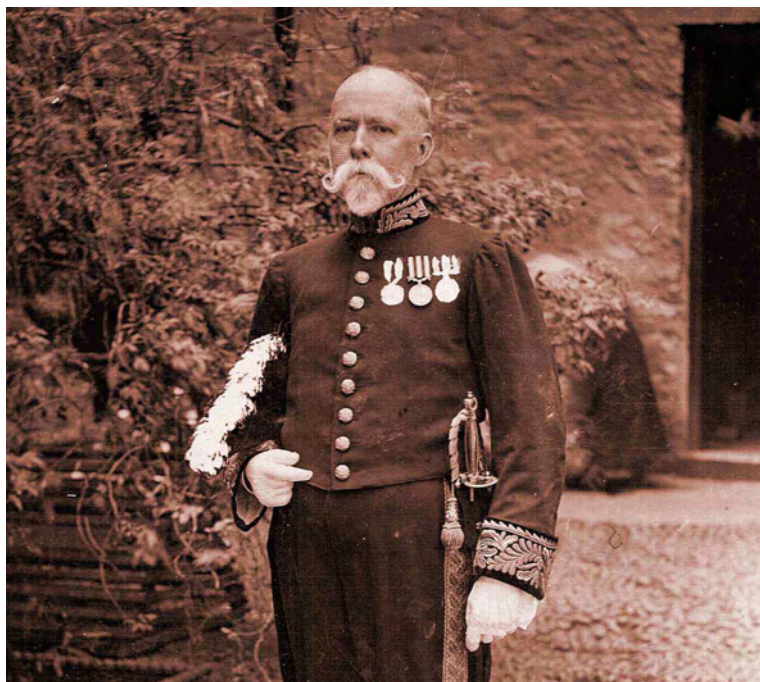


## The First Dozen Years\*

By Ian Bruce

The first dozen years of the 20th century were amongst the most difficult of St Helena's history, yet there was great hope at its start. Optimism that the landing of the new telegraph cable in the last days of 1899 marked an end to the island's long isolation and would help reverse the remorseless decline in its economy was based on the presumption that ship arrivals would increase as the new facility was used to communicate with the mainland. That never happened because the cost of telegrams was prohibitive at about four shillings a word. In addition, the cable was in practice primarily designated to intercontinental communications between government officials and the military. Nevertheless, the three-fold population increase resulting from the presence of Boer prisoners and British guards in 1900-1902 allowed traders and farmers to enjoy an unusual period of healthy business. It was not to last long.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Armitage Sterndale was governor during these better years. Born in India in 1839, he was privately educated and worked almost exclusively in various financial departments of the Indian government before retiring to South London in 1890. His interests ranged far more widely than just finance, publishing a novel, several books on natural history and travel, together with four short articles about St Helena. From his observations, it is apparent he first visited and became interested in St Helena shortly after the Indian Mutiny (about 1859). He was selected as honorary secretary of a London-based committee in 1894 with the objective of forming a fish-curing industry on the island. This formed the subject of his booklet *Sancta Helena*. He was next appointed acting governor of St Helena (December 1895 to July 1896) and governor in March 1897.<sup>2</sup>



Governor Sterndale <sup>3</sup>

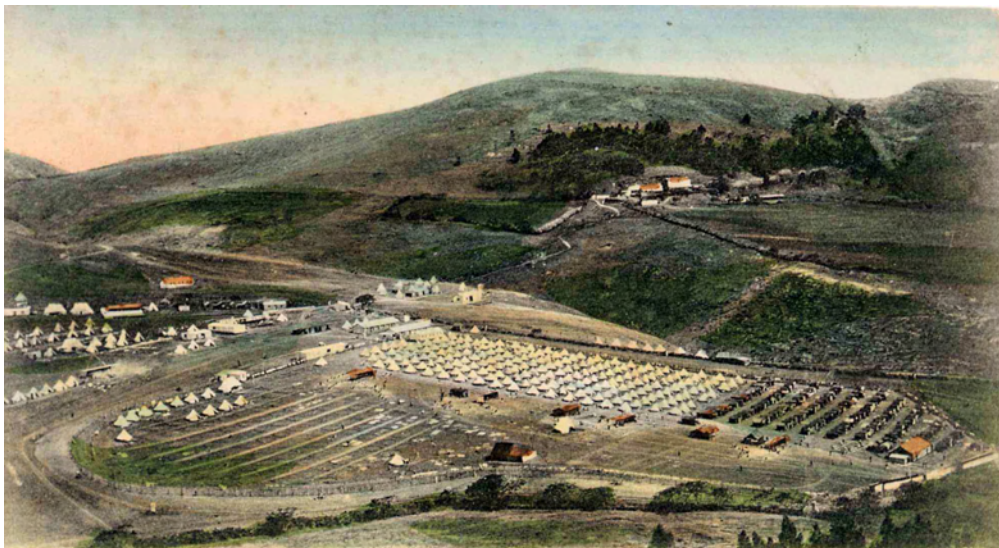
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Sterndale faced a serious problem during the Boer War period from infections brought to the island by the prisoners, especially typhoid (or enteric fever as it was then usually called). The first prisoners, captured with General Cronje at the Battle of Paardeberg on 27 February 1900, arrived some seven months after the start of the war. According to a Times report, the Boer laager and trenches were “beyond description”, the laager being “in a state of terrible filth”. This last may have hinted at typhoid, which broke out amongst the prisoners as soon as they were crowded together at Simon’s Town. The number of cases rose to 70 by 17 March, with daily deaths. It took a month before infections abated, and the prison ship *Milwaukee* eventually allowed to sail on 3 April, arriving off Jamestown on 10 April. All the prisoners apart from Cronje (who went ashore two days ahead of his men) remained in quarantine on the ship for almost another week. They were eventually landed at Jamestown’s wharf and marched to Deadwood, several stragglers needing to be conveyed in ambulances. Six cases of typhoid were immediately diagnosed and sent to the station hospital.<sup>4</sup>

