

1887.

QUEENSLAND.

REPORT OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT OF
QUEENSLAND FOR THE YEAR 1886.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command.

To His Excellency Sir ANTHONY MUSGRAVE, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

I have the honour to present to Your Excellency the Appended Report, from the Under Secretary, of the operations of the Post and Telegraph Department during the year 1886.

I have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,

T. MACDONALD-PATERSON,

Postmaster-General.

Post and Telegraph Department,
Brisbane, 28th June, 1887.

R E P O R T .

TORRES STRAITS MAIL SERVICE.

The average time occupied in the transmission of mails from London to Brisbane was 43 days 23 hours, as against 44 days 14 hours during the previous year, and from Brisbane to London 47 days 3 hours, as against 46 days 18 hours.

From the following statement it will be seen that ten of the Torres Straits steamers were detained at Aden on an average each trip on the outward voyage of 23 hours, waiting for the arrival of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's boat. The "Dorunda," from Brisbane on the 28th January and 16th June, and the "Duke of Westminster," from Brisbane on the 14th July, arrived late at Aden and missed connection with the Peninsular and Oriental Company's boats at that place, and consequently the mails on those occasions arrived in London 7, 6, and 5 days late respectively. Allowing for the detention at Aden, the average time occupied from London to Brisbane was 43 days; while the average time occupied in the transmission of mails from London to Brisbane by the Melbourne-Galle route was 41 days 4 hours, and by the Orient line 40 days 3 hours.

The following penalties were inflicted for late arrivals:—At Plymouth—"Quetta," in January, £50; "Dorunda," in March, £200; "Dorunda," in August, £100; and "Duke of Westminster," in September, £150. At Cooktown—"Duke of Westminster," in June, £300. Total penalties, £800.

Premiums

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPHS.

The Report of the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, Mr. A. F. Matveiff, concerning the Telegraph Branch for 1886, is as follows:—

EXTENSION OF LINES COMPLETED.

Since the last Annual Report (28th June, 1886) the extensions of lines completed are as follows:—

Nature of Works.	Date Finished.	MILES.	
		Line.	Wire.
*Along railway extension from Bethania Junction to Beaudesert, and additional wire Brisbane to Beenleigh	14th July, 1886 ...	27	77
*Cape Pallarenda to Magnetic Island (cable)	15th July, 1886 ...	3½	3½
*Muttaborra to Hughenden (iron poles)	31st July, 1886 ...	181½	181½
*Along railway survey route from Bundaberg to Howard, and additional wire thence into Maryborough	21st August, 1886 ...	36½	91½
*Along railway extension Kilkivan to Kilkivan Junction, and additional wire thence into Gympie	29th August, 1886 ...	26½	75½
*Cooktown, along railway route (81 miles), two wires	11th September, 1886	31½	69½
*Brisbane to Stanthorpe, <i>via</i> Ipswich, Fassifern, and Warwick, additional wire	14th September, 1886	...	138½
*Along railway extension from Mackay to Eton (four wires) and branch to Hamilton (two wires)	20th September, 1886	31	109½
*Hughenden to Richmond Downs (iron poles)	21st September, 1886	77	77
*Normanton to Burketown (iron poles)	9th October, 1886 ...	130½	130½
*Cape York Extension, first section (59½ miles not yet open)	13th October, 1886 ...	200	200
*Bowen to Mackay, additional wire	27th October, 1886 ...	...	125
Palmerville to Black-soil Junction, additional wire	29th October, 1886 ...	...	47½
Extension to Gatcombe Head (including 3½ miles of cable)	7th December, 1886	11½	14½
*New lines within railway fences—Brisbane to Helidon, and Toowoomba to Dalby Junction, deviation, Murphy's Creek to Harlaxton, etc.	15th December, 1886	148½	298
*Curtis Island, new deviation, Cape Capricorn Branch, alterations, etc.	17th December, 1886	...	...
*Dalby Junction to Charleville, and Augathella to Tambo, additional wires	26th December, 1886	...	419½
*Tambo to Springsure, additional wire	28th January, 1887 ...	...	144½
*Emerald to Springsure (four wires), and additional wires (two) Emerald to Clermont, along railway	31st January, 1887 ...	40½	296½
Emu Park to Yeppoon	10th February, 1887	9½	14½
Mellum Creek to Caloundra	19th February, 1887	13½	13½
Kabra (Station Central Railway) to Mount Morgan	12th March, 1887 ...	14½	28½
Dulbydilla to Morven, additional wire	5th April, 1887 ...	0½	17½
Junction Creek to Herberton	6th April, 1887 ...	97½	97½
Isis Branch Railway (two wires)	12th April, 1888 ...	11½	23
North Ipswich Branch	— April, 1887 ...	1	2
Harrisville to Dugandan along railway line	1st June, 1887 ...	16½	16½
Green Creek to Croydon (two wires, iron poles)	7th June, 1887 ...	23½	47½
LINES DISMANTLED OR ABANDONED.			
Gympie to Kilkivan ... ..	...	30	30
Cooktown to Palmer road ... ..	...	32½	32½
Mackay to Eton ... ..	...	21	42½
Springsure to Clermont ... ..	...	121	163
Caloundra Branch ... ..	...	12	12
Thornborough to Northcote ... ..	...	2½	30½
Nebo to Mount Britton ... ..	...	22½	22½
Harrisville to Fassifern ... ..	...	...	14
Total mileage of extensions completed since last report, dismantled and abandoned lines deducted		842½	2,357

