

# CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

## REPORT of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL for the Year 1876.

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

1877.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
1st June, 1877.

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit my Report on the Postal Service of this colony for the year 1876.

G. W. AITCHISON,  
Postmaster-General.

### REPORT.

During the two previous years, owing to the very severe weather with which every part of the colony was visited in turn, and the consequent destruction to roads and bridges, considerable difficulty was experienced in the regular conveyance of the mails. The damages then sustained have now all been repaired, and the seasons during the last year having been particularly mild, the inland mails have been conveyed with a tolerable degree of regularity, as may be judged from the fact that the fines for postal delays during the past year only amounted to £1,653, a very marked contrast to the amounts £3,448 and £3,932 levied respectively in 1874 and 1875.

The chief obstacle to the efficiency of the inland postal service has been the destruction of the Zwartkops Bridge which was carried away early in the year. From its situation on the main line of road between Port Elizabeth and Graham's Town, the loss of this bridge was a matter of serious moment, as any delay in the arrival of the post at Graham's Town throws the whole of the Frontier Mail Service out of gear—Graham's Town being the centre from which the posts radiate in all directions.

Fortunately, the railway afforded the means of somewhat supplying the defect of the bridge, and much of the inconvenience which must otherwise have inevitably followed was obviated by the use of special trains; but while these to a very great extent contributed to make amends for the loss of the bridge, still, owing to the fact that this railway line is unfenced, the mails when arriving late at Port Elizabeth could not always be forwarded at once, it being deemed unsafe to travel over the line late at night. Again, the line, being a single one, was at times found to be blocked, and from these causes, although the railway has afforded considerable aid in the transmission of the mails, the service has not been unattended with drawbacks.

[G. 62—'77.]

It is, however, to be hoped that shortly this line will be more extensively utilized for postal purposes, and that when it is opened to Alicedale, only a few hours ride from Graham's Town, the railway authorities may feel themselves at liberty to place at the disposal of this department a night train to leave Port Elizabeth three times a week on the arrival of the Cape post. With the distance in time between Port Elizabeth and Graham's Town considerably diminished, as it will be when the rail is open to Alicedale, 72 miles from Port Elizabeth, and with no necessity for having the post at Graham's Town earlier than seven or eight in the morning, it is apprehended that there will be no difficulty in running a train at night at such a pace as to preclude all fear of danger. No measure would tend more to efficiency in the conveyance of the up-country mails than this, as upon it depends the punctual dispatch from Graham's Town. The present uncertain hour of dispatch not only affects the regularity in the receipt of the mails at the places beyond, but also the return from passenger traffic, and so enhances the cost of the mail service.

The following are the chief alterations and additions made for affording improved postal communication.

An additional mail in the week has been established between Port Beaufort and King William's Town at a very trifling cost, the amount of which is covered by the payment made for a post conveyed part of the way, between Port Beaufort and Alice, for which the post to King William's Town serves as a substitute, whilst affording increased accommodation to all the places on this route.

A more regular communication has been established between Queen's Town and St. Mark's *via* Bolotwa, an important post in connection with the trade of Tembuland and with the natives under Mr. Levey, who have lately made very marked progress in agriculture.

Communication has also been established with the back parts of the divisions of Victoria West and Fraserburg, extensive tracts of country which had hitherto been entirely neglected. Formerly the post was partially conveyed by orderlies of the Northern Mounted Police, a system which was found not to answer, and it has now been re-organized so as to afford Carnarvon a second post in the week and to reduce the time occupied in communicating with Kenhart, a station becoming the centre of a large trade, within a reasonable limit.

The posts in these parts are at present costly, but the outlay is justified, considering how large a tract of valuable country is being opened up by them. The daily increasing weight of mail dispatched in that direction is assuring evidence of their necessity, as agents in these outlying districts not only tending to foster trade and improve the commercial position of the inhabitants, but effecting much in keeping up the standard of education, if not in advancing it. In order to improve the communication between the Diamond-fields and Europe, and at the same time to relieve the weight of the existing posts, a third mail in the week with Kimberley has been established. The cost has been inconsiderable, as to effect this purpose it was only necessary to institute an additional post between Richmond and Hope Town and fit it in with the existing posts. It has answered the expectations anticipated admirably, and enabled the Government to meet the wishes of the frontier inhabitants to have the day of the packet's dispatch to England changed from Friday to Tuesday, without inconvenience to any place, the mails from every part of the Colony, the Free State, and even from the Transvaal by a recent change, being due in Cape Town on Monday evening, in time for dispatch by packet the following day.

