

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

REPORT ON POSTAL SERVICES for 1874.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Excellency the Governor.
1875.

REPORT ON POSTAL SERVICE FOR 1874.

General Post Office, Cape Town,
22nd March, 1875.

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit my Report on the Postal Service of this Colony for the year 1874.

G. W. AITCHISON, Postmaster-General.

REPORT.

The past year has been the most trying, perhaps, ever experienced in the conveyance of the inland mails. First heavy floods set in in the Langekloof with such results as to necessitate the abandonment of the daily and the reversion to the tri-weekly post. The derangement to postal communication with the Frontiers consequent on the failure in the Langekloof had hardly been recovered from, when a severe drought set in, in the East and North Eastern Districts of the Colony, taxing the energies of the contractors to the utmost to fulfil their engagements. Many of them foreseeing the loss that must ensue if they held to their contracts availed themselves of the clause in their bonds, which allow of their terminating them at four months' notice, and as a criterion to what extent this was done I may mention that 63 out of 86 were thrown up during the year. Many of the contractors, though, continued, in the face of the difficulties they had to contend with, to work on, when the drought suddenly breaking up, an unprecedented flood set in, destroying the roads in every direction, and carrying away the bridges on the most important lines. For some time it seemed as if it would be utterly impossible to restore communication, there being no means of crossing the rivers, owing to the bridges being destroyed, and the approaches to the old fords being inaccessible on account of the masses of wreck carried down by the rivers and lodged in deep mud along the banks. Another difficulty was, that depending as the contractors did, upon the bridges there were no appliances at hand for crossing the mails. This difficulty was however soon overcome, and it was not long before, to the surprise of every one at all aware of the difficulties to be overcome, the mails were again conveyed with tolerable regularity.

Every consideration was shown to the contractors in their efforts to fulfil their engagements, and with the approval of the Government the imposition of fines for delays resulting from the floods was withheld.

To continue the mail service under the circumstances described in any way efficiently, unavoidably involved considerable additional outlay, and the expenditure for this year must necessarily contrast unfavorably with that for last year.

[G. 28—'75.]

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For 1873 the cost of the conveyance of inland mails and extra posts amounted to £37,229 12s. 3d. For the like service this year an expenditure of £9,969 4s. 3d. in excess of this amount has had to be incurred.

This expenditure, although at first sight it appears large, is not inordinate considering the circumstances which involved it, while it has to be borne in mind that as it is casual and extraordinary, it is also temporary, and that at the close of this year, when new contracts are to be entered into, a great decrease in the cost of conveyance of mails may be expected. I anticipate this for several reasons. By that time the railways in different directions will be sufficiently advanced in some parts to allow of doing away entirely with some postal contracts, in others so facilitating and expediting the transmission of mails as to allow of their being carried by *passenger* conveyance between populous towns, where now on account of the uncertainty and lateness of arrival of the posts, the contractors have to convey the mails by night, to the loss of passenger traffic, and the enhancement of contract allowance, on account of greater risk and expense incurred. As another reason for anticipating diminution of cost, I adduce the fact that along the coast lines the contractors have been relieved very much in the weight of mails carried, the great bulk being sent by the packets.

In my last Report I hinted at the desirability of turning the district or field-cornets post to better account. Acting upon this many of these posts have been converted from fortnightly to weekly posts, and have assisted to open up regular and appreciable communication with the outlying parts of every division in the Colony. The additional expenditure for effecting this has been £1,662 18s. 1d., a sum very small in comparison with the good effected by the opportunity thereby afforded of spreading intelligence and education among the most remote parts, apart from the more material commercial advantages derived from accessibility by post.

Last session an Act was passed making the half-ounce the unit of measure of postage, thus reducing the postage on letters above the ounce, which had previously been charged at the rate of a full ounce for every fraction of an ounce above the first ounce, whereas now the rate increases in portion to the number of half ounces. A reduction was also made in the postage on periodicals, books, &c., posted in the Colony. The object of the latter reduction was to induce residents in the Colony to procure their periodicals, &c., through Colonial publishers, thus securing to the Colony the whole of the postage for inland carriage, instead of its only receiving one-third, when such periodicals were posted in England. The result of these alterations in the law has been more favourable than I had anticipated. The postage received during the year amounted to £48,567 3s. 6d. or £7,088 11s. 4d. in excess of what it was in 1873. There can be no doubt that by the first of the above reductions some loss must have been occasioned on the larger commercial letters, but even in view of that, the measure seemed highly desirable, for the sake of securing uniformity in the mode of charge. I do not of course attribute the whole of the above increase in revenue to the beneficial working of the other apparent reduction. The greater part of it must no doubt be put down to the natural increase of correspondence, and to the greater facilities the Department has afforded by means of the coasting packets, extra and district posts, for intercommunication—but it is clear that a fair share of it may be put down to the fact that the public are taking advantage of this reduction, and while serving their own interests, at the same time contributing to swell the postal revenue, when it is ascertained that the number of book packets dispatched inland in 1874 nearly doubled that dispatched in 1873, the number in 1873 being 43,446, and in 1874, 83,586.