EXTENSIONS IN PROGRESS.

* *Cape York Extension (second section).*—The latest report received in connection with this work is dated Lydia Creek, 12th June,—“Line marked 136 miles, cleared 134 miles; clearing very light, sinking good; general course 20 degrees east of south; 24 men in that camp and 7 with moving party, besides bullock drivers; 14 teams now at work; clearing will be finished in five weeks, and the whole line probably in three or four months. Line on good sound country so far; expects to have make slight detour to avoid boggy ti-tree flats.”

* *Springsure*

* This extensions was advised in last year's report as being then in course of construction.

* *Springsure to Taroom*.—A section of this line was opened to Rolleston, a distance of $44\frac{1}{2}$ miles, on 19th April last. The construction overseer reports (12th June) that—

	Miles.	Chains.
Marking	138	20
Hole-sinking	135	42
Clearing	136	1
Pole-setting	135	46
Wiring	128	18

had then been completed, but as the route will probably cover 200 miles instead of 160 miles, as estimated, the whole work is not likely to be finished for some months yet. A considerable amount of delay was occasioned by the melancholy death of Mr. J. A. Brodie, the original contractor, some time elapsing before arrangements could be concluded with the executor (Mr. T. Brodie) for continuation of the work. However, 30 men are at present employed and every endeavour is being made to push the work ahead.

Clermont to Ravenswood (two wires); 200 miles, more or less. Since commencing the contractors were much hindered by floods, difficulties in obtaining suitable labour, and sickness in the camp. Operations had to be stopped on account of the wet in February last, when about 80 miles of the work from Clermont was completed. A fresh start was afterwards made at the other end, and at the date of last report (18th June) 31 miles had been finished. Thirty men are employed with two teams laying material and three horse teams drawing poles.

Ravenswood to Charters Towers and Junction Creek, additional wire; 250 miles. Only 37 miles completed on 16th June; progress has been slow up to the present owing to the large number of poles requiring renewal and the difficulty of procuring them. The contractor has now been urged to have the work finished by September next, as after then all expenses will be charged to him.

Stanthorpe to New South Wales Border, along railway line, additional wires (2), in place of those stretched on the old line; $25\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Tenders are now under consideration; work to be handed over to the Government within three weeks from the notification of the acceptance of the tender.

MILEAGE OF LINE AND WIRE.

There were at the end of 1886 8,225 miles of line and $14,433\frac{1}{2}$ miles of wire, and there are now $8,340\frac{3}{4}$ miles of line and $14,937\frac{3}{4}$ miles of wire open for public business.

NUMBER OF STATIONS AND OFFICERS.

