

The following are a few notes by the way on a voyage to Canada, while staying there and also the return voyage home again. Written by William Sterry.

### **A Trip To Canada or Notes By The Way**

April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1873

I left the Victoria Railway Station by the 9.15 am train for Liverpool. After a long ride of 3 hours duration I arrived at Liverpool at 12.40 pm. I then put my baggage on the bus and got on myself and went to Mr Allan's office James Street Liverpool. I paid the balance of my passage money and got my ticket signed for my berth on board the steamship *Circassian* of the Allan Line Company.

*Sailing from Glasgow and Liverpool, the ships of the Allan Line probably carried more young immigrants to Canada than any other line. Between 1852, when it was founded, and 1909 when it was taken over by the Canadian Pacific, the familiar red, white and black funnels of the Allan Line ferried these young charges to Canada. The Circassian docked at the port of Quebec May 7, 1873 on its maiden voyage. It was lengthened from 375 feet to 415 feet in 1875 and refitted with compound engines. She sailed the Liverpool to Montreal service until 1896 when she was scrapped.*

*Immigrants to Canada:*<http://jubilation.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/allan.html>

Then I had my baggage conveyed to Mr Peas's Temperance Hotel where I took up my abode for the night and made acquaintance with a man who was going on the same ship. So we spent the afternoon together, walking about Liverpool, came in got our supper and went to bed about 9 o'clock at night. Early on Thursday morning 24<sup>th</sup> about 4.30 we arose and had our breakfast. After which our baggage was all loaded on a cart and conveyed to the Wellington Docks, where we found the ship lying in harbour. She was named the *Circassian*. Built at Glasgow, her length from stern to stem 395 feet; her breadth was 39 feet 6 inches. She had 5 decks and 3 masts. Her engine was 800 horse power and her burden was 4000 tons and her crew numbered 153 all told. She had on board her first cargo and was waiting to receive her first passengers of which about 1000 went on board at 8 o'clock. And at 9 o'clock she left the docks and lay out on the River Mersey until after noon and a barge came alongside her with a supply of coal which was received into our ship. The barge then left us. Then came a tender with the mails etc and at 5.30 pm the anchor was weighed and off we went down the river, crossed the Bar of Fumby and got out to sea when most of us went below to prepare our hammocks for the night. I had an occasion to go to the closet about midnight. We were then on the Irish Sea and the ship was rolling so much it tossed me from one side the gangway to the other so that I was very glad when I got safe back to my bed again. I turned into my hammock but did not go to sleep.

Friday 25<sup>th</sup>

Arose at 7 a.m. Breakfast at 8 o'clock. Everything smooth and pretty comfortable. About 10 o'clock we received orders to march on deck to show our tickets to the purser. This done 4 men were found on board without a ticket. These are called [by seamen] stowaways. These stowaways had either to

pay the passage money or work on board the ship in lieu of such money or they must go ashore with the pilot. Three chose to work their way through, one went ashore at Londonderry where we arrived at one o'clock and cast anchor in Latch Foille [*Lough Foyle*]. Lay here all afternoon with a splendid scenery before us and we are about 9 miles from land. The tender from Derry has arrived with the Irish mails and about 225 passengers. And left Derry at 6 o'clock. We have a good view of the north coast of Ireland until dark. Then a great many of us stayed on deck watching for the coast lights. The last of these lights disappeared from our sight at eleven o'clock. I went down below and turned in for the night.

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>

We are now on the Atlantic Ocean, steaming along very pleasantly. The weather is fine, the sea is calm. But there are a goodly number of the passengers very sick already. We have nothing to look at now – only the dark waters of the sea all around us.

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>

Rather a heavy sea and our ship is just beginning to dance to the tune of the wind and water and our stomachs begin to follow with her example by tumbling upside down and eventually ridding itself of all its contents. I have been very sick all day and have taken no food since my breakfast this morning. A great sickness prevails on board today for I cannot turn to the left or the right but I see someone sick and it is the same all over the ship. So to avoid this sight any longer and to rest myself I will turn into my hammock. So good night.

Monday 28<sup>th</sup>

A very fine morning. But I am still very ill and cannot eat anything nor do I care to stir about for I seem to have no life in me for anything. Very ill all day. Eat no food. But am not sick at all now. But there are a good many on board very sick indeed and cannot leave their beds. A little change in the weather is taken place to night. Good night.

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>

I feel a great deal better this morning and am also beginning to eat my food better. But the weather is very rough. It is raining very hard. The strong wind is blowing almost from the south west as we are sailing nearly north west. It is a side wind to us, therefore causing a side sea and very heavy causing our ship to roll from side to side and all boxes which are down here with us to slide from side to side of the deck to the other with great violence. The only remedy was to lash them to the table legs to keep them steady as it is now tea time I shall have leave off writing. We have now had our tea. But not much comfort with it, for I had to hold my can of tea in one hand and get my bread and butter the best way I could with the other. But anyhow we all have had a jolly good laugh over our tea. It is like getting our tea in a swing boat. The weather continues the same so to get a little peace if I can I will turn into my hammock. So good night.

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>

This morning the wind and rain have ceased but the sea is still very high. I feel very well again today and the rolling of the ship does not affect me now in the least. We have passed two sailing ships this morning, one about 9 a.m. One of my mess mates, a boy 12 years of age, lost his footing and fell down and cut his eye very bad. He was taken to the ship's doctor and he is attended to. Weather still fine but sea still high. We sometimes get on deck and have music and dancing and singing and a variety of games to pass the time. As it is very cold up here I will go below and turn in the night.

Thursday May 1<sup>st</sup>

A very fine morning and I am quite well. Passed very close to a Norwegian barque at 8 a.m. Set in very wet at 10 a.m. All passengers are obliged to get below for shelter from the rain. The ship is under canvas and steam and making about 12 knots an hour.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup>

This morning I feel quite well but not comfortable for I am getting tired of this tossing about. Is a very fine morning but there is a very heavy head sea on and our ship being 395 feet in length and ploughing through the mountains of water she is in action like a large swing boat. She seems to rise and fall at her stem and stern from about 40 to 50 feet high. It is impossible to write much today.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>

A very fine morning. Sun has broken out nicely but the wind is extremely cold. The sea is lowering fast and we are beginning to have a little bit peace after 4 days tossing up and down. After tea a quarrel arose between two men who had come from London. One had turned into his hammock. The other put his back under the hammock and lifted it up throwing the man right out on the floor. This ended in a fight. But the man who was insulted was the best. The sea is got smooth now but it is still very cold and the snow is falling fast. Turned in for the night.