The arrangements referred to in my last report in regard to the conveyance of the mails in Namaqualand have been carried out. The Copper Mining Company having kindly consented to carry the mails by their ordinary trains to and from Port Nolloth and O'okiep gratuitously. This has in the circumstance of the severe drought with which that part of the Colony has been visited been

of immense advantage to the Department, as it would have been utterly impossible to convey all the mail matter for that part of the Colony by pack horse.

The conveyance of mails by Cobb & Co.'s coaches from Graham's Town to Colesberg *via* Cradock, which originally ran twice a week, was reduced to once a week and has latterly had to be given up altogether on account of the irregularity of the service. The same remark applies to the Inland Transport Company. The latter company's conveyances afforded a third communication in the week between Cape Town and the Diamond-fields, and I had hoped by means of Cobb & Co.'s coaches to afford the same advantage to Port Elizabeth as soon as the difficulty offered by the Free State in refusing to sign the postal convention could be removed. During the year additional posts have been established between places whose importance required it; but on the whole as little as the possible has been done in this direction owing to the very exorbitant rates demanded for postal service, the result of the droughts and floods, to which allusion has been made.

Contracts have been entered into for the conveyance of a mail overland to Natal along the coast from King William's Town *via* Toleni and Clarkebury to the Umtata, at an expenditure of £710 per annum. This post is one of great importance, not only for keeping up communication with Natal, but also for opening up the country lying between the Colonies, with which a large and increasing trade is being carried on. The conveyance of the mails from the Umtata through St. John's Territory is carried on by the Natal Government. This overland post is not worked so efficiently as I could wish, but I am now in communication with the Natal postal authorities, and trust that shortly it will be brought under better control, due allowance being made for journeying over so large a tract of country unprovided with bridges and proper roads.

Much inconvenience has been occasioned to places beyond Graham's Town by the late arrival of the posts there. It is hoped that as the railway is soon to be opened for half the distance between Port Elizabeth and Graham's Town an improvement will be effected, and the arrivals be so arranged that there may be an early and punctual despatch from Graham's Town upon which the regularity of so many posts beyond depend. The Free State postal authorities and the community at Aliwal North have upon this ground also had just cause of complaint, and in order to remedy the inconvenience they suffer, it is proposed shortly to carry the mails to Burghersdorp, where they branch off to the Free State and Aliwal North, direct from Cradock instead of *via* Middelburg.

During the year a postal route list has been compiled, and a copy supplied to each postmaster. This serves as a guide to him how to dispatch his mails, and enables him to afford the public the necessary information for availing themselves of every opportunity of corresponding, and I have no doubt that the postal revenue has been a considerable gainer by this publication quite as much as by the additional facilities given for posting by the creation of new post offices, which now number 394.

I append such statistics of the department as I judge will prove of public interest.

The mail matter dispatched inland from Cape Town was as follows —

Letters	653,454
Papers	887,976
Books	83,586
The weight of mails dispatched by coasting steamers ..	31,511 lbs.
By post cart to the Eastern Frontier	102,086 "
By the North Eastern post cart	50,325 "
By transport wagon	7,550 "

Being 18,027 lbs. in all in excess of the weight conveyed in 1873.

The number of bags of mails received by the Union packets during the year amounted to 2,421, or 780 in excess of the number last year. Those by the Donald Currie line amounted to 147.

The mails dispatched to England consisted of:—

Letters..	..	..	..	..	194,371
Papers..	..	..	..	..	135,512
Books ..	..	..	..	..	13,230

Of which 53,963 letters, 26,465 papers and 2,655 books were forwarded by private steamers.

Registered Letters.

The number of registered letters received in the General Post Office was:—

From and <i>via</i> England	..	..	..	..	4,566
From other places beyond sea	..	..	..	..	160
From inland towns	..	..	..	..	7,050

And those despatched:—

To and <i>via</i> England	..	..	..	..	5,313
To other places beyond sea	..	..	..	..	152
To inland towns	..	..	..	..	4,280

21,521

The number of letters containing coin and other valuables, put into the Post Office *unregistered*, and compulsorily registered by the officers of the department, amounted in all to 399 or twelve less than those so received last year. Of these 74 were posted at the General Post Office, 47 were addressed to England and 278 were received from inland towns. In bringing this matter to notice last year, I warned the public against the unfairness of throwing temptation in the way unnecessarily, when the means are placed at their disposal for securing their property from loss by the payment of a trifling sum, such as the registration fee or the commission on a money order. I trust that more attention will be paid to this caution than was bestowed on the last.