The British military medical staff took typhoid very seriously. It was the greatest scourge of the war, both to the fighting troops and to South African civilians incarcerated in British concentration camps. Twice as many British troops died from infection as from enemy action, typhoid accounting for 73.7% of all diseases. During the 32-month period of the Boer War, the British army had an average strength of 208,226 from which number arose 57,684 cases of typhoid. This resulted in 8,022 deaths and 19,454 troops being invalided home. Such was the debilitating effect of typhoid that the average time lapse between the first symptoms and return to military duty averaged 66 days.<sup>5</sup>

Typhoid infections on the island were largely contained in the first years, the greatest problem being an influenza epidemic in May/June 1900, also brought in by the Boers. This contributed to a doubling in the number of civilian deaths, from 72 to 142 in the period 1899-1900. Flu affected most of the population and business activities almost came to a standstill. Sterndale graphically described the widespread scale of this outbreak in his annual report for 1900, including the anguished detail that for several days he could find nobody to harness his horses. Precautions also needed to be taken to prevent the spread of bubonic plague from South Africa in 1901. The Boers were also blamed for spreading beriberi. This was wrong because the condition is caused by a deficiency of vitamin B1.<sup>6</sup>



**Broad Bottom camp with tightly packed prisoner tents <sup>7</sup>**

The number of typhoid cases suddenly rose in May 1902, especially amongst British troops where 98 cases were reported by 9 May. The first effective vaccine was developed in 1896 but was never used at St Helena. Low mortality levels of 10% were instead achieved by giving patients soap and water enemas. The islanders attributed the outbreak to the dry weather, combined with a slackening of the wind. However, the military medical staff was more inclined to blame overcrowding and poor hygiene. They warned Sterndale that typhoid could easily spread to the civilian population, especially in Jamestown. The town was certainly vulnerable to the spread of disease. A report in 1897 had

described the Run as “an open sewer” needing daily flushing. A later Colonial Office report stated: “existing sanitary arrangements [in Jamestown households] were reported to be most primitive and filthy in the extreme. A large part of the town was without any drainage or proper system of conservancy and the refuse of years was accumulated behind each house in pits”.<sup>8</sup>

An improvement to Jamestown’s water supply and drains had been under consideration since at least 1891. With a limited budget from the Colonial Office, the island government had merely tinkered with the existing services. Sterndale certainly recognised the need for improvements, having already organised a chartered engineer (Mr A. E. Brine) to examine and report on Jamestown’s drainage in 1901. In the same year, he distributed whitewash and disinfectant to households, gratis, to cleanse house interiors. He also started a system of house-to-house refuse collection. In response to the outbreak of typhoid in May 1902, Sterndale issued Ordinance 8 to improve the supply of fresh water to the town and Ordinance 9 (subsequently re-enacted by Governor Gallwey in 1904 as Ordinance 6) to improve its drainage.<sup>9</sup>

Sterndale was not a well man. He left St Helena in April 1901 on sick leave for five months. News of the Treaty of Vereeniging, marking the end of the war, was cabled to St Helena on 1 June 1902. All Boer prisoners were shipped out between 26 June - 21 October and Sterndale was awarded a knighthood in the coronation honours list for King Edward VII. Two months later, he set off with his wife for London again. It is not known whether he still needed medical care but he would certainly have wanted to discuss St Helena’s post-war future with Whitehall. This may be why he was lodging at Westminster (Ermin’s Hotel in Caxton Street) when he suffered a fatal heart attack on 3 October.<sup>10</sup>

The Colonial Office delayed seven weeks before announcing the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lionel Gallwey as the island’s next governor. Taking up his duties on 3 February 1903 at the age of 43, Gallwey was an unusually youthful appointment. His salary of £800 was 60% more than Sterndale, perhaps reflecting his army seniority. He was educated at Cheltenham College, gazetted Ensign in the 58th Foot (later the 2nd Northamptonshire Regiment) in 1878, transferring the same year to the 30th Foot (later the 1st East Lancashire Regiment). From 1882, he was ADC and private secretary to his father, then serving as Governor of Bermuda. Promoted Captain in 1887 he was appointed Deputy Commissioner and Vice Consul in the Oil Rivers Protectorate (renamed South Nigeria). Later appointed Acting High Commissioner for the region, he was further promoted Lieutenant Colonel in 1901. His reputation has recently been tarnished by the revelation that in an 1897 military campaign to evict the King of Benin he stole a valuable 16th century carved ivory mask of Queen Idia, an early African masterpiece, from the royal palace - this was valued by Sotheby’s at about £4.5 million in 2011 when Gallwey’s descendents unsuccessfully tried to sell it.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps because of his youth, he was to prove one of St Helena’s more energetic, effective and self-confident (possibly arrogant) governors. These qualities would be much needed over the following years. He faced a very different situation from Sterndale, as trade collapsed following the departure of most of the garrison and their Boer prisoners. The scale of this can be seen from annual government revenues, falling from an average of £21,000 during the Boer period to only £11,475 over the next three years. Meanwhile, with no industry, St Helena’s exports were negligible, seeming “to have consisted mainly of the furniture of military officers leaving the station”.