The railway line having been opened to Glen Connor, the Graaff-Reinet mails are now conveyed to that point from Port Elizabeth, and arrangements are in progress for improving and increasing the direct communication with Graaff-Reinet.

The post between Avontuur and Willowmore *viâ* Uniondale has also been improved, the conveyance being now effected by cart instead of on horseback.

An additional mail has also been established between Bedford and Fort Beaufort, and the dispatches altered so as to be more convenient for passenger traffic, a consideration which affects the cost very materially, without injury in these branch mails to the efficiency of the service.

An additional mail in the week now runs to Calvinia—a large district, the Crown lands in which have only very lately been surveyed, and may be expected to yield a considerable land revenue.

A weekly post has also been established with Gansfontein in the Karoo, which since the leasing of the Crown lands in that locality is being gradually populated.

Upon the opening of the railway to Worcester, the posts to Robertson and Montagu were re-arranged, resulting in the substitution of three posts in the week with Cape Town, in lieu of the two heretofore, and the retention of the weekly post with Swellendam. This increased accommodation was effected without any additional cost.

Since the settlement of the territorial question at issue between the Orange Free State and Griqualand West, a postal convention has been entered into between those Governments, allowing the free passage of mails through each other's territory. Under this arrangement it occurred to me to suggest to the Postmasters-General of the two States, that further advantage would result to them by allowing similar privileges to mail packets for and from this Colony. Action has been taken upon this suggestion, and the result is that the Free State have now the opportunity, *viâ* Kimberley, of a third communication with Cape Town, and of transmitting their European correspondence by the same route, so as to reach this office on Monday evening, in common with the mails from all parts of the Colony, in time for dispatch by the mail-packet leaving the next day. On the other hand, under this arrangement several of the bordering divisions of this colony have been brought into more immediate communication with the Diamond-fields and the Transvaal than they possibly could be if they had to depend solely upon the posts passing through this colony.

The overland mail from King William's Town to Natal *viâ* the Transkei, although it is greatly improved—carts being employed now from King William's Town to Umtata, and a horse-post substituted for part of the remainder of the route instead of runners—still the working of it is not altogether satisfactory, considering the importance of the country traversed, the trade with which is only now really developing itself; and it may possibly be necessary, before it can be made thoroughly efficient that there should be a personal interview with the Postmaster-General of Natal, for which arrangements were made by my predecessor when this post was first organized, but which were never carried out.

Since the opening of the East London Railway to King William's Town, mails on that line have been conveyed twice a day. The cost, however, in the conveyance of these mails from East London and King William's Town to the stations is heavier than that incurred formerly for the conveyance of the daily mail between King William's Town and East London.

This service was certainly exceptionally low, the large amount of passenger traffic on this line enabling the contractor to take the mails at a nominal price. Still, considering the short distance between East London and Panmure, the excessive cost seems inexplicable; but it is to be hoped that competition will soon arise and put an end to exorbitant charges.

Much additional facility has been afforded to the public for having access to the post by the increase of postmasters. During the year fifty-seven additional appointments have been made; they now number five

hundred and thirty-nine, or nearly double the number there was in 1871.

The postal convention with Natal has been amended, and the rate of postage reduced from sixpence to fourpence the half-ounce, thus making the postage uniform with the Inland Colonial rate and with that charged upon letters for the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

The postal convention with the Transvaal has also been amended, so that mail matter passing from this colony through the Transvaal is exempt from postage for transit, and *vice versa*. A similar arrangement is now under the consideration of the Volksraad of the Orange Free State, and if acquiesced in, the effect will be the neighbouring States and Colonies will as far as postal matters are concerned be exactly in the same position as if they were integral parts of the Cape Colony.