The weight of registered packets, supposed to contain diamonds, forwarded to England during the year was 474 lbs. 5 oz. A record of such packets has been kept only during this year. This will be continued, as the comparative returns may be interesting hereafter.

The amount of customs duty collected on articles of jewellery and other valuables imported through the Post Office during the year was £241 3s. 8d.

Dead Letters.

The number of Colonial unclaimed letters returned to the writers during the year has been 5,200, yielding a postage of £60 1s. 3d., and the number of letters from England and foreign parts returned as *dead letters* to the countries in which they originated amounted to 2,121.

Money Orders.

Money order offices have been established at Carnarvon, Jansenville, Masere, Tarkastad and Willowmoore, making the number in the Colony now 58.

The issues upon the respective offices during the year were as follows:—

	<i>Premiums.</i>		
Upon offices in Cape Colony	£48,307	9 9	£120 15 6
Upon offices in the U. Kingdom	14,116	7 7	78 18 0
Upon offices in St. Helena	788	14 5	25 8 0
Upon offices in Natal	272	3 8	6 19 0
Upon offices in Griqualand West	496	14 4	6 0 0
	£63,981	9 9	£1,138 0 6

The payments from the respective offices during the year were as follows:—

From offices in the Cape Colony	..	..	£48,533 12 6
" " United Kingdom	..	..	2,949 13 1
" " St. Helena	..	..	236 9 3
" " Natal	..	..	205 13 6
" " Griqualand West	..	..	6,507 1 4

£58,522 9 8

Revenue and Expenditure.

The expenditure of the Department for the past year has been as follows :—

Conveyance of Mails :—

Island Mails	£45,459	17	9
Sea posts	1,758	18	9
District posts	6,112	1	0
Gratuities to masters of vessels ..	4	9	4
Supply and repair of mailbags, wax-cloth, &c... ..	753	8	10
Mails from Landing-places ..	136	13	0
Bloemfontein and Harrismith ..	450	0	0
Steam communication Table and Algoa Bays	850	0	0
Hope Town and Kuruman ..	12	0	0
Conveyance to England by Union line	7,919	6	1
Gratuity to Donald Currie line ..	12,450	0	0
Conveyance of mails, total ..		75,906	14 9
Salaries		11,905	13 2
Allowances		1,226	11 2
Contingencies		1,590	10 3
Total ..	£90,629	9	4

The revenue was as follows :—

Postage	£48,567	3	6
Fines	3,448	2	4
Premiums on money orders ..	1,019	0	8
Total ..	£53,034	6	6

To the amount of fines brought to account in 1874, should be added £1,000 since recovered and which will figure in the returns for 1875. With this £1,000 added to the revenue, there is still a deficiency to meet the expenditure, amounting to £36,595 2s. 10d., but in this statement no credit is given to the Department for the service performed on account of the Government in the conveyance of the *Government Gazette* and official correspondence. Allowing a similar credit for this service as was claimed last year, viz: £20,000, the deficit is reduced to £16,595 2s. 10s., a loss in the conduct of the mail services, which under the very peculiar circumstances through which the country has passed during the year is not surprising.

G. W. AITCHISON, Postmaster-General.

STATEMENT OF MONEY ORDERS ISSUED IN THE COLONY

	COLONIAL.			GRIQUALAND WEST.			ST. HELENA.		
	No.	Amount.	Commission.	No.	Amount.	Commission.	No.	Amount.	Commission.
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Jan.	1189	3878 16 11	49 19 3	16	70 2 0	0 10 0	25	89 13 0	3 0 0
Feb.	1148	3937 3 1	49 17 6	7	37 9 0	0 9 0	29	49 3 0	1 13 0
Mar.	1172	3490 15 0	45 14 3	9	20 7 3	0 6 9	28	34 16 0	1 4 0
Apr.	1097	3435 18 6	44 10 6	12	71 4 0	0 10 0	29	54 11 0	1 16 8
May	1148	3867 7 7	49 4 3	17	69 15 0	0 12 0	37	89 4 8	2 19 8
June	1214	4070 11 6	51 15 3	5	12 9 0	0 5 3	17	19 15 0	0 13 0
July	1324	4035 15 6	55 13 3	11	38 13 0	0 16 3	19	52 15 0	1 13 8
Aug.	1388	4498 13 0	58 4 4	12	30 9 4	0 8 3	34	103 5 5	2 10 0
Sept.	1350	4150 18 8	51 10 11	7	23 14 11	0 7 0	38	84 16 0	2 16 8
Oct.	1316	4290 3 3	54 4 9	10	42 19 6	0 15 6	34	71 3 0	2 7 8
Nov.	1344	4340 17 9	54 19 0	15	63 7 10	0 17 0	27	41 8 0	1 8 0
Dec.	1322	4310 9 0	55 1 3	10	16 3 6	0 3 0	52	98 4 4	3 5 8
	15012	48307 9 9	620 15 6	131	496 14 4	6 0 0	369	788 14 5	25 8 0