Over the next years, there were several typhoid cases but no further epidemics. The main motivation for the drains and mains work therefore disappeared from the moment the ships carrying the Boers away slipped below the horizon. Nevertheless, work on Jamestown’s streets began in August 1902. Since low-cost labour would no longer be available from the Boer prisoners, the expenditure would accordingly be greater. When improvements to the drains were first discussed in 1891, the view was expressed that “the greater part of the outlay must be borne by the householders, who would directly benefit by the reformation, and who at present are the chief sufferers from the defects in our sanitary system”. This approach was faithfully followed by Gallwey’s 1904 Ordinance 6. Householders were expected to contribute £17,142 towards the overall project, equating to about £0.8 million at today’s prices. As a confidential Colonial Office report commented: “Owing to the poverty of the greater part

of the inhabitants and the absence of skilled labour, it was useless to look to private owners to carry out the necessary connexions on their own premises. The government decided to do the work and recover the cost by instalments. No option was given to owners and occupiers. Unfortunately it would seem that work on private premises has been carried out on too elaborate a scale. The Governor reports that ‘the value of the drainage and water fittings in many buildings far exceeds the value of the buildings and contents. The result is that the poorer classes in Jamestown are burdened with a crushing load of debt’ . . .”<sup>13</sup>



**Henry Gallwey in 1903**<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to credit that island officials actually thought that Jamestown householders would be able to pay for the cost of this civil scheme. Many could barely feed their families adequately let alone pay off this new government charge. This apparent blindness to the economic realities of St Helena is strikingly similar to the approach taken by officials to emancipate the island’s slaves (from 1832 onward). As discussed by Colin Fox in his forthcoming book *A Bitter Draught*, the British Treasury paid compensation directly to the owners of emancipated slaves in every colony, bar one. The single exception was St Helena, where the compensation was effectively paid by the liberated slaves, each of whom was then forced to assume a debt to the government, a debt that was impossible for most of them to pay off.

The civil project at Jamestown took over three years to finish. Severe floods caused damage in the first week of April 1904 and the work was only finally completed in December 1905. The project comprised four parts. First, street sewers were dug, with the positioning of manholes, ventilators etc. Second, pipes were laid to all domestic properties and government buildings connecting them to the

street sewers. There were many leaks and a skilled plumber was belatedly recruited from the UK. Catch-water drains were laid at the rear of properties in Market Street, between the Central and Upper Burial Grounds, to take storm water from the precipitous hillside. The rear of these properties had not previously been protected from flooding or debris from the hill caused by heavy rainstorms. Third, water supplies were improved with new collecting tanks that had more than sufficient capacity to meet the town's needs. The rate of progress in completing this work was impeded because of the need to daily make temporary connections to maintain a supply of water to the town. A six-inch mains pipe was fitted, capable of delivering 75-80 tons of water per hour to water boats supplying incoming shipping. Hydrants were also installed for the fire service. Fourth, all domestic properties were connected to the mains water, domestic piping and fittings also being installed. A detailed schedule was drawn up for "scavengers" to regularly lift manholes and clear drains and sewers. These "scavengers" were also charged with inhibiting anti-social practices - "A pernicious habit seems to prevail amongst certain householders of throwing bunches of withered flowers, scouring cloths, old knives and forks, and even stones into closet-pans and gullies which sometimes cause a block in the house sewer or in the street mains". A comment in the Annual Report also stated: "The old habit of throwing slops onto the pavements in the yards is still continued, and traps are thus allowed to fill up with solid matter". Gallwey commended the improvements, only criticising the low height of ventilation shafts, which allowed foul air to be carried to adjoining dwellings.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst all this expensive plumbing work was underway, another problem was developing. Manning levels at the garrison had fallen from its 1902 peak of 1,532 to about 500 in 1904. To the consternation of islanders, numbers dwindled down to 210 in 1905, almost entirely due to the monthly departure of time-expired men who were not replaced.<sup>15</sup> The final blow to the island economy was struck in the House of Commons on the afternoon of Thursday 8 March 1906. Richard Haldane MP, recently appointed Secretary of State for War by the newly elected Liberal government, stood at the despatch box and presented the Army Estimates for the year 1906/7. His party had been elected on a platform of economic retrenchment and, to the great satisfaction of several commentators, Haldane triumphantly announced an end to the previous remorseless growth in military expenditure. The outgoing Conservative government had assumed a £2 million rise in 1906/7. Spending would now be cut, albeit by only a tiny amount, from £29,813k in 1905/6 to £29,796k. As is still the practice of incoming ministers, he found much to criticise about the previous administration. For example:

"I found that the island of St Helena had a garrison of 100 men costing between £10,000 and £12,000 a year, who were there to defend some 5,000 tons of coal, and when we came to look into the matter the curious thing was that nobody supposed that they were in a position to defend the coal. They had two obsolete guns which were placed in a position where they had no command of the scene of any attack that was likely to be made, and a foreign force landing on the other side of the island could easily have overcome the garrison and obtained possession of the coal. There was obviously no justification for keeping that up, and it has gone".

These figures were wrong and later revised upward by Winston Churchill in his first ministerial appointment as Under Secretary of State for the Colonies: "The garrison of St Helena, when it was removed, was very nearly 200 men, and the saving, direct and indirect, amounted, according to the War Office, to upwards of £35,000 a year".<sup>16</sup>

St Helena's population and government greeted the news with horror. Successive British governments had allowed the economy of the island to run down to the point where the small garrison represented the population's last significant source of income. Regardless of its military value, it had become vital for St Helena's economic survival, in terms of both buying meat and vegetables from the island's farms and the money spent by the troops. Every male on the island, including every member of the Executive Council, were said to have signed a petition. Dated 9 April, this 12-point document was forwarded to Lord Elgin, Secretary of State for the Colonies, with a strong commendation by Gallwey. An action group, the St Helena Committee, was formed in London with the twin aims of promoting "the interests of the inhabitants of St Helena, and . . . to obtain a grant from the Imperial

government to compensate landowners, owners of stock, and others whose interests are very seriously menaced by the withdrawal of the troops.” Amongst several other points, the Committee refuted Haldane’s claim about the two obsolete and misplaced guns in the event of an attack, stating two modern guns had been installed at St Helena in 1903 and additionally “some twenty guns scientifically placed, so as to command the approaches of the island”.<sup>17</sup> The veracity of this is demonstrated by the image below of one of these new guns being hauled up Main Street in 1903.