At the close of 1886 there were 282 stations in daily operation, and 618 officers employed, including those holding appointments in other departments, but exclusive of assistants at country stations (officers' wives) and construction parties.

NEW STATIONS.

Since the 28th June, 1886, the undermentioned new stations have been opened:—

Rockwood	19th July, 1886
Beaudesert	26th July, 1886
Logan Village (R.T.S.†)	11th August, 1886
Magnetic Island (quarantine)	2nd September, 1886
Richmond	22nd September, 1886
Floraville	15th October, 1886
Burketown	18th October, 1886
Barcardine	8th November, 1886
Fernlees (R.T.S.)	8th December, 1886
Musgrave	23rd December, 1886
Coen	29th December, 1886
Prairie (R.T.S.)	29th December, 1886
Gatcombe Head	20th January, 1887

Barronwater

* This extension was advised in last year's report as being then in course of construction.

† R.T.S., Railway Telegraph Station.

Barronwater	...	...	...	10th February, 1887
Yeppoon	...	...	...	15th February, 1887
Wallangarra (R.T.S.*)	...	...	...	15th February, 1887
Mount Morgan	...	...	...	18th March, 1887
Lowood (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	25th March, 1887
Palmer Road (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	28th March, 1887
North Ipswich	...	...	...	12th April, 1887
Rolleston	...	...	...	19th April, 1887.

OFFICIAL OFFICES ADDED TO LIST OF STATIONS DURING THE YEAR.

Pengarry Junction R.S.
Esk R.S.
Howard R.S.
Colton R.S.
Woolooga R.S. (made R.T.S., 28th April, 1887.)
Kilkivan R.S.
Roma R.S. (previously R.T.S.)
Croydon Junction R.S.
Cooktown R.S.
Morven R.S.

STATIONS CLOSED.

Copperfield	...	...	...	30th June, 1886
Lowood (R.T.S.) (re-opened 25th March, 1887)	...	...	...	10th August, 1886
Nive	...	...	...	10th January, 1887
Caloundra	...	...	...	15th January, 1887
Northcote	...	...	...	6th February, 1887
Killarney (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	16th March, 1887
Sunnybank (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	13th April, 1887
Port Alma	...	...	...	21st April, 1887
Mount Britton	...	...	...	28th April, 1887
Gordon Downs (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	30th April, 1887
Langton (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	30th April, 1887
Wallaroo (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	30th April, 1887
Withersfield (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	30th April, 1887
Beta (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	28th May, 1887
Rocky (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	28th May, 1887
Tolmie's Dam (R.T.S.)	...	...	...	28th May, 1887.

WORKING OF LINES.

The lines in the Southern and Western Districts worked very well up to the latter part of January; and the interruptions, although numerous, were, as a rule, speedily removed. But the heavy gale, accompanied by torrents of rain, which passed over the south-eastern portion of the Colony on the night of the 20th January last, together with the floods that followed, were very destructive, and the commencement of a number of breaks of long duration. Out of all the wires running from the Central Office only one—viz., the new Tambo duplex—was workable on the 21st of January. On the following day the floods were very high in many places. At Warwick they flowed into the office. Between Warwick and Ipswich, and from the New South Wales border to about mid-way between Yandina and Gympie, the lines were destroyed for miles. Trees innumerable had been uprooted and thrown across them; the country was for long distances under water; bridges were swept away; rivers and creeks overflowing their banks, and roads everywhere impassable. Communication was restored as speedily as possible; but many days elapsed before some of the wires were workable. By far the longest interruption during the year was at the Burnett River, between Gin Gin and Maryborough, where the wires were down for four weeks. Several attempts were made to get them across, but each was unsuccessful until the floods subsided, owing to the quantity

