and failed to get a single complaint out of them. The Assistant Collector, Mr. Kisch, happened to visit the works on the same day, and questioned, I believe, all the gangs and found every one content. I myself am frequently over my line, and have always courted complaints, but in no case nor at any time during these frequent visits has a gang or individual cooly complained that he or she could not earn enough for support. When I took over charge the work was being carried out under a local officer and local subordinates at these same rates, and, up to the present, I have seen no necessity to increase them. A recent order raising the scale of subsistence money on civil agency works may perhaps compel me to make a proportionate increase in my rates.

6. There is truth in "looker on" statement that on one day my numbers dwindled down to 1,500. The work had been confined to a length of four miles in close proximity to the villages of Veerapoor and Kodagul, and when it became necessary to shift labor beyond this length, these villagers refused to work, but consented to return if excavation was commenced towards Bellary and nearer to their villages. Nine hundred of the Kodagul villagers left *en masse*; large numbers of the coolies sent from the roads are induced by their maistries and kolcars to abscond before they have tried their powers on the railway. In the same way large gangs sent from Sundoor State went off at once. Those who have remained have been content with their earnings; but numbers tired of work still daily desert to regain employment on their favorite system of doing next to nothing for 2 Annas a day. I attach a statement showing the numbers on the Bellary portion of the work from 1st to 25th of this month.

7. "Looker on" becomes wild in his figures in the latter part of the Article. "Thousands upon thousands" is of course an exaggeration, and where thousands are afterwards mentioned hundreds would have been nearer the truth.

8. The system pursued on this railway is I am aware unpopular with contractors who do not get employed, and with maistries and kolcars who lose their lucrative situations. It is also unfit for emaciated and weak coolies, and my great difficulty lies in the fact that Civil authorities are directed to send me coolies irrespective of age or strength, "including weak and emaciated," and I have as yet hit on no plan—short of degrading the work into an ordinary famine work as hitherto carried on by the Civil agency—by which able-bodied men can be expected to work side by side with others who do as they like for 2 Annas a day. Though piece-work must be my system I must still pay the man who does nothing 2 Annas for that nothing, and cannot therefore hope to obtain a yard and a half of earthwork from his stronger neighbour for the same sum.

9. The fact must be accepted that the scheme of closing all civil agency works and drafting the entire gangs of aged, weak, emaciated, and able-bodied on to our public works has not, so far as it has yet been tried, been successful. I have been trying other experiments at Gadajanoor, and as Mr. Oldham has this day joined me I intend to commence trying yet others on the Bellary portion to arrest the wholesale desertion of gangs as they are drafted on to my works.

Circular from Major K. A. JOPP, R.E., in charge of Bellary-Hubli State Railway, dated Bellary, 11th May 1877, No. 163.

THE "Construction" of the Madras portion of the Bellary-Hubli State Railway having been placed under my direction, the following general instructions are issued for the information and guidance of all employed thereon.

The "Construction of line" is at present confined to two heads—Earthwork, Ballast.

The accounts, daily rosters, &c., of which must be kept separate and distinct. The construction will be carried out in two separate lengths or sub-divisions, the limits of which are not yet clearly defined; they are at present separated by the Darojee tank.

The sub-divisions will be designated in all official correspondence the Meerapoor Sub-division and Hospett Sub-division. Each sub-division will be under the charge of an Assistant Engineer or other officer I may appoint, who will be designated "Officer in charge of Construction, Sub-division." He will correspond direct with, and receive orders direct from, me. He will be assisted by subordinates, who will receive their orders from, and will submit their daily rosters, measurements, &c., to him. "Earthwork" and "Ballast" will be carried out on the system of piece-work by gangs at the rates prevailing in the district. A statement of these rates will be given to the Officer in charge of Construction.