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>

This morning about 4 o'clock a shout was raised which caused nearly all of us to leave our beds and go on deck to witness the passing of a very large ice burg. It was about 40 feet above water and one of the seamen told us that it is supposed to be two thirds under water and one above. Its length seemed to us about the same as our ship. Several small ones are to be seen floating about but nothing of note. The sea is as calm as can be and our ship is gliding along at a god speed over the banks of Newfoundland. 9 a.m. passed by two sailing ships. The wind and sea is getting very high again. 10.30 a.m. attended Divine Service in the saloon. About midday it began to snow very hard so that in 2 hours the snow was 8 inches deep on the ship's deck. One of sailors got drunk and insulted the boatswain and was put in irons and brought before the captain who after hearing both sides ordered him to be released from the irons and to be fined two day's pay. Weather still remains rough and very cold indeed.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup>

It have been very cold all night and is now. But the sun is bright and a little warm, but the wind is almost fit to shave anyone who dares to go up on the deck. We are surrounded with ice on every side in as it were great fields of broken fragments of all sizes and assuming all shapes and forms imaginable with a deep snow upon them. And the sea has washed them into all kinds of ornamental figures, which make them a beautiful scenery although dangerous for the engines have to be stopped at times and the captain's Mate is up in the rigging at the mast head to see where the open course is so as to give orders where to steer for the clearest way. And there are 25 ships in round about us. Two are belonging the Allan Line same as us (the *Prussian* and the *North American*) both left Liverpool, the *Prussian* on Saturday and the *North American* on Tuesday before our *Circassian* which left Liverpool on Thursday following. They have it is expected been fast in the ice for we are just arrived at a body of ice now and she is literally forcing her way through it at the enormous rate of about 1 mile per hour. The *North American* following in our tract. This lasted from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. same night. During the afternoon the Minister gave us a lecture, after which a man gave a short

address on the providence of God towards us during the whole voyage. 7 o'clock p.m. We seem to be got quite close up all the ice now. The sea has risen to a great height and we are tumbling along at a pretty good rate again. This day has been a treat to most of us with regard to scenery for we have had something afresh to take our attention as we have been 8 days with only the rolling sea to look on. I will leave off writing now and go to bed as we expect to land at day light in the morning so with this hope I say good night.

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>

6 a.m. Land in sight. The northern coast of Nova Scotia. All we can see at present is great high hills covered with fir trees and the ground all covered with snow. But it is a great distance up from 1 o'clock p.m. Land on both sides us now here and there a house and a bit of land cleared. Land begin to appear be flatter and more under cultivation as we get higher up the river. We are going along as easy as if all was stood still and going at 12 miles an hour. 3 p.m. Getting up the River St Lawrence quite fast and the scenery on each side is beautiful to look upon with the glimmer of the sun upon it in the distance. 5 p.m. The two canons are fired for a signal for the pilot who is on the lookout at a place called Feather Point. 9 p.m. Three sky rockets – red, white and blue – are sent up in the air. After the lapse of 15 minutes 3 more were sent up. In about 5 minutes this signal was acknowledged by two rockets – red and blue – at the lighthouse at Feather Point. Presently a light could be seen floating across the water toward us and as the boat came nearer we could see 4 men in it. One of these is the pilot who is to take charge of the ship the remaining part of the way. 9.30 p.m. Pilot came on board and 4 passengers went ashore with the other 3 men in the boat. The engines are started again and the little boat is soon lost to our sight in the darkness. All seems quiet so I go to bed 10 o'clock p.m.

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>

6 a.m. A fine morning. The sun is just risen and is likely to be warm today. The landscape view on each side of the river is beautiful. Vast numbers of wooden houses are seen in all directions. Here and there a small town with a church spire or two, looking nobly over the tops of the wooden shanties which are dotted round them. All looking beautifully white in the sunshine. It is now breakfast time 8 a.m.

After breakfast we received orders to prepare for landing as dinner will be served at half past eleven and to go ashore shortly after. The uproar this order created in our steerage was horrible. Straw beds were flying in all directions. Tin cans were being knocked together and kicked from pillar to post with a bit of shouting so that you could not hear your own ears for the din. That lasted for about half an hour. Up on deck again once more. Scenery continues. Beautiful. Water as placid as can be. Sun very warm and we seem to be overjoyed with hope to think that in a very short time we shall tread *terra firma* once more. 11.30 a.m. Called to dinner. A very good dinner is served to us. Plenty of beef and potatoes and also some very good sweets. On deck again Quebec is now in site and every one stands pack and package ready to go ashore. The landing stage us at last reached and we come ashore at one o'clock p.m. The bustle of landing our baggage and conveying it to the custom sheds lasted about 2 hours. The examination and loading in the railway cars occupied the time up to 11 p.m. and we started to rumble along through the darkness over the Grand Trunk Railroad.

## **Journey by Railway**

Left Point Levi for Toronto May 7<sup>th</sup> 1873 at 11.30 p.m. Arrived Richmond Junction at 9 a.m. May 8<sup>th</sup>. Stayed here 35 minutes and got breakfast at an hotel. 25 cents each. Nothing of notes on our way only vast woods; here and there a wooden house and a bit of land cleared. The jolting and shaking on this fearful bad road called the Grand Trunk Railway. It is giving some of the passengers a grand emptying of their stomachs through their teeth. About 5 miles off Montreal the River Lawrence is crossed by a tubular bridge; one and three quarter miles the line is single and the bridge is in shape like a tunnel and every bit as dark. Arrived Montreal 2.30 p.m. Got our dinner and with it had a cup of tea. A milk jug stood on the table and its contents were intended for milk. I put a little into my tea but I could not drink it for it tasted like whitewash more than milk. Next place of note is at Trenton Station. Here we have to shunt as a train in front of us had run off the road. Delayed 4 hours. Arrived Toronto at 5.30 a.m. Saturday morning May 10<sup>th</sup> 1873.