quantity of drift which fouled the wires before they could be raised clear of the water. At these and the many subsequent interruptions that occurred in various parts of the district from similar causes, the repairers—frequently subjected to considerable risk and exposure—worked with a will, and deserve praise for their exertions. An interruption was reported on the 8th of May, 1886, between Dirranbandi and New South Wales border, which proved to have been caused by the malicious burning down of five poles. Several others were shortly afterwards found similarly destroyed on the Bollon section. Both deceptions were probably committed by the same person. He was tracked by the police, and received three months' imprisonment for the last-named offence. An interruption of eleven days occurred between Dunwich and South Passage Offices, caused by the failure of the cable across the South Passage. A new one was laid. The old piece had been in use for many years, and was too firmly imbedded in sand to allow of its being raised. The total number of interruptions registered up to 23rd May last is seven hundred and ninety-one. Over 20 per cent. of these occurred in offices (chiefly railway), and could have been avoided by ordinary care and attention. Ninety-eight were owing to crosses with telephone wires. Seventy-six were caused by trees blown on the wires. Sixty-three through insulating-pins at angle-poles breaking, brackets falling off, insulators smashed, etc., and allowing the wires to fall to the ground. The same number of ordinary crosses were attributable to high winds principally; in some cases the cause was not perceptible. Line parties interfered with communication on forty-nine occasions. Forty-two stoppages were owing to broken insulators and tie wires allowing the line wires to come in contact with iron poles; and twenty-six more to severe floods. Railway parties and contractors are blameable for twenty-four interruptions. Lightning caused eighteen, and lightning-conductors touching line a similar number. Trees felled on the wires by people clearing caused seventeen bad breaks. In some instances the men to blame were found out and made to pay the cost of replacing the material destroyed. Damage by thunderstorms prevented work eleven times. Nine interruptions were caused by wire being corroded away by sea-air. Flaws in wire, eight. Bush fires, large birds flying against wires, and teams running against poles, seven each. Other interruptions were owing to fall of rotten poles, whip-lashes and kites entangled in wires, high loading of railway trucks, faulty iron insulators, blasting operations, sand shifted by gales, flying foxes, etc., etc.

The duration of the interruptions may be classed as follows:—Two hundred and ten, under an hour; two hundred and sixty-two, under a quarter of a day; sixty, under half-a-day; one hundred and forty-eight, under one day; seventy-four, under two days; fourteen, under three days; three, under four days; eight, under five days; five, under six days; three, under seven days; two, eleven days; one, fifteen days; and one, twenty-eight days.

The new lines and additional wires have facilitated business very much. The Northern line is, however, at present still overcrowded with messages, causing delay; but it is hoped that the use of the "quadruplex" will shortly remedy this.

In the Northern District the lines also worked very well; the total number of interruptions up to 31st March being one hundred and sixty-two, from much the same causes as those occurring in the Southern and Western Districts.

Cape York Line.—The first (or inner) section of the Cape York line, a distance of 200 miles, was completed on the 13th October, 1886. Musgrave, the first station, 74½ miles from the junction with the Palmer-Cooktown line, was opened on 23rd December; the second station (Coen) on 29th of the same month last year. In the expectation that the instruments and stores would be delivered in good time at the third station (Mein), the officers for that place were sent on during January. Unfortunately, owing to the floods, nothing could reach Mein, and the office is not yet opened; but it is hoped that very soon the instruments will be available, and station placed in circuit.

The second (or northern) section is not yet completed. The contractors for this portion of the line had many difficulties to contend with, some of which, had they been foreseen, might possibly have been avoided. Consequently, after completing some 25 miles from Paterson, and clearing about 118, all work was stopped in November last, and, though an attempt to re-commence was made shortly after, nothing further was done, the rains having then set in, rendering the country impassable. The most northern station of the peninsula (Paterson) had been manned

in readiness for the cable, and officers were sent up to McDonnell, the next station, in November, both buildings having been completed. It is expected that McDonnell will be in circuit in a few weeks now, and it is also hoped the whole line will be completed through in July or August next, thus bringing Thursday Island into telegraphic communication with other parts of the globe.

This line will be a very expensive one to work, and the receipts from the different stations, Thursday Island and Coen excepted, little or nothing.

