

PROGRESS REPORT
OF
FOREST ADMINISTRATION
IN THE
PROVINCE OF ASSAM
FOR THE YEAR
1900-1901.

BY
C. G. DINGWALL-FORDYCE, Esq.,
CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS, ASSAM.



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above area, 996.6 square miles were successfully protected, the proportion of failure being .22 per cent., against .33 of the previous year. The total area burnt was 2.2 square miles, against 3.3 square miles in 1901-1902.

27. The total expenditure on the areas for which special protective measures were adopted was Rs. 7,490, or Rs. 7-8-0 per square mile. The area successfully protected cost Rs. 7-8-3 per square mile, as compared with Rs. 8-4-7 per square mile in the preceding year.

28. Besides the areas attempted to be specially protected, partial protection was afforded to 196 square miles of the Bijni reserve separately shown in Form No. 53 attached to this report. Of this area, 17 square miles were burnt owing to a big fire which entered the reserve from the Bhutan frontier, the unprotected side. The protection of the whole area cost Rs. 384, or Rs. 2-2-4 per square mile of the area successfully protected, compared with Rs. 2-3-1 in 1901-1902. The percentage of failures was 8.7, against 14.8 in 1901-1902.

29. The following statement shows the origin of the fires and their number, together with the areas burnt in each case, during the year under report:—

Division.	A		B		C.—Fires beginning inside the reserve or fire traced areas.																Total A, B, C and columns 23 and 24.						
	Fires caused by accident or through carelessness in burning fire lines.		Fires entering the forests by crossing exterior fire lines.		Owing to carelessness or accident.								By intentional firing.									Causes unknown.					
	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.	Number of fires.	Area burnt, in acres.									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25			
Goalpara	3	10,225	1	60	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	60	...	...	4	10,915		
Kamrup	1	95	...	1	15	1	65	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	81	...	...	3	166		
Dartang	1	195	
Nowgong	1	100	1	100	1	100
Khasi and Jaintia Hills	6	64	6	64	6	64	
Garo Hills	3	497	3	21	3	358	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6	373	...	...	8	870		
Total	7	11,617	5	95	10	482	1	100	16	678	23	12,520

30. Form 53 shows that out of 639,242 acres of specially-protected forests, only 1,425 acres were burnt. This result is very satisfactory, and it is especially gratifying to note that our attempts to save valuable *sal* forests met with almost equal success in each division. Great credit is due to the Divisional Officers and the protective staff concerned for their commendable exertions which produced such good results, considering the fact that the season was very dry.

31. In the Goalpara Division, the only fire of any importance was the one which entered the Bijni reserve from Bhutan, burning 17 square miles of it. This danger cannot be overcome, as the graziers who set fire to grass lands in Bhutan near Bijni reserve are beyond the control of district authorities. On this side of the reserve too protection has not yet been given. It is under contemplation to fully protect this Bijni area. Any further expenditure, however, on its protection from a purely forest improvement point of view is open to serious argument on the score of expense. It is thought perhaps, however, that it may be undertaken in the interests of natural history, so as to form a large area protected from fire as a home for that fast decreasing but interesting animal the rhinoceros.

32. Of the 23 fires which occurred during the year, 8 were in the Garo Hills Division, burning 870 acres. One fire case was compounded on payment of Rs. 30. One case was sent up to court and disposed of during the year under report, whilst the

4. Fire protection was more successful than usual, the percentage of failure in the specially-protected area being '22, as against '33, and in the partially-protected area 8'7, against 14'8 in the previous year. Considering the dryness of the season and the consequent greater liability of the forests to fire, the results are very creditable to the protective staff.

Large fires annually occur in the partially-protected Bijni reserve, caused either by shooting parties or by fires entering the reserve from Bhutan. The Chief Commissioner has under consideration the establishment in this forest of a reserve for big game, with special reference to the protection of rhinoceros which are rapidly becoming extinct.

5. The Kachugaon reserve in the Goalpara district was constituted mainly for the establishment of forest villages, with a view to the supply of labour for fire protection. With this object the area was made over to the Forest Department in 1901-1902, though it was not formally notified as a reserve till a year later. The experiment has already met with considerable success. Two new villages were established within the reserve during the year, and the number of householders increased from 182 to 265, the area under cultivation also showing an increase from 2,675 to 3,351 *bighas*. It appears that interference by the police at the outpost on the Sankos river has impeded the immigration of settlers from Bengal, and the removal of the outpost is under consideration. A forest village was established in the Langai reserve in Sylhet, and further extensions of the system are desirable in view of the scarcity of labour available for the proper working of the forests. The Chief Commissioner would also emphasise the importance of encouraging forest reproduction by the agency of *jhum* cultivators, employing them to sow useful trees along with their crops.

6. The total outturn of timber and fuel was 12,725,852 cubic feet, as against 10,397,533 cubic feet in the previous year. The increase was mainly due to a large increase in the amount of timber removed in the Garo Hills under *gurkati* permits. Excluding the produce removed under these permits, the quantity of timber and fuel extracted from all forests amounted to 9,322,592 cubic feet, an increase of 861,306 cubic feet as compared with the previous year, due to larger removals of timber and fuel under free permits, purchasers other than *gurkati* permit-holders having removed 16,544 cubic feet of timber and fuel less than in the preceding year. The improvement in the outturn of tea boxes from the saw-mills of the province has been maintained, and there was an increase of 20,816 in the number of boxes sold during the year.

7. The Charduar caoutchouc plantation in Darrang was extended by 13'5 acres. The rubber collected from the Kulsi and Charduar plantations in 1901-1902, which was sold during the year, realised Rs. 18,199-14, or slightly over two rupees per pound. Tapping operations were carried on during the year in the Charduar plantation, the total yield amounting to 6,462 lbs., or an average of 21'7 lbs. per acre and 1'4 lbs. per tree. The rubber trees in the Kulsi plantation were not tapped.

8. Excluding the rubber from the Kulsi and Charduar plantations, the outturn of home and foreign rubber amounted to 1,307 maunds, against 837 in the preceding year. The outturn of home rubber fell off by 226 maunds, chiefly owing to the exhausted condition of the Darrang rubber forests and the closure of the rubber *mahal* in the Lakhimpur Division. On the other hand, the imports of foreign rubber into the Darrang and Lakhimpur Divisions were nearly treble those of the previous year. This is said to be due to the rise of the market price in Calcutta, which induced the traders to offer high rates for the rubber purchased by them from the hillmen. The Chief Commissioner has decided, after much consideration, to discontinue the system of granting passes to cross the Inner Line of the Darrang district for the purpose of collecting rubber. It practically entailed the limitation of the issue of passes to the holders of the home rubber *mahal*, and thus created a monopoly in the trade, which was not in accordance with the policy laid down by the Government of India, besides leading to complications with the hill tribes. In Lakhimpur it is the practice for the hillmen to bring their rubber down to the frontier for sale, and there appears to be no reason why they should not do so elsewhere.

9. The financial results of the year's working were satisfactory, showing a surplus of Rs. 2,44,765. The receipts were Rs. 1,07,179 in excess of those for the previous year, the increase being shared by all heads of revenue. Receipts from departmental operations were swelled by an advance of Rs. 42,500, received for the supply of sleepers to the Eastern Bengal State Railway, to be delivered during the year 1903-1904, and by the realisation during the year of the price of rubber collected from the Government plantations in 1901-1902. There were increased receipts from timber and other produce removed by consumers and purchasers owing to greater demand for timber in the Cachar and Garo Hills Divisions. The new rules for unclassed forests in