OF THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE DURING THE YEAR 1874.

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NATAL.			UNITED KINGDOM.			TOTAL.		
No.	Amount.	Commission.	No.	Amount.	Commission.	No.	Amount.	Commission.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
3	13 0 0	0 6 0	288	996 10 6	33 14 8	1521	5048 2 5	87 16 2
7	32 14 0	0 15 0	296	992 10 9	33 19 4	1487	5048 19 10.	86 13 1
8	41 14 5	1 0 0	351	1048 8 2	35 11 8	1568	4636 0 10	83 16 11
8	33 9 3	0 17 0	336	1012 0 10	34 5 8	1482	4607 3 7	82 5 4
4	10 10 0	0 5 0	334	1163 4 8	39 7 6	1540	5200 1 11	92 13 5
	47 3 0	1 4 4	363	1167 14 8	39 13 10	1613	5317 13 2	93 10 5
5	10 16 0	0 7 0	363	1215 4 9	41 1 0	1722	5353 4 3	99 4 11
	16 18 5	0 8 0	388	1181 14 8	40 4 8	1826	5831 0 10	101 16 0
2	5 5 0	0 4 0	371	1235 8 6	41 18 4	1768	5500 3 1	96 16 8
2	5 1 7	0 3 0	471	1509 2 0	51 5 4	1833	5918 9 4	108 10 9
5	20 0 6	0 10 0	502	1532 10 8	51 12 2	1893	5998 4 9	109 1 2
	35 11 6	0 19 8	369	1061 17 5	36 3 10	1761	5522 5 9	95 15 8
70	272 3 8	6 19 0	4432	14116 7 7	478 18 0	20014	63981 9 9	1138 0 6

STATEMENT OF MONEY ORDERS PAID IN THE COLONY

MONTH.	COLONIAL.		GRIQUALAND WEST.		ST. HELENA.	
	No.	Amount.	No.	Amount.	No.	Amount.
		£ s. d.		£ s. d.		£ s. d.
January	1184	3718 17 10	141	553 19 11	8	28 16 3
February	1150	4028 12 5	105	483 17 6	5	21 8 10
March	1184	3646 16 0	126	504 9 2	9	35 19 4
April	1185	3405 10 10	130	529 6 2	5	13 8 1
May	1016	3922 1 6	132	526 0 9	4	10 7 9
June	1200	3939 9 8	145	571 8 7	4	7 0 9
July	1472	4380 14 1	131	509 18 11	3	21 19 2
August	1180	4317 15 7	158	558 11 9	7	15 0 11
September	1308	4403 2 5	132	524 3 10	8	28 18 8
October	1379	4461 1 8	148	592 16 3	8	15 8 2
November	1127	4134 11 8	151	478 7 1	10	35 7 8
December	1313	4204 18 10	181	734 1 5	12	32 13 8
	14698	48563 12 6	1680	6567 1 4	83	266 9 3

OF THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE DURING THE YEAR 1874.

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NATAL.		UNITED KINGDOM.		TOTAL.	
No.	Amount.	No.	Amount.	No.	Amount.
	£ s. d.		£ s. d.		£ s. d.
8	23 5 10	56	221 8 0	1397	4546 7 10
8	4 3 0	51	250 13 11	1314	4788 15 8
6	8 2 6	40	240 4 8	1365	4335 11 8
7	13 14 4	60	291 18 10	1387	4253 18 3
1	5 0 0	48	182 6 0	1201	4645 16 0
8	18 0 6	46	207 4 2	1403	4743 3 8
4	8 13 7	72	333 13 0	1682	5254 18 9
5	5 5 6	54	274 2 6	1404	5170 16 3
8	23 19 1	52	217 18 6	1508	5198 2 6
9	36 12 6	49	221 12 3	1593	5327 10 10
16	41 3 8	68	284 2 0	1372	4973 12 1
5	17 13 0	82	324 9 3	1593	5313 16 2
80	205 13 6	678	2949 13 1	17219	58552 9 8