At Toronto here is an emigrant depot - a large building erected comprising one very large long room with a passage down the centre and a platform raised about a foot higher than the passage down each side where the emigrants – each family or single person – can put their baggage and, if required, they can make their bed for the night. One a large wash house, each for males and females, one large stores and cooking kitchen and also a very large dining hall; also offices and other out buildings. At this depot I understand that emigrants are provided with 3 meals a day for 2 days; also temporary sleeping accommodation. This place is provided by the government of Canada and also a free railway ticket from Quebec to any part of Canada. At this depot a breakfast was provided for us 3 hours before our arrival at half past 5 o'clock this morning. Our baggage was unloaded and we got a good wash and our breakfast by 7 o'clock. After which we waited on Mr Donelson, the agent at the above depot. Those who had a fixed place to go to, he gave a free railway ticket to wherever they wanted to go; and those who had not a fixed place or did not know where to go, he gave them a recommendation where to get work, as the employers of labour applied to him for men when they wanted any. He gave me a note to the Northern Railway Company who was in want of 6 foremen platelayers. But I was too early at the office as the engineer had not come and I had a long time to wait to see him. So I walked back to the depot. By this time several agents had come to engage men for their several companies or employers. One of these was for the Erie Railway Coy. And I for one engaged to go with him to Welland to work on the above line at a rate of one dollar and a half per day of 10 hours. From this depot the emigrants are being dispersed to all parts of Canada. But the greater part of those with us were forwarded on at midday by train in the Great Western Railway to Hamilton about 40 miles west of Toronto. A very pleasant ride in a splendid railway car with beautifully cushioned seats, well ventilated and decorated, fitted with a stove at one end and a water closet at the other. Also a drinking fountain with cup and clean water for the use of the passengers. Arrived at Hamilton at 3.30 p.m. same day. Here is another depot of the same description as the last one but not on so large a scale but the same rule is exercised over it as is over the other. Here we have to change trains and have to wait until 8 o'clock at night. Therefore a supper is provided for us about 6 p.m. All public houses and hotels are closed on Saturday nights at 7 o'clock until 7 o'clock on Monday morning. This is a beautiful place and situated on the head of the Great Lake Ontario. And it is also a very busy place; also a very large railway station. At half past 2 o'clock on Sunday morning we left Hamilton on our way for London, where we arrived after a wearisome night's journey at about 5 a.m. Sunday morning. Here breakfast and also dinner was provided for us at the cost of the government as before. This town is a large one and has some very fine buildings in some of the

principal streets of it and the streets are very wide but very muddy in wet weather and very dusty in dry weather. At 5 p.m. we left London by special train for St Thomas. Arrived here at 6.30 p.m. same night. Here we stayed until Monday morning. This was the first night I have been undressed since I left England. But I forgot to say that when at Hamilton me and two or 3 of my mates we fell out with the agent who had engaged us at Toronto on account he wanted us to bear our own expenses over Sunday at Hamilton as there was no train to Welland till Monday. So we would not go with him any further. So then we engaged with an agent for the Canada Southern Railway Company who brought us on our way to this place as above called St Thomas and the CSR runs through here. Monday morning May 12<sup>th</sup> about 7 o'clock we marched to the station to get our baggage transhipped on to the car belonging to the Canada Southern Railway. Leaving St Thomas early in the forenoon, we proceeded on the above line, putting some off at one place and some at another. And myself and 14 others are brought on to Gordon which is on the banks of the Detroit River close to the head of Lake Erie and near the city of Amertsburg [*Amherstburg*] in the county of Essex province of Ontario Upper Canada. We arrived at Gordon at 10 o'clock at night May 12<sup>th</sup> 1873.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Notes During My Stay at Gordon**

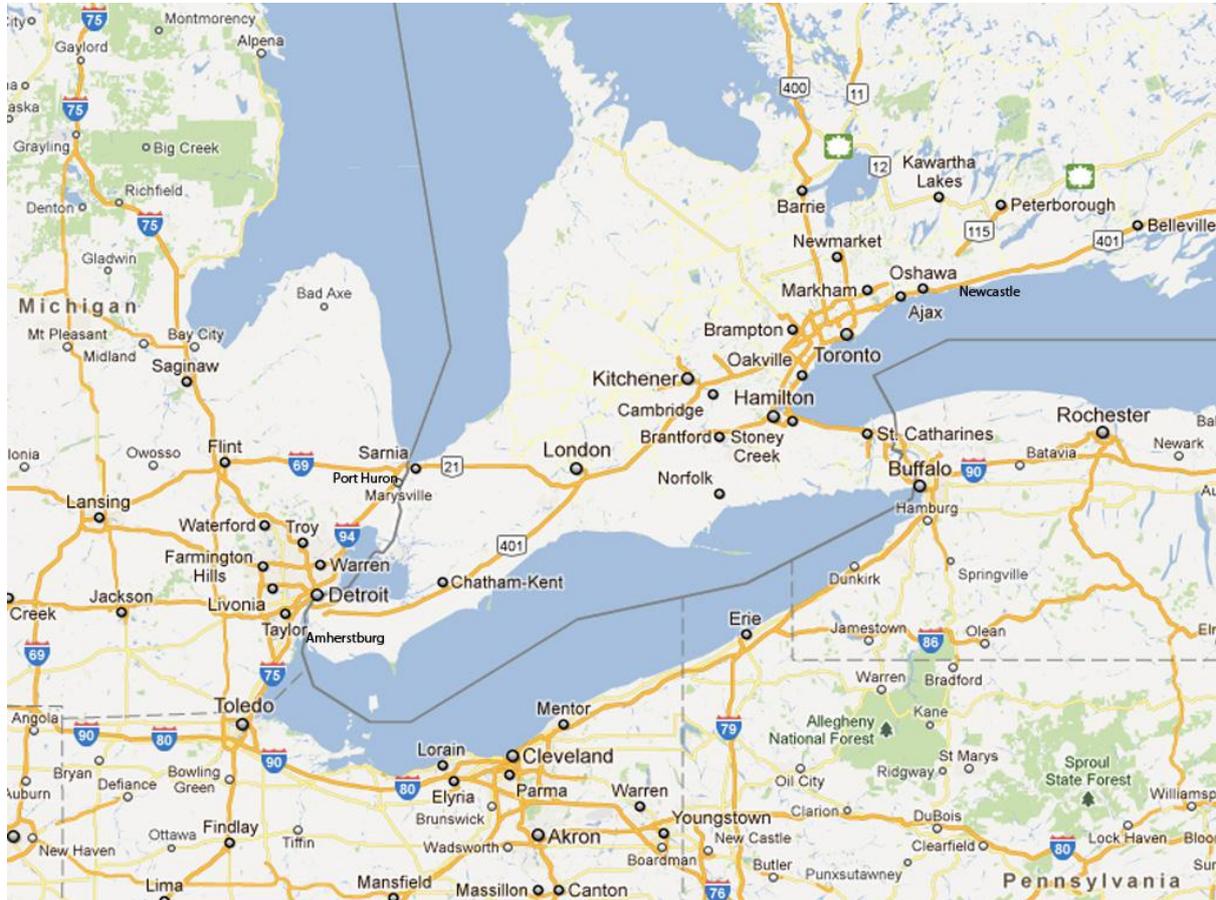
Gordon May 13<sup>th</sup> 1873. Last night when we came here a good supper was provided for us, after which we were taken to a very large railway car, called a sleeping car, where we lay down until the morning. But did not sleep but very little. Got our breakfast at half past 6 a.m. Commenced to work at 7 o'clock this morning. At dinner time 12 out of the 15 that came here together left us and went over the river into the U.S. The 3 that have stayed are myself, Adam Hope, a platelayer from Manchester and Philip McCorry, an Irishman. Me and Adam went to board at William Dent's and as we were shipmates, so we still remained bed mates. So we worked, ate, lived and slept together. Our work was to help to level a part of the river side so as to make a station yard and docks for the purpose of landing the trains on and off a boat which would convey the whole train across the river to similar docks on the other side. Our wages are one and a half dollars per day of 10 hours and, if required to work on Sundays, double time is allowed. I continued at Gordon until Saturday 19 July. During that time I worked 57 and a half days and received 86 and a quarter dollars.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Journey to Newcastle**