**New coastal defence gun being hauled up Main Street in 1902**<sup>18</sup>

Haldane’s claims about St Helena’s guns were clearly wrong, but he showed little interest in debating the facts with the Committee. Neither St Helena’s critical economic dependence on the garrison nor its problems of poverty were relevant to the decisions he needed to take as Secretary of State for War. He bluntly dismissed the island’s petition, presented by two leading St Helenians (Henry J. Bovell, a member of the island Executive Council, and Homfray Solomon). *The Times* supported Haldane’s strategic policy of retrenchment, commenting that the garrison was unnecessary because St Helena would probably not be needed as a naval coaling station in future. Opinion had certainly changed since recommendations were made by an 1879 Royal Commission for the armed protection of coaling stations. By 1906, the Royal Navy not only preferred to use the Suez Canal route but plans were also well advanced for the Navy to switch from ship coal to oil over the next decade.<sup>19</sup>

Having so long disregarded St Helena’s declining economy, the Colonial Office could not so easily ignore the crisis now developing on the island. Its ministers were not however to be distracted by the campaign run by the newly formed St Helena Committee. This mistakenly focused on its second aim - to compensate the small number of large island landowners who would no longer find a market for their produce. Several MPs and Peers made speeches in Parliament about this urging that compensation be paid to this handful of islanders. The Committee’s campaign would undoubtedly have been more effective had it focused on its first aim - to highlight the poverty of the general population and the urgent need for action to be taken to stimulate the island economy. This strategic error allowed Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to argue on 10 May that there was simply no precedent for the British government to compensate individual “colonials” for losses sustained because of its policies. Winston Churchill likewise sidestepped the compensation issue by stating on the same day, “it would be premature to determine the question of a grant-in-aid from St. Helena until it is seen what effect the withdrawal of the garrison actually has upon the finances of the island”. He was guarded because the Colonial Office had belatedly already decided to send out an economist to answer that last question, whether a viable industry could be established.<sup>20</sup>

An anonymous official, identified merely by the initials "G. G." visited St Helena and published his report in October 1906. He was not the first, and certainly not the last, to exhaustively examine every possible export opportunity, ranging from fish, potatoes, fruit, cinchona, aloes, cotton, coffee and tobacco. Each was rejected as unviable. Sheep and cattle had been raised exclusively for the garrison and could not be afforded by ordinary islanders, who mainly ate fish and rice, whilst any attempt to export them would result in a loss. Farmers were therefore left without a commercially viable crop. However, amidst all this gloom, the report ended optimistically and offered a solution. Provided the mistake in 1876-1880, of locating the New Zealand flax (strictly speaking *Phormium tenax* fibre) mill in Jamestown was avoided, "the cultivation of New Zealand flax affords the only remaining chance of establishing an industry in St Helena on a scale sufficient to relieve appreciably the universal depression which must ensue from the withdrawal of the garrison".<sup>21</sup>

Most of the garrison left St Helena on the steamship *Cluny Castle* on 29 October 1906, *The Times* reporting: "The people, having drifted from a state of indignation into a sort of apathy, accepted the withdrawal as inevitable. Another 16 left on 2 January 1907, leaving just two men to maintain the remaining guns and equipment. Gallwey commented at the end of 1906 "Large numbers of men were thrown out of employment, and to these were added numbers of others discharged by farmers, who, on the withdrawal of the troops, were forced to cut down expenses to the lowest possible level." Again, "Wages fell from 33-20% [this presumably meant wages fell by 20-33%]. Begging petitions became the order of the day during the latter part of the year, and needless to say, they still continue. During my first three and a half years in the Colony begging was almost unknown. In fact the actual 'beggar' did not exist in the island." Gallwey also wrote that he drew comfort that the unusual publicity about St Helena's problems in the British media and Parliament might help win support for additional funds for the island. His apparent prescience was sly because when he wrote this Gallwey already knew a small grant of £4,070 to fund the cost of setting up a government-run flax industry had just been voted by Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

Gallwey had already consulted the director of Kew Gardens in 1904 for advice on exporting flax from St Helena and was sarcastic about the answer received - that flax "was quite unsuitable for cultivation within the tropics" and that "no useful purpose would be served by attempting to establish the industry in St Helena". The experts at Kew presumably thought he was referring to the genuine flax plant, *Linum usitatissimum*, which requires cool conditions for growth. New Zealand flax *Phormium tenax* was certainly a very common island plant by the start of the 20th century, being first described in 1851 as "growing wild and with great luxuriance in every part of St Helena". At the request of the Colonial Office, in March 1907 Sir Robert Stout, the Governor of New Zealand, arranged for Mr C. J. Fulton, the country's Chief Fibre Expert, to be sent out to St Helena to advise on the cultivation and processing of flax. There had long been sympathy in New Zealand for St Helena's economic plight, a committee having been established in 1894 to administer a Relief Fund, but this did not prevent the New Zealand Flax Millers Association lodging a bitter protest that its own government was helping to create a new competitor. Interviewed in London by a New Zealand newspaper in early 1908, Fulton said St Helena's flax was mainly used as a hedge, especially in exposed areas. He added, "the big flax hedges greatly need thinning, and so a considerable quantity will be available - quite enough to go a small way while the method of working is being practiced. Then the hedges will be thinned out not only by cutting but also by transplantation of the roots. There will be fields of the flax instead of merely hedges".<sup>23</sup>

In 1907, the St Helena government published the financial case for a new flax enterprise and a Government-run mill opened shortly after. Once established, it took some years before the industry significantly benefited island finances. The mills were always likely to struggle, particularly during the Depression, against the disadvantage of high freight costs and labour-intensive methods stuck in 1900s technology. Near collapse was faced in 1938 with the closure of eight flax mills, total exports of flax fibre, tow, rope and twine collapsing from 1,519 tons in 1937 to 497 tons because of an inability to compete against world prices. Thereafter, the island government agreed a system of minimum guaranteed prices. New Zealand suffered the same problems, virtually ceasing exports from

this time, but St Helena's flax industry struggled on for almost another 30 years as the world's only exporter of *Phormium tenax* fibre.