By the opening of large sections of railways lately, the area deriving the benefit of increased communication, and consequently, under Section 9 of Act 30 of 1864, the privilege of reduced postage has been considerably extended, and the places now enjoying a penny post number 59.

Contracts have been entered into with the Union Company and Donald Currie & Co. for the conveyance of a weekly mail to and from England, which came into force on the 1st October, 1876, and are to terminate on the 30th September, 1882. It is stipulated in them that the voyages are to be performed in 26 days, and in 27 days when the packet is appointed to touch either at St. Helena or Ascension. Premiums for speed at the rate of £4 3s. 4d. are allowed for every complete hour in which the passage is made under the period of 26 or 27 days and at the rate of £6 5s. per hour for each such passage under the period of 23 or 24 days respectively. The contractors are further entitled to receive the postage collected on the mails they convey.

I append statements from which the working of these contracts may be seen.

The following statistics of the department are annexed, as of interest in showing the amount of work effected :

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

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Number of letters | 830,692   |
| Number of papers  | 1,163,228 |
| Number of books   | 128,950   |

Showing an increase over the previous year respectively of 136,216, 166,403, and 33,297.

The weight of mails despatched was :—By coasting steamers, 82,163 lbs., by post-cart to the Eastern Frontiers, 118,842 lbs.; by post-cart to the North-Eastern Frontiers, 70,224.

The mails dispatched to England consisted of :

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| Letters | 254,708 |
| Papers  | 218,399 |
| Books   | 10,420  |

Showing an excess of 15,630 in the number of letters over the previous year.

#### *Registered Letters.*

The number of registered letters passing through the General Post-office has increased 50 per cent. since 1874, as appears in the annexed return :—

|  | 1874.  | 1875.  | 1876.  |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Received from and <i>via</i> England . . . . . | 4,566  | 4,944  | 6,048  |
| From other places beyond sea . . . . .         | 160    | 252    | 307    |
| From inland towns . . . . .                    | 7,050  | 11,670 | 12,760 |
| Dispatched to and <i>via</i> England . . . . . | 5,313  | 5,616  | 7,085  |
| To other places beyond sea . . . . .           | 152    | 235    | 166    |
| To inland towns . . . . .                      | 4,280  | 4,294  | 6,524  |
| Totals   | 21,521 | 27,011 | 32,890 |

The letters containing coin and other valuables posted at the General Post-office without being registered, and *compulsorily registered by officers of the department*, amounted to the unprecedentedly large number of 445, of which 259 were received from inland towns, 79 were posted for inland transmission, and 107 were addressed to England.

As indifference or carelessness in this matter would appear to be on the increase, I would again caution the public against a practice which is as unfair to the post-office employes as it is hazardous to the senders, and urge them in making remittances to avail themselves of money-orders whenever this can be done; but where this is impracticable, in no case to attempt the transmission of coin without registering the letter containing it, the lowness of the premium on money-orders and of the registration fee leaving no excuse.

The record of the weight of registered packets addressed to England, supposed to contain diamonds, has continued to be kept, from which it would appear that the weight dispatched during the last three years has been as follows :—

|                   | lbs. | oz. |
|-------------------|------|-----|
| In 1874 . . . . . | 474  | 5   |
| In 1875 . . . . . | 649  | 12  |
| In 1876 . . . . . | 702  | 2   |

The amount of Customs duties collected on articles of jewellery and other valuables imported through the Post office shows a steady increase, the amounts received being :

|                   | £   | s. | d. |
|-------------------|-----|----|----|
| In 1874 . . . . . | 241 | 3  | 8  |
| In 1875 . . . . . | 313 | 17 | 6  |
| In 1876 . . . . . | 485 | 16 | 10 |

#### *Dead Letters.*

The unclaimed colonial letters returned to the writers numbered 6,914 ordinary and 101 registered, yielding a postage of £79 3s. 1d.

2,709 ordinary and 53 registered unclaimed letters were returned to London, and 1,305 ordinary and 19 registered to British Colonies and Foreign parts.

The unclaimed letters returned from England to the Cape amounted to 1,198 ordinary and 17 registered letters.