Monday morning July 21<sup>st</sup> 1873. I packed up my boxes and came to Detroit on board the steam boat called the *Dove*, a daily boat between Amertsburg [*Amherstburg*] and this City Detroit which is a distance of 18 miles on the Detroit River. Arrived here at 9.30 a.m. Paid half a dollar to have my box taken to the Grand Trunk Railway Depot. At the depot [which is the station] I learned that no through train would run on that route until 6.15 p.m. So I had 8 hours to walk about the City. Which I did pretty well. Detroit is an American City on the banks of the river which is at that point 2 miles wide. It is a fine City with some very large stone buildings and also brick ones too. The streets of villa residences are shaded with a row of large trees on each side and it is also a very busy place too, it being an inland seaport. At 6.15 p.m. I got my ticket for Newcastle for which I paid 8 dollars. Left Detroit about 6.30 p.m. Arrived at Port Uran [*Huron*] at 9.30 a.m. where the train was run on board a boat and carried over the river to Port Sarney [*Sarnia*]. Here we stopped to get our supper and then proceeded on our journey through the remainder of the night and arrived at Toronto about 5 o'clock

on Tuesday morning. Stayed there about half an hour for refreshments, then resumed our journey and arrived at Newcastle Station about 8 o'clock. When I went to the van to look for my baggage it was not there. In making enquiries about it, the Station Master asked me if I had my boxes examined by the Custom's Officers at Port Sarney. I said no for I did not know it was required. Then said he your boxes are detained there for inspection but said he will write to Sarney about them and you will get them in a few days.



So then I started in search of my sister, Ann Parker. After walking through the town of Newcastle I enquired of a wheelwright the way to my sister's house and was told that she was at a farm house which I could see from where I stood. I thanked him and went to the farm house where I met one whom I had not seen for 17 years and her daughter whom I had never seen before. The farmer's name is Mr Bellwood. Mrs Parker was washing there that day and her daughter Mary Jane is living as servant with Mrs Bellwood. I was asked into the house to partake of something to eat and was told that I should be very welcome to stay all day. So I stayed there until my sister had done washing then went home with her. I found she had got a little cot of her own standing on a piece of waste land at the corner of the road about 3 miles back of Newcastle. Here I found two boys, Charles Franklyn and George Edward. On the morrow I visited her neighbours round there and I was made welcome with them all. In a day or two after there was a picnic in the wood close to her house. The farmers round about came and brought with them baskets laden with tea, sugar, cakes and bread and butter. Those who had much, brought much and those who had little, brought little and those that came without anything, partook of what there was. They boiled the water for tea at my sister's house and so we all enjoyed ourselves together as one family. Here I met the other boy, Frederick

William, who is at service at Mr Wm Delongs, a farmer at a short distance from here. I then went to work at plate laying on the Grand Trunk Railway and made my home with my sister until the middle of August when I got lamed by a bar of iron falling across my foot and disabled me from work. So I made up my mind to return to England. And on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August at 9 o'clock at night I left for Montreal where we arrived at 11 o'clock next day. Here I went to Allan's Office and got my passage ticket for Liverpool for which I paid 25 dollars, then took train again to Quebec at 2.30 p.m. Arrived at Quebec at 10.30 same night and took lodging for the night ready to go on board in the morning.

### Homeward Bound

On Saturday morning August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1873 came on board the steam ship *Circassian* of the Allan Line at Quebec at 9 o'clock bound for Liverpool. At 20 minutes to 10 the anchors are weighed and we set out with very fine weather. I learn that the ship is laden with 2000 tons of butter and cheese alone and 2000 tons of other goods and 126 passengers all told. We came very pleasantly down the River St Lawrence and at 12 o'clock on Saturday she had made 295 miles.

From Sunday noon

Sunday afternoon August 24<sup>th</sup>. A very heavy storm arose. The sea rose mountains high. The ship is tossed about like a cork and the wind is howling through the rigging with an awful roar. And it seemed an impossibility to walk about the deck. This state of things continued all night and all day on Monday. Monday night it came on very thick fog. Storm as rough as ever. We are in the Gulf of St Lawrence and the engines are stopped to wait for a calm to pass through the straits of Belle Isle in safety. Tuesday morning the fog is cleared off but the storm is fiercer than ever. During the night one of the life boats has been dashed to splinters caused by a heavy sea breaking over the ship. Also about 10 feet broken from one of the fore spar trees and the officers and men in charge of the ship has had a fearful rough time of it owing to the continuance of the storm and the delay it was causing. The captain thought it would be much better and safer to alter his course and put the engines on full speed and round the southern coast of Newfoundland as it would only add to the distance 270 miles and be all that much safer as the Straits of Belle Isle are very narrow and require great care in passing through. So the course is changed and the engines are in action. Tuesday night. We are getting out on the ocean now and the storm is abating a little. During the day two of the passengers have met with an accident. One man slipped down and put his shoulder out. But the Surgeon was quickly in attendance and put it in again. Another man was walking past an hatch way on his way to his berth when the ship gave a sudden lurch, causing him to lose his balance and he fell over the hand rail of the hatchway. But luckily he caught hold of the rail as he went over, to which he clung. Consequently saved his life or at least from broken limbs. I have been very ill all this time and I am not in a way for much writing at present.