**First Flax Mill and drying field at Longwood, photographed in 1908** <sup>24</sup>

In the long term, the social impact of the flax industry was negative. It certainly provided jobs for hundreds of St Helenians, but they were paid very little. Worse, the wages of other islanders, in both private and public sectors, were pegged to those in the flax industry. Income levels were so inadequate that the island government was forced, in addition to subsidising the flax mills, to subsidise the cost of essential imported foods. The demand for increased wages, backed by the St Helena General Workers Union, led to industrial dispute on an unprecedented scale from 1958 onward, reports of poor nutrition and expressions of concern in Parliament, particularly by Cledwyn Hughes MP. Eventually in 1965, the island government decided to bite the bullet, simultaneously scrapping food subsidies and raising its own salaries. This decision was taken with the full and certain knowledge that it would kill off the flax industry, the flax mills being unable to increase wages without running at a loss. The story commonly told that the flax industry was destroyed by the British Post Office's unthinking decision to switch to plastic mailbags is a myth.<sup>25</sup>

Several other opportunities presented themselves during Gallwey's time but all ended in disappointment. Over 200 men applied to work in the Transvaal mines in 1906, but St Helenians were then barred for undisclosed reasons, probably by Transvaal legislation restricting the immigration of Indians and Chinese - Nehru first came to prominence campaigning against this law. The discovery in 1905 of sizeable manganese deposits on Crown land led to disappointment, for the metal content was too low for it to be profitably worked. Likewise, deposits thought to be mica were found to be calcium sulphate. Gallwey's condescending attitude to the islanders was illustrated by a talk he gave during a visit to London in June 1910: "The people were independent and very lovable in their way; but they could not help themselves. Heredity was responsible for that, but he had great hope of the rising generation, and of the industries which they had established, with the help of the Colonial Office . . . The people had begun to realize that they must help themselves". He then hurried back to the island to be in time to greet the Duke of Connaught (Prince Arthur, Queen Victoria's seventh child) and receive a knighthood on board *HMS Balmoral Castle* on 25 October.<sup>26</sup>





**Duke of Connaught shortly after knighting Governor Gallwey, Jamestown Wharf, 1910** <sup>27</sup>

He still faced a remaining problem. Many Jamestown householders were either very slow paying their debts for the drains and mains water infrastructure improvements, or financially unable to pay anything. In January 1911, a little before ending his term of office, he wrote to the Colonial Office suggesting a solution. In total, 83 owners of 135 Jamestown properties still owed the St Helena government £3,379. No mention was made of householders who had left the island without paying off their debt and it seems no restrictions were placed in the way of their departure. This is reminiscent of the way in which officials seventy years earlier had allowed liberated slaves to leave even though the debt most owed for their freedom had not been paid.

In his submission, Gallwey grouped households into four schedules. First, 25 owners of 48 properties could afford to make payment and should be made to do so. Second, four owners of 20 properties had already paid a substantial sum but were financially in a state of collapse. Third, six owners of nine properties might be able to pay in the long term. Fourth, 48 owners of 58 properties were impoverished or living on charity and quite unable to pay their debts. He recommended the debts of everyone listed in schedules three and four be written off.<sup>28</sup>

Gallwey commented, “a large proportion of the houses in Jamestown, although, owing to hard times, in a sad state of disrepair, are equipped with an excellent and costly drainage and water system . . . I would add that in numerous cases the drainage and water services are the only parts of the house which are of value. There is no doubt that the cost of the systems generally was out of all proportion to the value of the buildings . . . so much poverty still exists in Jamestown that the peace of mind of the people is not a little upset owing to their liability to the government. . . Many householders have during the last few years petitioned the Colonial government to take over their properties in full payment of their debt to that government. Unfortunately I have been unable to consent to the government being burdened with unsalable properties. Gallwey considered the forthcoming coronation of King George V as an exceptional opportunity to grant clemency to poorer householders and made the calculating suggestion that writing off the debts “would create a most lasting and favourable impression upon the minds of a loyal community. Such an act of grace would be taken as coming from the Throne, and there is no doubt that the Monarchical principle is a sure channel through which to appeal to the minds of His Majesty’s subjects in the outlying parts of the Empire”.

These recommendations were accepted, except the debts of householders in the third schedule were, at the discretion of the governor, only to be suspended. Thus, for many in Jamestown the coronation celebrations in June 2011 in the 12th year of the century were markedly improved with the knowledge

that their heavy debts had been written off. Meanwhile, having been appointed Governor for Gambia on 9 September 1911, Gallwey left St Helena with the dubious distinction of being the last governor to impose the death penalty. Travelling to his new appointment via London, he announced he had changed his surname to Galway by deed poll, effective from 3 November. As Governor of Gambia (1911-1914) and Australia (1914-1920), he encountered considerable opposition and hostility in both countries to his policies and personal style. He died in London on 17 June 1949 aged 89.<sup>29</sup>

History sometimes has a habit of repeating itself to some degree. The corresponding first dozen years of the 21st century under the stewardship of Governors Hollamby, Clancy, Gurr and Capes also had their depressing moments, especially the decision in 2008 to pause and re-review the airport project.<sup>30</sup> However, the present century witnessed far more good news than bad, particularly the belated restoration of full British citizenship in 2002 and the long-awaited decision in 2011, the twelfth year, to proceed with the airport. As was the case a century ago, a new industry is planned for St Helena, except this time it is to be tourism. Instead of a grant of £4,070, paltry even by the standards of 1909, to establish a flax industry, this time the grant to build the airport is colossal, totalling £246.6 million. It can be debated how realistic it will be to achieve an economically viable tourist industry at St Helena, how painful it will be for islanders to pay for essential infrastructure improvements, how safe the airport will be and what the British government's true motives are for the project. What can surely not be disputed however is the sharp contrast between Britain's small investment at St Helena a century ago and its full-blooded expenditure there today.

