

HONGKONG.

THE ACTING POSTMASTER GENERAL'S REPORT FOR 1889.

*Presented to the Legislative Council, by Command of His Excellency
the Officer Administering the Government.*

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, February 6th, 1890.

SIR,—I have the honour to forward herewith a Report on the work of this Department during 1889, prepared by Mr. TRAVERS, who was in charge of the Department during that year.

2. Having been absent from the Post Office throughout the whole period under report, I am not in a position to add anything to the facts submitted by Mr. TRAVERS. I would ask permission, however, to urge upon the Government the importance of his representations as to the necessity for a new building. The existing premises were apparently as closely packed as possible when I left for Europe in 1888, but they are even worse now. The bad air which pervades the whole building, and which no doubt arises mainly from the shockingly overcrowded servants' quarters attached, makes service here a severe trial to all except those in the most robust health, whilst the facilities with which the public might reasonably expect to be provided are seriously curtailed from the want of the smallest margin in the way of room. Several important improvements are standing over, as they have been for years, from mere lack of space.

3. The site for the new building should, I think, be that at present occupied, with the sites of the Supreme Court and Land Office. I trust that the mistake will not be made of cutting down the accommodation provided to what will just, and only just, suffice for the service as it is. It would be well worth while to include several suites of extra rooms, and to let them as offices. As, in the course of years, they came to be required, the tenants could be got rid of and the rooms gradually converted to Government purposes.

4. It gives me much pleasure to testify to the ability with which the work of the Department has been carried on by Mr. TRAVERS during my long absence, and to the state of efficiency in which I find it on my return. I know from past experience how heavy a task is imposed on any one who attempts to conduct this Department as the only English officer in it. The mere strain on endurance and physical strength in this exhausting climate is often very severe, and Mr. TRAVERS is to be congratulated on having (I fear at some sacrifice of health) conducted the Department alone for eighteen months without occasion for serious complaint of any kind.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

A. LISTER,
Postmaster General.

The Honourable F. FLEMING, C.M.G.

Colonial Secretary,
&c., &c., &c.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, 31st January, 1890.

SIR,—I have the honour to report on the British Postal Service in Hongkong and China during the year 1889.

2. The date on which this Report has to be sent in makes it impossible to detail the Revenue of the Department for 1889, which will not be definitely ascertained for some months to come.

The Revenue for 1888 was as follows :—

Gross Revenue 1888,	\$148,106.89	Share of United Kingdom,	\$46,782.26
Deficit,	16,345.81	Contribution towards P. & O. subsidy*	\$69,041.09
		Share of other Countries,	\$ 5,502.91
		Conveyance of Mails,	\$ 6,718.30
		Working Expenses,	\$36,408.14
	<u>\$164,452.70</u>		<u>\$164,452.70</u>

3. Approximate Statistics for the year 1889 are appended. They show a general increase of correspondence.

* $1\frac{1}{2}$ years at £6,000 a year.

4. A Steam-Launch has been provided, and by its means the landing and delivery of mails has been accelerated. It has also enabled me to establish a Kowloon delivery which, judging by the growing requirements of that place, appeared to me necessary. At the same time a Harbour delivery was introduced.

5. I am glad to see that at last the necessity for a new Post Office has been recognised, but I would venture to suggest that a more suitable site than North Barracks be selected. It appears to me that the Post Office should be somewhere in the vicinity of Pedder's Wharf, which is not only central, but the most convenient spot so far as the general public are concerned. In my last report I remarked very strongly on the question of accommodation, and now that a new building has been, I hope, decided upon, I would urge that the work be put in hand with as little delay as possible. Rough plans of the rooms more essentially necessary, showing their best arrangement and grouping, have been prepared in this Department.

6. In May last the French Government consented to our request to allow Marine Officers to travel on the Messageries Maritimes Packets with a view of sorting the French Mails, and all arrangements to carry out this Service were completed in June, but a difficulty then arose from the fact that the *Agents des Postes* were without authority to hand the mail over to our Officers before arrival in Hong-kong. The matter was again referred to the French Post Office, but up to the present time no reply has been received, though a settlement of the question in the direction desired may be expected very shortly. The Colony is much indebted to the Vicomte de BEZAURE, French Consul, for the warm interest he has taken in this Scheme and for his constant efforts to bring it to a successful issue.

7. In March last the Postmaster General (Hon. ALFRED LISTER) during his absence on leave worked out the details of a scheme for Local Delivery, and recommended that a certain sum be placed on the Estimates of this year to defray the expenses in connection with it. This was done, and if it is approved by the home Authorities* a long felt want will be supplied. By Local Delivery must be understood the distribution, not only of correspondence originating in the Colony, but also of that which is constantly arriving by Local Steamers from China, Japan, Manila, the Straits, &c. The Colony will receive the following advantages:—

- (a) In the town, regular deliveries of Local Correspondence quite independent of either the arrival or departure of Contract Mails. These deliveries will take place every hour from 8.30 A.M. to 8 P.M.
- (b) In the Suburbs there will be three deliveries each day.
- (c) All local correspondence will be delivered exactly as addressed.