To lessen the amount of supervision and to avoid the necessity for constant payments of money "Head Gangsmen" may be employed on the following conditions:—

- 1st.—That the head gangman will undertake to construct the embankment (or collect and stack ballast) according to instructions he may receive from the officer in charge or his subordinates.
- 2nd.—That he will employ only such labor as may be handed over to him or as he may select from among the gangs of famine coolies drafted on to the Railway works by the Civil agency.
- 3rd.—That he will employ upon the length, and within the limits assigned to him, and on each pit or side-cutting, as many coolies as the officer in charge may deem necessary, and that he shall not crowd more labor on any one pit or side-cutting, or upon his length, or within the limits assigned to him, than in the opinion of the officer in charge is necessary or advisable.
- 4th.—That he shall make payments to his gangs or individual coolies as often as their necessities require it; that he shall permit no one individual to suffer want or to lose condition even though that individual or the gang of which that individual is a member has not completed the task agreed on; that in no case and on no account shall gangs or individuals remain longer than three days without payment.
- 5th.—That he shall provide on the work a sufficiency of drinking water for the wants of his coolies during working hours.
- 6th.—That he shall receive payment by cheque on treasuries of Bellary or Hospett for the amount of work he has performed on pit or stack measurements made by the officer in charge or his subordinates.
- 7th.—That his work shall be measured up and that he shall be paid once a week and not oftener, unless the officer in charge desires or consents to make more frequent payments.
- 8th.—That no engagement with him for payment for work performed extends longer than from payment to payment; that the officer in charge may at any time and for any reason terminate the engagement by measuring up and paying for the work performed.

It is probable that persons who are unfit for earthwork or who cannot earn the famine rate of subsistence may be sent on to the Railway works in large numbers.

It might also happen that greater numbers of all sorts may arrive than can conveniently be employed on the earthwork. It is for these reasons that "Ballast" has been added to "Earthwork."

The prevailing rates for strong ballast are entered in the statement of rates. Head gangsmen will no doubt be found to organize gangs and collect and stack ballast at these rates.

The head store for tools and stores is at Veerapoor in the Sub-division of that name. A Storekeeper has been appointed to Gadaganoor; he will be supplied in the first instance with tools and stores from the head store, and he can obtain further supplies from the same source on indent countersigned by the Officer in charge of Construction, Gadaganoor Sub-division.

(Signed) K. A. JOPP, Major, R.E.,
In charge of Bellary-Hubli State Railway.

Statement showing Ordinary Rates for Earthwork and Collection of Metal prevalent in Bellary Taluq prior to commencement of Famine.

Rates for Earthwork.

	RS.	A.	P.
Earth excavated and carried to embankments	...	...	...
Embankments levelled and slopes dressed	...	...	...

Easy Soil—Sandy or Light Black Earth.

Excavating	...	...	...	0	0	9
Pit-lifting	...	...	...	0	0	6
Carrying from pit to embankment 10 yards	...	...	...	0	0	8
Levelling embankment and dressing slopes	...	...	...	0	0	4

Total per Cubic Yard ... 0 2 3

Easy Soil—Red Earth or Black Cotton Soil.

Excavating	...	...	...	0	1	0
Pit-lifting	...	...	...	0	0	6
Carrying from pit to embankment 10 yards	...	...	...	0	0	8
Levelling embankment and dressing slopes	...	...	...	0	0	4

Total per Cubic Yard ... 0 2 6

Difficult Soil—Hard Gravel.

Excavating	...	...	...	0	1	6
Pit-lifting	...	...	...	0	0	6
Carrying from pit to embankment 10 yards	...	...	...	0	0	8
Levelling embankment and dressing slopes	...	...	...	0	0	4

Total per Cubic Yard ... 0 3 0

Earthwork.

For each yard in depth over 3 feet	...	...	...	0	0	4
For each lead of 10 yards over 30 feet	...	...	...	0	0	8

Collecting Stone for Ballast.

Collecting stone within a distance of one furlong and stacking near the line—
When lying sparse, 4 Annas per cubic yard; for every extra furlong distant 1 Anna per cubic yard.

Collecting stone within a distance of one furlong and stacking near the line—
When lying thick, 2 Annas per cubic yard.

Breaking stone into 2½ cube, 9 Annas per cubic yard.

