

OBITUARY.

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JOHN BENNETT was born on the 12th December, 1823, at Fagra, near Kirkcudbright, N.B. His career as an engineer commenced in 1843 in Liverpool, where he served his time in the workshops and drawing office of Messrs. Bury, Curtis and Kennedy. He was then for two years with Messrs. McConochie and Claud, consulting engineers, of the same city, and subsequently spent a short period in the works of the Great Western Railway at Swindon.

In 1850 Mr. Bennett obtained employment under the Government of the Straits Settlements, and for three years was in charge, under Mr. J. T. Thomson, of the construction of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on the Pedra Branca Rocks at the entrance to the China Sea, 10 miles from the nearest land and 40 miles from food supplies. The lighthouse was built entirely by convict labour, chiefly Chinese and Malayan, on a bare rock hardly raised above sea-level, and Mr. Bennett himself fixed the revolving light. On the completion of the work, he was favourably reported to Government by Mr. Thomson. In 1854 he entered the Public Works Department of the Government of India, in which service he rose through the various grades to the rank of Acting Superintending Engineer. From 1854 to 1863 he was stationed at Singapore and superintended the building of the Rabbit and Coney Lighthouse, also at the entrance to the China Sea, a heavy isolated work. He likewise prepared the stones for the Alguada Reef Lighthouse, off Cape Negrais, on the east coast of the Bay of Bengal, cutting them at Pulo Obin in the Malay Peninsula; and carried out St. Andrew's Church (now the Cathedral), Singapore—to which he himself fixed the lightning conductor—and various public buildings and fortifications. In the execution of these works he had charge of large bodies of convicts, whom he managed with great skill and tact.

In 1864 Mr. Bennett was transferred to Penang, on the coast of the Malay Peninsula, where he carried out the works in connection with forming the new settlement. In 1867 he returned to Singapore and, in addition to his engineering duties, acted as Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department and as Superintendent of Convicts. In the same year the Straits Settlements

were placed under the administration of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Mr. Bennett was transferred to Burma as Executive Engineer of the Myanong division and stationed at Rangoon and Henzada, his chief work there being the reclaiming of the Rice lands (a district 90 miles by 30 miles) from the overflow of the River Irawadi, by forming an embankment along it for over 90 miles. On this work several thousand native workmen were engaged. He was invested with the powers of a subordinate magistrate within the limit of the embankment division and had charge of the Government treasury, which was kept at his house under a native guard, no other European officer being stationed at Henzada. In 1868 Mr. Bennett carried out the construction of three screw-pile lighthouses at the entrances to the Irawadi River. In the following year he was transferred from Burma to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, where he had sole charge of all public works, both in those islands and in the Nicobar Islands, building stone barracks, making roads, forming sea embankments and erecting a church on Ross Island. During that appointment he was acting magistrate and had charge of the convict establishment.

In 1873 Mr. Bennett was transferred from Port Blair to the North-West Provinces of India as Executive Engineer and was stationed successively at Allahabad, Meerut, Cawnpore, Benares, and Calpi. In the Allahabad district he carried out several viaducts, bridges, irrigation works, a large opium factory, the Thornhill Mayne Memorial, the Government Press and the Muir College; had charge of the Grand Trunk Road for 200 miles between Benares and Cawnpore; and thoroughly renovated Government House for the reception of the Prince of Wales. He was also engaged on famine relief works, in connection with which his services were specially referred to by Government. In 1877 he was promoted to Superintending Engineer of the North-Western Provinces, which responsible position he held until his retirement in 1879.

During his whole career Mr. Bennett was greatly liked and respected, from his superiors to his lowest workmen, his manner being quiet and unassuming, yet firm, and his temper even. To those qualities, and to his ability as an engineer, may be attributed his success with native workmen. Mr. Bennett died at Dartington, Totnes, South Devon, on the 21st September, 1896. He was elected a Member on the 4th March, 1873.

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