Among the unclaimed letters, *unregistered*, the following property was found :—Coin, £13 2s. 8d.; Cheques, £1,089 8s. 7d.; Drafts, £315 6s. 8d.; Bank Notes, £39; Money Orders, £15 0s. 6d.; and Promissory Notes, £369 10s. 11d.

*Revenue and Expenditure*

The expenditure has been as follows :—

|                               | £      | s. | d. | £      | s. | d. |
|-------------------------------|--------|----|----|--------|----|----|
| Salaries . . . . .            | 13,248 | 3  | 7  |        |    |    |
| Allowances . . . . .          | 1,219  | 6  | 3  |        |    |    |
| Contingencies . . . . .       | 1,684  | 11 | 11 |        |    |    |
| Rent . . . . .                | 815    | 0  | 3  |        |    |    |
| Transport . . . . .           | 8      | 8  | 0  |        |    |    |
| Conveyance of Mails . . . . . | 81,589 | 12 | 6  |        |    |    |
|                               |        |    |    | 98,565 | 2  | 6  |

*Revenue.*

|                                    | £      | s. | d. |         |   |   |
|------------------------------------|--------|----|----|---------|---|---|
| Postage . . . . .                  | 56,411 | 0  | 0  |         |   |   |
| Postal fines . . . . .             | 1,653  | 0  | 0  |         |   |   |
| Premiums on money orders . . . . . | 1,407  | 0  | 0  |         |   |   |
|                                    |        |    |    | £59,471 | 0 | 0 |

Deficiency £38,094 0 0

In this expenditure is included £1,333, the cost incurred in providing special trains for crossing the Zwartkops River, to which reference has already been made; but even with the addition of this item the expenditure is less by £4,142 than it was the previous year. No appreciable reduction can, however, be expected in the expenditure for the conveyance of the mails until the heavy contracts made in previous years lapse. By that time it is to be hoped that the Gouritz, the Kromme, and other rivers on the main road to Port Elizabeth will be bridged, and the road through Lange Kloof, now being worked at, completed. I feel confident that as soon as this has been effected there will be a very considerable reduction in the cost of mail conveyance on this important line, which will go far in a few years, by the saving so effected, to cover the expenditure incurred on these works.

But even if my hopes in this respect should be fully realized, I do not anticipate any diminution in the expenditure under this head, as the saving effected on existing lines will have to be devoted to meet the growing wants for postal communication on every hand, especially as the Colony extends its borders, and takes in new country, the very first necessity of which is the post.

The revenue has increased by £1,086, in spite of a falling off of £2,279 in the proceeds of postal fines. This is, however, an undesirable source of revenue, which can only flourish in an unhealthy and exceptional state of things. It is gratifying, however, to notice that the revenue from postage and the premiums on money orders, the legitimate sources, is steadily on the increase, as shown in the accompanying return :—

|                                    | 1873.   | 1874.   | 1875.   | 1876.   |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Postage . . . . .                  | £41,478 | £48,567 | £53,128 | £56,411 |
| Premiums on Money Orders . . . . . | 909     | 1,019   | 1,324   | 1,407   |

The excess of expenditure over revenue for the year is shown to be £38,094; allowing £20,000 for the services rendered by the department to the Government in the conveyance of correspondence, the deficit is reduced to £18,094.

Considering, therefore, that the cost for field-cornets' posts, very many of which exist as much for Governmental administrative as for postal purposes, is also borne by this department, and that the posts in this sparsely populated country, parts of which are difficult of access even by the mail, effect as much in an educational point of view, carrying along with it books and papers as well as letters, as if directly connected with the Educational Department, and receiving a grant in aid, it will, I submit, be allowed that the comparatively small excess over the revenue is money well spent in the true interests of the country.