										RS.	A.	P.
Carriage for $\frac{1}{2}$ mile										0	3	6
75	75	$\frac{3}{4}$	75	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	4	6
75	75	1	75	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	6	0
75	75	$1\frac{1}{4}$	75	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	7	2
75	75	$1\frac{1}{2}$	75	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	9	0
75	75	2	75	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	12	0

BELLARY,
8th May 1877.

(Signed) W. JACKSON, Lieut.,
Exc. Officer in charge
of Bellary Division.

BELLARY-HUBLI STATE RAILWAY.

Statement showing the Number of Coolies employed on the Bellary portion of the Bellary-Hubli Railway from 1st to 25th May.

Month and Date.	Number employed.	Remarks.
May 1st	2,872	
Do. 2nd	2,762	
Do. 3rd	2,991	
Do. 4th	3,138	Mr. Paul left the work sick; since then the work has been under a subordinate.
Do. 5th	3,152	
Do. 6th	Sunday.	
Do. 7th	3,089	
Do. 8th	3,091	Length of 4 miles nearing completion.
Do. 9th	2,978	
Do. 10th	1,844	Captain Hackett took charge of camp.
Do. 11th	1,882	
Do. 12th	1,470	Length finished and new length taken in hand.
Do. 13th	Sunday.	
Do. 14th	1,626	
Do. 15th	2,336	
Do. 16th	3,484	
Do. 17th	4,014	
Do. 18th	4,229	One death from cholera.
Do. 19th	3,625	Two deaths from cholera.
Do. 20th	Sunday.	
Do. 21st	3,144	Panic on account of cholera.
Do. 22nd	5,348	
Do. 23rd	4,896	
Do. 24th	3,867	
Do. 25th	3,737	

BELLARY,
28th May 1877.

(Signed) W. G. ALLEN,
for Officer in charge of Bellary-Hubli State Railway.

SUBMITTED for the information of His Grace the Governor in Council, with reference to a paragraph in the *Madras Mail* of the 19th instant, which is appended.

2. I trust that Major Jopp's explanation and his report regarding arrangements made for progress of work will be considered satisfactory. He has had considerable difficulties to contend with.

(Signed) J. H. M. SHAW-STEWART, Lt.-Col., R.E.,
Consulting Engineer for Railways.

No. 70.

ORDER THEREON, 14th June 1877, No. 140 R.

HIS GRACE the Governor in Council accepts Major Jopp's explanation as being quite satisfactory, so far as the letter which appeared in the *Madras Mail* is concerned.

2. Major Jopp will be informed that there is nothing in the abolition of the lowest scale of wages to affect the prices paid on the Bellary-Hubli Railway more than on any other public work.

3. Major Jopp will be asked to explain further his remark regarding "the numbers who daily desert to regain employment on their favorite system of doing next to nothing for 2 Annas a day."

4. It must be borne in mind that the work upon the Bellary-Hubli Railway is purely a relief work and nothing more; that it would not have been otherwise undertaken; and that it must therefore be liable to the contingency of having a large proportion of weakly or unskilled labor upon it.

5. The papers will be referred to the Collector of Bellary for report upon the following points:—

- (1.) Are the arrangements upon the Railway works such that ordinary workers needing Government employ can earn at least the Government subsistence rate thereon?
- (2.) What becomes of those laborers who leave the Railway works, and what is their inducement?
- (3.) What numbers have been actually transferred to the Railway works, and what relief works in the neighbourhood have been closed?

(True Extract.)

Mauntt

Lt.-Col., R.E.,
Joint Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.,
Railway Branch.

To the Consulting Engineer for Railways.
" Officer in charge of Bellary-Hubli Railway.
" Collector of Bellary.
" Revenue Department. ✓

27/6

Exd.E. C. Shunker.

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RAILWAY.

Govt. of 1877. Madras.
PUBLIC WORKS.

To

THE CONSULTING ENGINEER
FOR RAILWAYS,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated June 14th.

Issued

Recd. 27/6/77

Encl.

To B of Revenue 30 June 77

G. O., 14th June 1877, No. 140 R.

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JUNE 27/6/77
Nos. 69-70.

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Communicated to the Secy
Rev. Secy
27/6/77

27 June 77

Bellary-Maddur Railway. - Passing
on papers relative to the labor employed on
the