Note: Thanks are due to Edward Baldwin for his identification of the gun a being hauled up Main Street, previously thought to be a Boer "Big Tom" gun, photographed and misidentified by my grandfather T. R. Bruce. All internet references were accessed in December 2013. URLs have been provided for many references below in condensed tinyurl format.

1. **Laying of cable:** Shortly before the outbreak of the Boer War on 11 October 1899, the Eastern Telegraph Company contracted *CS Anglia* to lay 2,065 nautical miles of cable from Cape Town to St Helena. This was completed by 26 November 1899. *CS Seine* laid the section from St Helena to Ascension (844 nm), completing it by 15 December 1899. *CS Anglia* then completed the task of laying a cable between Ascension and St Vincent, Cape Verde Islands (1,975 nm), by 21 February 1900. From St Vincent, telegrams were conveyed to Porthcurno, England, via the Western Telegraph Company's cable to Carcavelos, Portugal [G. L. Lawford and L. R. Nicholson, *The Telcon Story 1850-1950*. (London, 1950), 82.] **First use of cable:** "The Eastern Telegraph Company," *The Times*, 28 November 1899, 7. **Assumption that cable would attract in shipping:** R. A. Sterndale, "Annual Colonial Report No 309, St Helena, 1899" (HMSO, 1900), 16. **Continued decline in shipping despite cable:** Public Record Office, CO 879/93/9, 'St Helena: Notes on the Situation Arising out of the Withdrawal of the Garrison', October 1906, 23. **Telegram fees:** Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 129. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/njnp7ml>.
2. **Sterndale's parentage and career:** URL: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); "Obituary," *The Times*, 7 October 1902, 4. Census, 1891: RG12/546/47/13. **Appointment by St Helena Committee:** *The Times*, 5 May 1894, 20. **Appointment as Governor:** *The Times*, 2 March 1897, 9. **Sterndale's books on St Helena:** R. A. Sterndale, *Sancta Helena an Island "In Extremis" by One Who Knew Her in Prosperity* (London: W. Thacker, 1894); R. A. Sterndale, "St Helena - The Gibraltar of the South Atlantic," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* I (1895); R. A. Sterndale, "St Helena in Ye Olden Tyme," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* VIII (1899): 345-352. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/qj26ltd>; R. A. Sterndale, "St Helena in the Present Time," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* X (1900): 98-107. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/ngd35rt>
3. From photo album belonging to my grandfather Thomas R. Bruce (postmaster 1898 - 1928).
4. **Enteric fever** is a collective term that refers to severe typhoid and paratyphoid - C. M. Parry and N. J. Beeching, "Treatment of Enteric Fever," *British Medical Journal* 338 (3 June 2009): 1159. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/pqvp2ep>. **Battle of Paardeberg:** Denis Judd, Keith Terrance Surrige, and Keith Surrige, *The Boer War: A History* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), 163-168. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/om9aen>. **Description of battle scene:** "Cronje's Surrender," *The Times*, 2 March 1900, 5. **Typhoid aboard prison ship:** "The Boer Prisoners," *The Times*, 19 March 1900, 7. **Departure of The Milwaukee:** "The Boer Prisoners," *The Times*, 5 April 1900, 5. **Landing at St Helena:** "The Prisoners at St Helena," *The Times*, 18 April 1900, 3; E. L. Jackson, *St Helena: The Historic Island* (London: Ward, Lock, 1903), 106-7.
5. **Typhoid statistics:** Vincent J. Cirillo, *Bullets and Bacilli: The Spanish-American War and Military Medicine*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press; London, 2004), 136-149. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/qz4mhvu>
6. **Influenza Outbreak:** R. A. Sterndale, "Annual Colonial Report No 323, St Helena, 1900" (HMSO, 1901), 14; **Beriberi Outbreak:** H. L. Gallwey, 'Annual Colonial Report No 420, St Helena, 1903' (HMSO, 1904), 15. **Bubonic plague precautions:** R. A. Sterndale, 'Annual Colonial Report No 371, St Helena, 1901' (HMSO, 1902), 12.
7. Grateful thanks are due to Clifford Masters for providing the image of this coloured postcard, which was published about 1904 by Sallo Epstein & Co, Durban.

8. **Typhoid amongst British Troops:** Hansard House of Commons Debates, 15 May 1902. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/ps32jof>. **Typhoid vaccine:** Stefan H. E. Kaufmann, *Novel Vaccination Strategies* (John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 231. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/qdhtxzd>. **Treatment of typhoid at St Helena:** W.J.J. Arnold, "Turpentine Enemata in the Treatment of Enteric Fever," *British Medical Journal*, (July 1910): 195. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/oajcd6w>. **Causes of typhoid:** E. L. Jackson, *St Helena*, 113. **Insanitary state of the Run:** R. A. Sterndale, 'Annual Colonial Report No 240, St Helena, 1897' (HMSO, 1898), 7. **Insanitary condition of households:** Public Record Office, CO 879/93/9.

9. **Inspection by Mr Brine:** *St Helena Almanack & Annual Register 1913*, 1915, 69; **Cleansing of Jamestown households:** Sterndale, 'Annual Colonial Report No 371, St Helena, 1901', 12.