G. W. ATCHISON,  
Postmaster-General.

Statement shewing Premiums Paid for Speed on Voyages from England  
by the Donald Currie Line of Steamers.

| Date of Departure from<br>England, | Name of Vessel.         | Premium for Speed. |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1876.                              |                         | £ s. d.            |
| October 6                          | Walmer Castle ... ..    | 166 13 4           |
| „ 20                               | Dunrobin Castle ... ..  | 462 10 0           |
| November 3                         | Courland ... ..         | ...                |
| „ 17                               | Edinburgh Castle ... .. | 254 3 4            |
| December 1                         | Lapland ... ..          | ...                |
| „ 15                               | Flamingo ... ..         | ...                |
| „ 29                               | Elizabeth Martin ... .. | ...                |
| 1877.                              |                         |                    |
| January 12                         | Walmer Castle ... ..    | 229 3 4            |
| „ 26                               | Dunrobin Castle ... ..  | 518 15 0           |
| February 9                         | Courland ... ..         | 33 6 8             |
| „ 23                               | Edinburgh Castle ... .. | 183 6 8            |
| March 9                            | Balmoral Castle ... ..  | 600 0 0            |
| „ 23                               | Caldera ... ..          | ...                |
|                                    |                         | 2,447 18 4         |



Statement shewing Premiums Paid for Speed on Voyages from England  
by the Union Company Line of Steamers.

| Date of Departure from<br>England. | Name of Vessel. | Premium for Speed. |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1876.                              |                 | £ s. d.            |
| October 13                         | African ... ..  | 116 13 4           |
| " 27                               | Danube ... ..   | 187 10 0           |
| November 10                        | Roman ... ..    | 166 13 4           |
| " 24                               | European ... .. | 133 6 8            |
| December 8                         | Nubian ... ..   | 500 0 0            |
| " 22                               | Teuton ... ..   | ...                |
| 1877.                              |                 |                    |
| January 5                          | American ... .. | 100 0 0            |
| " 29                               | Anglian ... ..  | 187 10 0           |
| February 2                         | African ... ..  | 133 6 8            |
| " 16                               | Roman ... ..    | 162 10 0           |
| March 2                            | European ... .. | 337 10 0           |
| " 16                               | Nubian ... ..   | 412 10 0           |
| " 30                               | Teuton ... ..   | ...                |
|                                    |                 | 2,437 10 0         |

Statement shewing the Amounts of Postage Payable to the Union and Donald Currie Companies for Conveying Mails to England during the six months from 1st October, 1876 to 31st March, 1877.

| UNION COMPANY'S PACKETS. |                 |            | DONALD CURRIE AND COMPANY'S PACKETS. |                  |            |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Date of Departure.       | Name of Vessel. | Postage.   | Date of Departure.                   | Name of Vessel.  | Postage.   |
| 1876.<br>October 3       | European        | £ 231 13 4 | 1876. 10<br>October 24               | Edinburgh Castle | £ 214 3 1  |
| " 17                     | Nubian          | 198 14 3   | " "                                  | Flamingo         | 191 5 2    |
| " 31                     | Teuton          | 159 15 10  | November 7                           | Elizabeth Martin | 149 10 2   |
| November 14              | Asiatic         | 241 10 0   | " 21                                 | Walmer Castle    | 210 8 6    |
| " 28                     | Anglian         | 328 1 3    | December 5                           | Dunrobin Castle  | 212 19 8   |
| December 12              | African         | 205 4 8    | " 19                                 | Courland         | 194 11 10  |
| " 26                     | Danube          | 164 16 7   | " 1877.                              |                  |            |
| January 9                | Roman           | 201 8 5    | January 2                            | Edinburgh Castle | 182 0 3    |
| " 23                     | European        | 199 4 8    | " 16                                 | Lapland          | 213 8 3    |
| February 6               | Nubian          | 205 18 5   | " 30                                 | Flamingo         | 164 1 7    |
| " 20                     | Teuton          | 142 11 10  | February 13                          | Elizabeth Martin | 198 4 2    |
| " 6                      | American        | 223 17 6   | " 27                                 | Walmer Castle    | 193 0 8    |
| " 20                     | Anglian         | 122 12 7   | March 13                             | Dunrobin Castle  | 239 13 7   |
|                          |                 |            | " 27                                 | Courland         | 201 3 3    |
|                          |                 | 2,625 9 4  |                                      |                  | 2,569 10 4 |