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday morning. A calm sea and a fare gale of wind in our favour and she is going ahead at the rate of 13 miles per hour. I understand our captain did not leave the bridge except to get his meals during the whole of the time the storm lasted. And greater part of the passengers in this part of the ship have been very ill all the time. I have been ill and have not eaten but very little food since Saturday night's supper until today I am getting the better of it now a bit and as there is music and singing and dancing on deck this evening, I think it will do me good to go up and enjoy myself a little with them and get a little fresh air.

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>

A fine morning and the wind still in our favour. Passed by two outward bound ships but at a great distance from us. All is going on well now. In the afternoon all the canvas is spread and the wind keeps still in our favour until we are going to bed.

Friday 29<sup>th</sup>

Wind still in favour and blowing briskly. A sailing vessel is seen in the distance. We have nothing else to look at now besides the rolling swell of the water. All round us all goes well until 7 o'clock at night when the piston of the engine got out of order which caused the engine to be stopped for the space of 5 hours. But we still had the wind in favour so that we still kept travelling on. At midnight the engines were made right and set in action again, but I was in bed when the engine started.

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup>

Weather very fine. The wind still in our favour and we are enjoying ourselves all day on deck except to go down to our meals. For we are just getting to be good sailors now.

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>

6 a.m. A sail in sight. Wind still in our favour. Weather rather stormy. I attended Divine Service in the saloon at 10.30 a.m. where I heard an excellent sermon preached by the vicar of St Pancras London. From the 27<sup>th</sup> chapter of The Acts of Apostles. Very appropriate to our condition of a few days ago. And he spoke very highly of the persevering and untiring service rendered by the officers and sailors during the late storm. When I came on deck again, I could just see the rigging of the vessel at a great distance but soon lost sight of her again. And we are alone on the bosom of the deep again.

Monday September 1<sup>st</sup>

A very fine day but the wind against us. We have nothing to do now but to eat and drink and bask in the sunshine upon the deck. One slight stoppage of the engine is all that is worth noting today.

Tuesday Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>

A very calm day and nothing but the rolling of the mighty waters and now and then a few porpoises is to be noticed. We are getting along very slowly at present. But we are all anxiously waiting the expected landscape scenery of the Irish coast tomorrow morning.

Wednesday Sep 3<sup>rd</sup>

6 a.m. A fine morning and 2 ships in sight, one north and one south and another at 3.30 p.m. The north coast of Ireland is sighted at 5.30 p.m. All the Londonderry passengers are very busy getting ready to go ashore. The first lighthouse is seen at 7.00 p.m. We are all on deck until we reach Moville at one o'clock in the morning. At half past one the tender steamer arrived and took the Irish mails and passengers ashore. We left Moville at about 2.30 a.m. for Liverpool. We that were left then went to bed.

Thursday Sep 4<sup>th</sup>

I did not rise very early this morning but the weather is fine and the sun is shining beautifully. We are now between the Irish coast and the Isle of Man. The scenery is very good what with land on both sides and lots of shipping all around us. Just at dinner time we rounded the new lighthouse tower at the south point of the Isle of Man. Crossed the Bar of Formby at 5.30 p.m. Landed at

Liverpool at 7.30 p.m. Passed the Customs Office and got to Mr Davis' Temperance Hotel by 9 o'clock at night.

#### The Ship's Log

The SS Circassian of the Allan Line. Left Quebec Bound for Liverpool, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1873 at 9.40 a.m.

Dates	Distance run daily at noon
Aug 24 <sup>th</sup>	295
Aug 25 <sup>th</sup>	150
Aug 26 <sup>th</sup>	25
Aug 27 <sup>th</sup>	112
Aug 28 <sup>th</sup>	275
Aug 29 <sup>th</sup>	292
Aug 30 <sup>th</sup>	233
Aug 31 <sup>st</sup>	300
Sep 1 <sup>st</sup>	267
Sep 2 <sup>nd</sup>	262
Sep 3 <sup>rd</sup>	274
Sep 4 <sup>th</sup>	265
Total 12 days	2750 miles

Signed by W Sterry

September 5<sup>th</sup> 1873 Liverpool

#### On My Way Home From Liverpool

Friday morning September 5<sup>th</sup> 1873. I left Liverpool by the 10 o'clock train for Sheffield where I arrived about half past one o'clock same day. I left my boxes at the M.S. & L Victoria Station and went to Heeley, a village about a mile out of Sheffield on the Chesterfield Road. I stopped with Henry Tudor, Signalman at Heeley Station until half past five in the afternoon. Then George Needham, ganger on the Heeley Length, came up to look over the station yard and oil the points. He asked me to go and have my tea with him. So I thanked him and went with him to his house. I had a good wash and a good tea. After tea we had a long talk about America and how I had gone on while there. Then we walked into Sheffield and went to the Old Tankard Music Hall. Stayed there until 10 o'clock. When we came out he told me I could sleep at his house if I liked so I accepted his offer and went home with him and made my home there until Monday morning. Then I went to Worsbro Dale to see my wife's brother George. There happened to be a plow [plough?] show there so I stayed that day and night with him and in the morning I took the train to Mexbro where I met Samuel Nadis[?] who had got a contract on to relay the station yard at Mexbro. He offered me 4/6 per day if I would stop there and work for him. I accepted his offer and as he was living in Sheffield, I got lodgings in Sheffield too and so went to and fro with him by train. I lodged at 71 Bramber St Spittle Hill Sheffield. I then got my boxes from the station and stayed there 5 weeks and my wife was living in Birmingham at the same time and wished me to come there to make my home. She let me know about a place of work, at Mr F Jones, Oliver Smith. So I left Sheffield at once and came to see Mr Jones at Birmingham. Went home to see my children on Sunday. Came back on Sunday night and agreed to go to work for Mr Jones on Monday morning in a shop in Tower Street. I got a home together and my family also. Took several houses before I got one to suit me. At last I got one. 3

Rose and Crown Yard Brierley St West where we lived happy and comfortable and I worked for Mr Jones as a Oliver Smith until August 13<sup>th</sup> 1874. When left him as I had signed an agreement under the government of Cape of Good Hope and on Friday August 14 I left home and all that was dear to me again to set out for the Cape of Good Hope as a platelayer to work on a new line for the space of one year at 8 shillings per day and free passage out.