10. **Sterndale sick leave:** E. L. Jackson, *St Helena*, 110. **Departure of Boer prisoners:** Ibid., 125. **Sterndale's knighthood:** "The Coronation Honours," *The Times*, 26 June 1902, 5. **Sterndale's passage to England:** BT 26/204/63, Board of Trade Inwards Passenger Lists, 9 August 1902, The National Archives, Kew. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/p46al99>. **Sterndale's death:** Principal Probate Registry. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/oqwrk6d>; "Obituary," *The Times*, 7 October 1902, 4.

11. **Gallwey's appointment as Governor:** *The Times*, 21 November 1902, 7. **Gallwey's arrival:** *St Helena Almanack & Annual Register 1913*, 48. **Gallwey's salary:** Public Record Office, CO 879/93/9, 6. **Parentage and career:** [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); "Obituary," *The Times*, 20 June 1949, 7. **Theft of Benin artefact:** "Queen Idia Mask's Sale Sets Sotheby's against Art World," *Nigerian Tribune*, 7 January 2011. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/o379fe4>.

12. E. L. Jackson, *St Helena*, frontispiece photo.

13. **Post Boer War exports and typhoid cases:** Public Record Office, CO 879/93/9, 23; Arnold, 'Turpentine Enemata in the Treatment of Enteric Fever'; Ian Shine, *Serendipity in St Helena: A Genetical and Medical Study of an Isolated Community*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1970), 23–25. **Construction works by Boers:** Sterndale, 'Annual Colonial Report No 323, St Helena, 1900', 3–4, 16. **Funding of project:** W. Grey Wilson, "Annual Colonial Report No 240, St Helena, 1891" (HMSO, 1892), 4; CO 879/93/9, Ibid. 1902 Vs 2013. **Costs at 2013 prices:** <http://www.measuringworth.com/>

14. **April 1904 floods:** H. L. Gallwey, 'Annual Colonial Report No 448, St Helena, 1904' (HMSO, 1905), 32. **Description of drainage project:** CO 885/17/13, "St Helena, Jamestown drainage and waterworks schemes. Final report by Mr Chisholm on the progress of the works", June 1906, The National Archives, Kew. **Employment of qualified UK plumber:** H. L. Gallwey, 'Annual Colonial Report No 392, St Helena, 1902' (HMSO, 1903), 15. **Anti-social practices:** CO 885/17/13, Ibid, 6; Gallwey, 'Annual Colonial Report No 420, St Helena, 1903', 17. **Criticism of ventilation shafts:** H. L. Gallwey, 'Annual Colonial Report No 525, St Helena, 1906' (HMSO, 1907), 20.

15. **Garrison numbers:** Stephen A. Royle, "'You've Got to Grind Them Down' - the Boer Prisoner of War Camps on St Helena, 1900-1902," *Wirebird* No. 17 (Spring 1998): 25–30. Also <http://www.sthelena.uk.net/wirebird.php>. **Rundown of garrison numbers:** Hansard House of Commons Debates, 17 March 1904. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/odkh5kh>; G. C. Kitching, *A Handbook and Gazetteer of the Island of St Helena Including a Short History of the Island under the Crown 1834-1902* (G. C. Kitching, 1937, 1995 printing), Appendix 2; Gallwey, "Annual Colonial Report No 525, St Helena, 1906," 4.

16. **1906 Liberal policy on army expenditure:** Liberal Publication Dept. (Great Britain), *The government's Record, 1906-1913. Seven Years of Liberal Legislation and Liberal Administration* (London: Metchim, 1913), 303–4. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/ovr9jpd>. **Approval of 1906 army cutbacks:** *The Times*, 12 March 1906, p7; *The Spectator*, 10 March 1906, p2. **Haldane's 1906 Army Estimates speech:** Hansard House of Commons Debates, 8 March 1906. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/psafvsb>. **Revised St Helena garrison figures:** "Report of Supply," *The Times*, 7 March 1907, 6.

17. **St Helena gun placements and 1906 petition:** A. G. Wise, 'The Abandonment of St Helena', *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record XXI* (April 1906): 306–10. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/pqm8opz>.

18. Photograph taken by Thomas R. Bruce. He did not provide a date for this photo but it was certainly after the Boer War. Clifford Masters has noted that the photo shows the Alexander L Innes studio. He left the island in September 1902 This photo was therefore probably taken June-September 1902. The gun has been identified by Edward Baldwin as Elswick Mark VII wire breech loading gun with a six inch calibre. They had a maximum range with full charge and 30° elevation of 25,000 yards and for 50 years were the standard naval and coastal defence guns used by British forces. They were ordered in 1902 to help guard the Boer prisoners, but did not arrive at St Helena until after they had left. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/nm37xdz>.

19. **Petition to War Office:** "Withdrawal of the St Helena Garrison," *The Times*, 18 July 1906, 5. **St Helena not required as naval station:** *The Times*, 27 September 13 1906, 13. **Defence of coaling stations:** Henry Herbert Dodwell, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 5 (CUP Archive, 1932), 232. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/q3zdsxs>

20. **Lord Elgin's and Winston Churchill's comments:** "St Helena Garrison," *The Times*, 11 May 1906, 6.

21. **Prospects for industry at St Helena:** Record Office, CO 879/93/9. **Review of 1876-80 flax operations:** CO 879/21/7, 'The Agricultural Resources of St Helena; a Report on Present Position and Prospects by D Morris, Director of Public Gardens and Plantations, Jamaica,'" 1884, The National Archives, Kew. **Jamestown Flax Mill Location:** The town mill resulted in a transport-intensive industry. Cut flax was brought to town from the country. After processing, flax fibres were transported back into the country to be dried on the fields. The dried fibres were returned to town for compression into bales and onward shipment. External reasons were probably to blame for the ultimate failure of this early venture, not the poor location of the mill at St Helena. The operation was run from London by the international mill operator Colonial and Foreign Fibre Company and the closure of the mill at Jamestown in late 1880 coincided with the liquidation of this London company and its overseas mills on 8 December 1880 [*The Gazette*, 18 January 1881, Issue 24925, 222].