The blacks have given considerable trouble, carrying away wire, insulators, pins, and plates, bending down the poles, and generally trying to destroy the line. A large number were employed at this work between Musgrave and Coen last April. Our men from the latter place found a large camp, containing forty gunyahs; and in the camp, besides a number of tomahawks, etc., over a hundredweight of spear-heads formed out of telegraph wire were discovered, showing that the same mob had been guilty on former occasions of interfering with the line. Between the Coen and Mein the natives have also been at work, and material has had to be forwarded to make good the damage caused by them.

The Coen building is now in course of erection, Mein and Moreton are still to build.

CABLES.

In April last communication with Moreton Island was interrupted. The land lines, test-houses, etc., on Stradbroke having been carefully examined, tests were taken of the cable over South Passage, and the fault discovered therein. This cable was laid about twenty years ago, and is now so imbedded in the sand that it was quite useless attempting to lift it. A new piece was, therefore, taken down on the "Heather Bell," and laid by Mr. Starke, electrician of the Department, on 29th of the same month. The route was slightly altered, and the end brought right into the office at the South Passage station, instead of into the test-house formerly used.

A cable of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length was laid on 15th July, 1886, between Cape Pallarenda, a few miles north of Townsville, and a point near West Point on Magnetic Island. Another was put down between the mainland and Facing Island on the 20th October last, a distance of $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles, connecting with a land line to Gatecombe Head. The latter place is now in direct communication with Gladstone and Bustard Head.

The most important cable laid during the past year was that between Thursday Island and Paterson, the telegraph station on the mainland. This cable, in length about 18 knots, is double-cored and weighs from twelve to thirteen tons per mile at the shore ends, and eight tons per mile in the middle. A very good course was taken by the cable ship "Recorder," through the Boat Channel. The work was completed on the night of November 17th last. The contract of the Eastern Extension Company with the Government to supply, bring out, and lay the cable, was faithfully and successfully carried through. The tests taken showed both cores to be as perfect as could be desired. The acting Government Resident (Mr. Milman) gave much assistance, and the use of the "Albatross," in carrying out this work; and but for this there would probably have been delay. A mile of each type—surplus—was joined and laid from Thursday Island over towards Friday Island as the best mode of preservation, there being no facilities for building a cable tank on the island. Communication with Paterson has been kept up through the cable since first laid.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS.

The expenditure for 1886 was as follows:—

Southern and Western Districts	£4,142	14	10
Northern District	3,127	9	3
Total	<u>£7,270</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>

Seven parties have been constantly employed during the year—four in the South and West and three in the North. A small party has been at work, besides, on the line behind Port Douglas, but it has proved more economical to do the heavy clearing and numerous renewals of poles necessary in that district by piece work. A contract has, therefore, been entered into with a resident in the locality to undertake the work at a reasonable rate. Similar arrangements have been going on near Cairns and Geraldton also for some little time past.

DUPLEX AND QUADRUPLEX.

The new wire between Brisbane and Tambo has been duplexed, and works very well, a distance of over 600 miles. The quadruplex instruments for the Brisbane and Bowen circuit, mentioned in my last report as having been ordered, have arrived and been fitted. They are now working fairly well.

TELEPHONES.

The Telephone Exchanges are all in good working order, and the number of subscribers is gradually increasing. An exchange has been opened at Bundaberg with 33 paid subscribers and two service connections. Brisbane has 298 paid, 57 free; Maryborough 37 paid, 7 free; Rockhampton 40 paid, 1 free; Townsville 31 paid, 4 free. Some of Felton and Guilleaume's anti-induction aerial cable has been imported and will shortly be stretched. This cable is highly spoken of, and has been used in many places.

CHECKING SYSTEM.

The system of "checking by post" which it was intended to have introduced on the 1st August last, was delayed for two months on account of the extra space required at the Head Office not being available until the 1st of October following.

Since the inauguration of the above method the lines have been greatly relieved for the passage of ordinary business, and it may also be said that the system has worked very smoothly from the commencement. The checking is certainly as well, and perhaps more effectively, carried out.

Attention is directed to the Appendices and Map attached hereto, giving full statistical and other information in connection with the whole Department.

I have, etc.,

JOHN McDONNELL,
Under Secretary.

Post and Telegraph Department,
Brisbane, 28th June, 1887.