### Going Out to the Cape

Friday August 14<sup>th</sup> 1874 left Birmingham at 12.15 noon for Southampton by the \_\_\_\_\_  
From thence to Southampton by the L & S \_\_\_\_\_ where I arrived at 6 p.m. The baggage is taken to the ship and \_\_\_\_\_ 6 in number are taken to the Rosen[?] Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ a good tea was provided for us. After tea some of us went to the locks to see the boat on which we were to sail. Her name is the *Danube* of the Union Steam Ship Company bound from Southampton to Algoa Bay and Toriege[?] is 2030. Returned to hotel and to bed at 9 p.m.

Saturday Morning Aug 15<sup>th</sup>

Me and more arose about 6 a.m. and took a walk round the beach and returned at 8 to take breakfast. After which we all received orders to go on board at 11.30. We did so and government agents came and took our tickets. 6 men platelayers myself Hopwood Perkins Smith Williams and Rose and his wife. We were assigned the 2<sup>nd</sup> cabin and are very comfortably provided for. We have all things round us for our use on board the ship and plenty of good provisions and good berth and also 12 navies went out with us but they only got steerage accommodation which is only very rough fare. We left the docks at 2.30 p.m. and got out into the channel and a strong head wind began to bellow which soon set the ship in great motion and made me very sick and several others too. So I went to bed where I was very comfortable until morning.

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>

Arrived in Plymouth [*Plymouth*] Harbour and cast anchor at 7 a.m. Lay there until 12.30 noon. After receiving the mails and a few passengers on board they weighed the anchor and was very soon out at sea and very soon sick \_\_\_\_\_ amongst the passengers. I remain very ill and cannot take any food. We are beginning to skirt the Bay of Biscay about 8 o'clock tonight. I am not well at all so I'll get off to bed.

Monday 17<sup>th</sup>

A very fine morning and the wind is in favour of us and the sails are spread. 7 a.m. I got a cup of coffee and it has done me good but I could not eat any breakfast. But I lay down on the deck in the sunshine until 12 a.m. then went down below and got some bread cheese and pickles. I had no dinner but I eat a small bit at tea time with 2 cups of tea. This seems to revive me a little so I stayed on deck until between 8 and 9 o'clock at night. We have seen several ships today crossing the Bay of Biscay.

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>

A fine morning. The wind still favours us, with a very high sea rolling as it were mountains high and giving us a pretty good tossing about until about 4 o'clock this afternoon when we left the Bay of Biscay behind. It is clam and pleasant now. We have a variety of livestock on board. We have a cow for milking purposes and sheep, pigs, fowls, pigeons, rabbits, ducks and geese for a supply of food on our voyage. One of the sheep has been killed today. A sail in sight at 7 p.m. bound for the coast of

Spain. I will now proceed to give some description of our berths. Our room is eight foot square. Two berths on one side and two at the other side from the door placed one above the other. On the other side is placed two wash stands with water, soap and towels. Also a small case for to put our combs on. And also a water bottle with clean water and 2 goblet glasses for drinking purposes. Each berth is provided with one flock mattress, 1 flock and one feather pillow, 2 sheets, one blanket and one counterpane. Also a carpet on the floor and a looking glass about 16 inches by 12 inches in size, fastened up behind the door. And the table in the cabin is spread good enough for any gentleman or lady in the country. Tea on at 5 o'clock. After tea, spent some time on deck then read two or three chapters in the Bible, returned thanks to God for all his goodness and protection through the day and retired to bed.

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>

6 a.m. arose and got a cup of coffee, went on deck. A very fine morning and wind in favour and a sail in sight over the bows of our ship. About 8 o'clock we came up alongside of her and found her to be Portuguese Man of War with about 36 guns and her name was the *Blanca*. This past we went down to breakfast. After which we came on deck again but the *Blanca* was then a long way behind us. The sea is very smooth and we are going ahead nicely at present. There is not anything more worth note to day only that it is very hot on deck and some are lying in one place and some in another about the deck. And I am almost too idle to walk about at all. So I read a little from the Bible. Sat upon the forecandle until 9 o'clock then went below to my berth, said my prayers and turned into bed but did not get to sleep for some considerable time.

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>

I arose about 6 a.m., dressed and washed, got a cup of coffee, went on deck and stayed there until breakfast time. It is a very fine day and the sea is pretty smooth and the sun is very hot. At 12 o'clock it was 94 degrees and at 2 p.m. 102 degrees in the sun. Nothing else worth note beyond the daily routine of duty on board, the officers and seamen. 9 o'clock at night I got my Bible and read the 118<sup>th</sup> psalm and part of the 119<sup>th</sup>, went into my room and thanked God for his protecting care over us through the day and asking him to take care of us through the night. Then turned into bed, went to sleep and dreamed during the night that I could see the peak of Tenerife reaching as it were to the sky. But I did not find it so.

Friday 21<sup>st</sup>

I arose just before breakfast, thanked God for the blessings of the night, then dressed and washed. I took a walk up to Danube town, first down Port Street viewing the sights on both sides as I passed along it. Then turned up Starboard Street at the corner of which stood a mariner's compass. At this I must have a look and found that the point was then 74 degrees southwest quarter. I then marched on up Starboard Street seeing what I could there until I reached the top where is a place called Forecandle where a number of my companions were gathered together, enjoying their morning chat. I joined them for a few minutes for it is a very fine morning and also very pleasant up at the Castle this morning. I then left them and went down home to get a cup of coffee. This done I return to the Castle and I stayed until breakfast was ready then went down with the rest to partake of it. After breakfast the awnings are stretched across the deck for a shade from the sun. But it is not so hot today, the sun being overcast a little. About 2 p.m. land is sighted in the distance which is supposed to be one of those deserted islands called Gonaro. We have not been very near to it and we lost it again about half past five. The wind still keeps in favour and the ship going gracefully on at about 12

miles per hour. I stayed up at the Castle till 9 p.m. when a revolving light could be seen in the distance over the starboard bows of the ship. This light is off the peak of Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands. Then I went down home and prepared to retire.