22. **Attitude of islanders to garrison withdrawal:** "Withdrawal of the St Helena Garrison," *The Times*, 1 November 1906, 5. **Grant to establish flax industry:** "Report of Supply," *The Times*, 7 March 1907, 6.

23. **Kew's advice on growing flax:** Public Record Office, CO 879/93/9. **Earliest reference to St Helena flax:** "New Zealand Flax," *St Helena Advocate*, 27 November 1851; **St Helena relief fund in New Zealand:** "New Zealand Flax," *St Helena Advocate*, 27 November 1851; **Objections to helping St Helena flax industry:** "Flax Growing in St Helena, the government's Action," *Manawatu Standard*, Vol XLI, 25 February 1907, 5. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/nd8l6bq>. **Update on St**

**Helena flax start-up:** “New Zealand Flax in St Helena, Interview with Mr Fulton,” *Marlborough Express*, Vol XLII, 31 March 1908, 7. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/pfqk8c2>.

24. **Photograph Longwood flax mill:** CO 1069-758-11, The National Archives. Photograph sent by Governor Gallwey to Mr Antrobus, 1908 (Colonial Office).

25. **Financial case for flax industry:** ‘St Helena Flax. Proposed Scheme for the Re-Establishment of the Flax Industry in the Colony’ (St Helena government, 1907). **Optimistic reports on new flax industry:** “St Helena,” *The Times*, 3 March 1909, 6; “Flax Growing in St Helena” 21 May 1909, 6. **Production methods:** Ken Denholm, *Island of St Helena: The Flax Industry 1874 - 1966* (printed draft never published), Chapter 10. **Inability to compete against world prices:** ‘Annual Colonial Report No 1909, St Helena, 1938’ (HMSO, 1939), 13. **Minimum guaranteed price system:** “Relief for St Helena,” *The Times*, 29 December 1938, 9; David L. Smallman, *Quincentenary: A Story of St Helena, 1502-2002* (Penzance: Patten Press, 2003), 64–65. **Industrial disputes and poor nutrition:** Alexander Schulenburg, ‘Transient Observations: The Textualizing of St Helena Through Five Hundred Years of Colonial Discourse’ (University of St Andrews, 1999), 271–280. Cledwyn Hughes, ‘Peoples of the Colonies, No 17: Forgotten Islanders of St Helena’, *The Times British Colonies Review*, 2 September 1959, 23–24. **Raising of wages and removal of food subsidies:** OD 16/333, “The West Report”, 1965, The National Archives, Kew. **Myth that the Post Office ended island flax industry:** The Post Office only used mailbags made from hessian fibre after the First World War. This was the result of a recommendation first made about 1913. [‘P/30/4853: Mail Bags: Proposed General Use of Hessian Bags.’ (London: The British Postal Museum & Archive, circa 1913)]. At roughly the same time as it switched from hessian to plastic mailbags in the 1960s, the Post Office certainly switched from string to rubber bands to bundle letters prior to delivery, but twine only ever represented a small part of St Helena’s total flax exports. The Post Office myth may have started from a newspaper report: Rory Coonan, ‘The Depressing Truth Behind Island’s “Toy Town” Facade’, *The Times*, 4 April 1984, 30.

26. **Island opportunities:** Gallwey, ‘Annual Colonial Report No 525, St Helena, 1906’, 26. **Nehru’s campaign in the Transvaal:** Roger D. Long, *Charisma and Commitment in South Asian History: Essays Presented to Stanley Wolpert* (Orient Blackswan, 2004), 255-259. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/oyyxzw8>. **Gallwey’s attitude to St Helenians:** “The Future of St Helena,” *The Times*, 22 June 1910, 9. **Gallwey’s knighthood:** “The Duke of Connaught at St Helena,” *The Times*, 25 October 1910, 5; “The Duke of Connaught at St Helena,” *The Times*, 26 October 1910, 6; Diary of Owen Charles Budd, RMLI, URL: <http://tinyurl.com/o8vfdl4>.

27. One of several images of The Duke of Connaught’s visit taken by Thomas R. Bruce.

28. **Writing off Jamestown householder debts:** T 1/11318: Colonial Office. “Writing-off of Certain Debts Owed to the St Helena government by Householders in Respect of New Drainage and Water Systems” 1911, The National Archives, Kew.

29. **Prosperous Bay Murders:** H. L. Gallwey, “Annual Colonial Report No 486, St Helena, 1905” (HMSO, 1906), 18; also John Grigshaw’s blog, <http://tinyurl.com/nzkmbgu>. **Change of surname from Gallwey to Galway:** “Personal,” *The Times*, 10 November 1911, 1. **Galway’s death:** Principal Probate Registry, <http://tinyurl.com/ptvysjf>.

30. **Airport pause:** Hansard House of Commons Debates, 8 December 2008, Column 50WS, Statement International Development, St Helena URL: <http://tinyurl.com/p5mzuyf>. **Restoration of full British citizenship:** The British Overseas Territories Act 2002, full details on <http://tinyurl.com/p7nxfj>. **Decision to proceed with airport:** Hansard House of Commons Debates, 3 November 2011, Column 40WS, Statement International Development, St Helena. URL: <http://tinyurl.com/olazkqt>. **Breakdown of airport costs:** Ibid. The DTI announced in 2011: “The contract will be in the amount of £201.5 million for the design and construction of the airport, with an additional amount of up to £10 million in shared risk contingency, and £35.1 million for 10 years of operation”.