8. It was suggested to me during the year by several members of this Community that it would be a great convenience to the public if something could be done to notify as early as possible the arrival of steamers, so that mails could be sent for at once. I accordingly placed a notice board in a conspicuous place outside the Office for this purpose, and endeavoured to obtain the earliest notice of the arrival of steamers. This system, however, does not work at all satisfactorily. The launch men of this Department, engaged in other duties, frequently fail to report arrivals, and the consequence is that the mails are kept on board until it is convenient for the Agent or Captain to land them, which is very often hours after arrival. The only way really to meet the difficulty would be by efficient electric communication with Officers stationed at the Eastern and Western entrances to the Harbour.

9. In my Report for 1888 I recommended that the Salaries of our Postal Agents should be raised to such sums in dollars as will fairly represent the amount of £100 per annum, the original pay of the larger Agencies, or £50 in the case of the smaller Offices. I am glad to see that His Excellency the Governor has, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, decided upon this increase.

10. Nothing further has been done, so far as I know, with regard to handing over our Agencies in China to the Customs, and it seems only too probable that they will continue in the hands of the Assistants at the Consulates for some time to come. This is much to be regretted, as it perpetuates a crippled and make-shift service which can never, by any diligence or care on the part of the Officers employed, develop into a properly organised Postal System. I am bound to say, however, that, bad as the existing organisation is (and I hope this year will see it a little better) the Agents at the ports have done the best work possible under existing circumstances.

11. Arrangements were made in May last for the exchange of parcels between this Colony and Cochin-China, Camboge, Tongking and Annam.

12. The number of Parcels received and despatched during the year is as follows:—

	<i>Inward.</i>	<i>Outward.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
By P. & O. Packet,	8,203	4,529	12,732
By German Packet,	174	267	441
Total,	<u>8,377</u>	<u>4,796</u>	<u>13,173</u>

The total number despatched and received in 1888 was 10,593. There is therefore an increase of 2,580.

* Approval has now been received, 11.3.90.

13. By the Christmas Mail from Europe we received 527 parcels, and by the New Year's Mail 576. These are the heaviest mails that have yet come under my notice.

14. Money Orders may now be exchanged with France and Algeria through the medium of the Imperial Post Office.

15. The Peak Delivery has proved, as I expected, a great convenience to the public. The number of letters despatched and received is 3,711 and 288 respectively. I must again record my thanks to the Manager of the High Level Tramway Company for allowing our postmen to travel free.

16. Among the many instances of fraudulent enclosures in newspapers &c., the following may be mentioned :—

Mrs. ———, China posted a newspaper prepaid as a single paper, but containing a dozen silk handkerchiefs.

Mr. ———, China addressed a newspaper to a lady, containing six pairs of gloves and three letters.

These were duly forwarded, letter rate being charged, and I have no doubt the addressees would much rather they had not been sent. Unfortunately the senders could not be discovered.

17. Several Parcels falsely declared were confiscated by the Customs Authorities.

18. The late Compradore CHING TSÜN, after 23 years service, retired on pension. I cannot speak too highly of his services.

19. In conclusion I have to express my thanks to all the Officers employed in this Department for the very efficient manner in which they have performed their duties.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ARTHUR K. TRAVERS,
Assistant Postmaster General.

The Honourable A. LISTER,
Postmaster General,
§c., §c., §c.

APPROXIMATE STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1889.

DESCRIPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE.	INTERNATIONAL.		LOCAL.		TOTAL.	COMPARISON WITH 1888.		
	De-spatched.	Received.	De-spatched.	Received.		Total in 1888.	Increase.	Decrease.
Ordinary paid Letters,	640,000	506,900	63,100	73,700	1,283,700	1,147,000	136,700	...
Unpaid and short paid Articles,	17,200	16,400	3,500	2,080	39,130	46,000	...	6,820
Letters on Postal Business,	1,600	3,700	1,850	1,200	8,350	5,405	2,945	...
Post Cards,	6,100	4,100	2,200	1,300	13,700	14,375	...	675
Do. with prepaid reply, .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Newspapers and Periodicals,	133,850	406,300	30,100	19,400	589,650	460,550	129,100	...
Books, Circulars, Prices Current, &c.	190,250	89,500	23,700	26,900	330,350	338,025	...	7,675
Patterns,	15,800	7,600	50	250	23,700	9,775	13,925	...
Registered Articles,	35,100	50,500	5,200	5,600	96,400	69,125	27,275	...
Letters with value declared, .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Registered Articles with Return Receipts,	400	1,650	50	100	2,200	6,325	...	4,125
Parcels,	6,200	8,650	2,100	80	17,030	13,123	3,907	...