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>

A very fine morning, wind still in our favour. There is nothing afresh at present to write about, only a clear sky above. And the beautiful water below us is a clear blue as can be. I am not very well at this time owing to the fact that I cannot sleep very well at nights just yet. This is for the sailors to go through there drill. At 9 o'clock the bell rang as though the ship was on fire, sailors are seen next minute running from all parts of the ship towards the fire hoses box and in about 5 minutes the hoses are all in working order and every man in his place and ready for action. The first officer then called attention and commenced to call roll, every man answering to his name by saying 'here sir'. These words are accompanied with a salutation made by bringing the right hand up to the forehead and down again in the direction where the officer stands. This is all cleared away. The seamen commence to turn all their chests and bedding out on deck and to have a general turn of cleaning all the places below. This done, the captain and a Chief Officer goes round and on a general inspection.

The wind has changed ahead of us now. We are all getting pretty well acquainted with each other by this time and are amusing ourselves by watching the shoals of flying fish and other large ones which show themselves at times. At 9.30 p.m. I went below to repair for bed.

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>

A very fine morning, very calm and the sea is a like a sea of glass and our ship is making headway and all things are very pleasant. At 10.30 a.m. all the officers and men belonging to the ship are all dressed in full uniform and are in rank near the saloon to answer to the \_\_\_ calls which is done by the first mate the captain standing by all the time. Then all hands marched down into the saloon where all things were made ready for morning prayers, the captain himself filling the office of Minister, performed the service of morning prayer and read 2 lessons from the Bible. Lesson 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> of Samuel 12 chapter; lesson 2<sup>nd</sup> St John 10 chapter. This service ended we left the saloon again as there was no sermon to be preached. We spent the day pretty comfortable and went to bed at 10 p.m.

Monday 24<sup>th</sup>

A fine morning with a little breeze in our favour and all going on well at present. 5 p.m. a sail in sight ahead of us, lying away to the east of our course and in full sail. Her course from east to west across, about 6 o'clock we came up with her and our captain ordered to our ship to be steered close across her stern so causing us to run a good round after her. She was a \_\_\_ Dutch Trader. Her name was the *Condore*. At 7 o'clock we have lost all sight of her again. We are now in the tropical climate. The sun is very hot during the day and the weather is very sultry during the night. Flying fish are in abundance also porpoises are very numerous here in these climates. Several of these flying fish have alighted on the deck of our ship. The longest I have seen as yet is about 12 inches in length, it's wings about 6 inches each in length and at the extreme end of the wing from 3 to 4 inches. They resemble a lot of sea cows flying about as there back is black and belly is white. But they always fly in a straight direction and sometimes a long way at once. Also a drove of Grampuses are to be seen now and again rolling very lazily about in the sunshine. Some of them appear to us to be about from 8 to 10 feet in length and something like the size of a horse's body with a very large fin on the centre of the back and it is great fun for us all to watch them gambolling about in the smooth water as it still

continues to be so. Another sailing ship has passed us today on the east of us and to appearance she was homeward bound. We have lots of amusements amongst us to keep us alive which seem to shorten the hours which at best is are plenty enough now owing to us being idle so long. Some of us often wish we had something to do.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>

A very heavy swell came on the sea last night and have remained all day and it has caused many of us to be very ill again and it is very hot too for we are just about on the equator now and the sun rises at 6 a.m. Is straight over our head at noon. Sets at 6 p.m. and it is dark by half past 6. I cannot eat but very little food and the heat is excessive both day and night. Is a beautiful moon light night and I stayed on deck until 12 o'clock at night then I went to bed but did not get but very little sleep.

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup>

There has been very heavy rain during the latter part of the night. But it is a very fine morning with a very strong westerly wind. We are pitching and tossing pretty well still but we do not feel it so much today.

Friday 28<sup>th</sup>

A very fine morning; very strong head wind and a heavy sea. Still \_\_\_\_\_ and the ship is tossing more than ever and shipping a good deal of water at times all day which makes not so pleasant to be on deck and to stop below is unbearable on account of the heat of the place. I have lay about the decks, first in one place, then in another till my bones are sore and I am getting tired of doing nothing nor having afresh to write about, only the one thing, day after day. Sky above and water below us. So good night.

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>

A fine morning. But a very strong head wind also a great swell on and the ship is beginning to toss a little. The seamen are put through their ordinary drill and every place is made as clean as a new pin ready for Sunday. The weather us made pleasant by the wind cooling the hot rays of the sun. It seems rather strange to us to have the sun north of us instead of south and instead of about 15 hours day light only 12. The day has passed away and the night is very dark and the sparks of the phosphorus can be seen in the water as it rushes in its mad circuit about the ship's side. This on a dark night is a splendid sight as the fire like sparks assumes such a many different forms.

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>

A fine morning with a very strong wind and heavy sea right ahead of us and we are just beginning to find ourselves out at sea a little now. At 10.30 a.m. all the crew muster in full uniform on deck to attend the roll call and those of them who were not on deck had to attend the morning prayers in the saloon. This over all hands returned to their respective places and some of the sailors were undressed for bed again. When the boatswain came up and blew his whistle and shouted all hands muster aft up they comes some ready dressed others dressing as they are anxious to know what was going on. Some of us followed suit. Here we find them all crowded round the captain and ship's officers. The captain here takes to task for talking and making a noise during prayers and consequently told them they would have their grog stopped next Saturday night and if they did it again, he should be in duty bound to fine each man so disobeying the rules of the ship. About 8 of us met in the cabin at half past 2 in the afternoon and held a Bible class for about 1 and a half hours and

at night we met again for singing. The sea is not very high and a little on the \_\_\_ and we are having a great rolling.

Monday 31<sup>st</sup>

It is a very fine morning but wind and tide still against us. We have had a pretty good rolling about all night, sometimes head up then heels up and some nearly rolling out of their beds. The ship seems to roll more now as we are supposed to be sailing across an undercurrent and this causes a very heavy swell. Therefore great commotion of the ship. Still there is not anything unpleasant about it at present.

Tuesday September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1874

A continuation of this rolling about still prevails. Also head winds and sea. The weather is very hot during the day but the nights are very cold indeed. They are making preparations for landing so I have no more to say until we arrive there.

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup>

A very fine morning but very cold. Ship still rolling about as much as ever. 10 a.m. The \_\_\_ are being got ready to be lowered and everyone is anxiously watching for the first glimpse of the top of the rocks of the Isle of St Helena which was sighted at 10.55 a.m. and the decks have been crowded all the time. We could hardly spare time to get any dinner for watching the approaching island, which after 18 days run from Southampton we arrived at and let go the anchor at 5.10 p.m. They began to take out the cargo until dark when all work was postponed till daylight in the morning. After tea some of the passengers went ashore with one seaman whose home is here. And all being still and quiet we expect a good night's sleep tonight.

St Helena Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>

Everything has been pretty quiet at night till 5 o'clock this morning. Then all hands that is all the seaman are aroused to prepare for work. When the stern winch began to work it disturbed all us and all of us turned out and prepared for breakfast at 8.15 a.m. We hired boats and went ashore in companies of about 12. By this means we were rowed from and to the ship again for sixpence each way. As soon as we landed we were at once surrounded by men with horses and boys as guides. Our new found friends seem very anxious that we should take a horse. Also the boys were all readiness to show us all the best scenery there was to be seen or to guide us to any place we may have fixed upon. After this walking and talking for about one quarter of a mile along the beach we came to a large gateway which is the entrance into the town. Its name is James Town and is lying in a very deep valley. Its breadth is about 300 yards and extends up the valley about a mile and half. As soon as we get into town there is some very fine buildings composed of gentlemen's houses, a customs house and a large hotel or two, the governor's castle and an established church and some very fine gardens in which was a variety of trees plants and flowers. Amongst these stood the palm and \_\_\_ nut trees. To the right as you enter the city there we find a flight of steps leading right up to the \_\_\_ steep \_\_\_ of the \_\_\_. This is \_\_\_ Jacobs Ladder and this ladder is composed of an iron hand rail on each side \_\_\_ wide enough for you to take hold with both your hands at the same time. The steps are of wood and their lumber 650. At the top of this ladder there is a large barracks for the soldiers and the ladder forms a \_\_\_ way to and from the town. There is another way up by means of a winding path. By this path it is nearly 2 miles from bottom to top a little higher up the street we came to the market hall. And it so happened today is market day. So we have the pleasure of seeing

the people from the interior of the island come to market with their donkeys carrying all kinds of fruit and vegetables having the burdens slung over their backs, one bundle hanging on each side and trotting along in 3s and 4s and the \_\_\_ \_\_\_ following behind leaving the greater part of our fellow passengers behind. I proceeded on along with 3 other men of our party up the valley. Arriving at the top of the town the \_\_\_ takes a turn to the left for a little way then to the right and so on winding about in this manner for one and three quarter hours we reached not the top of the hill but as near as was to be reached by a main road. Then we turned to the left again down a pathway into the valley again. In one corner of this valley is the place where Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have lived, died and was buried in a tomb which is still to be seen by those who think well to visit in that valley. A small piece of land is enclosed by a range of wooden palisading. Inside this are some very fine shrubs growing in a ring round the outside of a square iron fence which enclosed the said tomb. Of the said exiled old warrior inside the iron rail was a beautiful border of geraniums in full bloom and in the centre a large stone slab about 8 feet by 5 ft. This slab covered the vault where once lay the remains of Napoleon Bonaparte. In the enclosure is a very nice spring of water. At this spring he is said to have got his water to drink. A jug and a glass is now placed on the stone for all visitors who wish to drink of the same spring of water. There is a man lives in a small house close by to keep it in order and to keep a book for visitors to sign their names and subscriptions in. We having seen all there was to see and drank of the spring of water we gave the sum of one shilling for the 4 of us. We signed our names in the book and took our departure. Returning we soon overtook a man with a horse and cart, gave the man 6 pence each and got up into the cart rode into James Town again. On our way back down the hills the scenery on the hillsides and in the valleys beneath is beautifully grand. We came back to the beach at 12 o'clock and our boat was waiting to take us on board our steamer again. 1 o'clock all on board again and dinner is now ready and I think most of us are ready for it. At 1.30 p.m. a canon was fired for a signal to get ready to start. The anchor weighed and engine started at 1.50 pm. Time at St Helena 21 hours. Wending our way round the island, the rocks present an awful grand scenery with crevices and crags and straight up sharp peaks all looking very barren towards the sea.

Noes gathered from the St Helena almanac. First discovered by a Portuguese fleet returning from India May 21<sup>st</sup> 1502. The arrival of Bonaparte October 15<sup>th</sup> 1815. The island transferred to Britain April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1834. Bonaparte died May 5<sup>th</sup> 1821. The first visit of a prince of the blood royal of England was made by Prince Alfred to the island in September in the year 1860.

The island of St Helena is 10 and a half miles long and 6 and a half miles wide. Its whole area is 47 miles and is very mountainous. The highest peak is called Cuckold Point which is 2677 feet above the sea.

A great flood caused by the bursting of a water spout causing great damage to property and loss of 7 lives January 20<sup>th</sup> 1873.

The census for 1871 on the night of April 7<sup>th</sup> 1871

Inhabitants 2681 males, 3157 females

Garrison 217 males, 85 females

On board ships in the harbour 101 males, 0 females

Total 6241

The whole island is but one parish. The seasons commence as follows:

Spring September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1874

Summer December 21<sup>st</sup> 1874

Autumn March 20<sup>th</sup> 1874

Winter June 21<sup>st</sup> 1874

The sun will be vertical at St Helena on Feb 5<sup>th</sup> and Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 1874. The prevailing winds are south east and the people are of a mixture of colours and are for the most part very poor. Total of deaths for 10 years 1038.

Friday 4<sup>th</sup>

The weather is fine but a very strong head wind still prevails.

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>

A continuation of the same but got very rough in the afternoon and continued all night.

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>

Very rough still and very cloudy, cold and miserable all day. The order very routine of Sunday duty as before is all gone through. At night the wind and the sea got very high and the ship is heaving and tossing about like a cork and every now and again dipping into the waves and the water flowing over her decks in floods so that we cannot get any comfort anywhere.

Monday 7<sup>th</sup>

A continuation of the same sort of weather as yesterday but rougher at night. It has been very bad all night, tossing up and down till it is almost impossible to get any sleep.

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>

A little brighter this morning but a tremendous high seas and are breaking over the ship worse than ever. About eleven o'clock the *Syria*, another steamer belonging to this company and that she left Cape Town on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> and is homeward bound. But she was a great distance from us and with the wind at her stern she was soon out of sight again and left us to weather the storm alone. A heavy gale continued all night.

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup>

A very dull and cold sea and wind rough and headstrong as ever. Our ship dipping her nose into water and splashing it all over the deck and makes it very uncomfortable.

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>

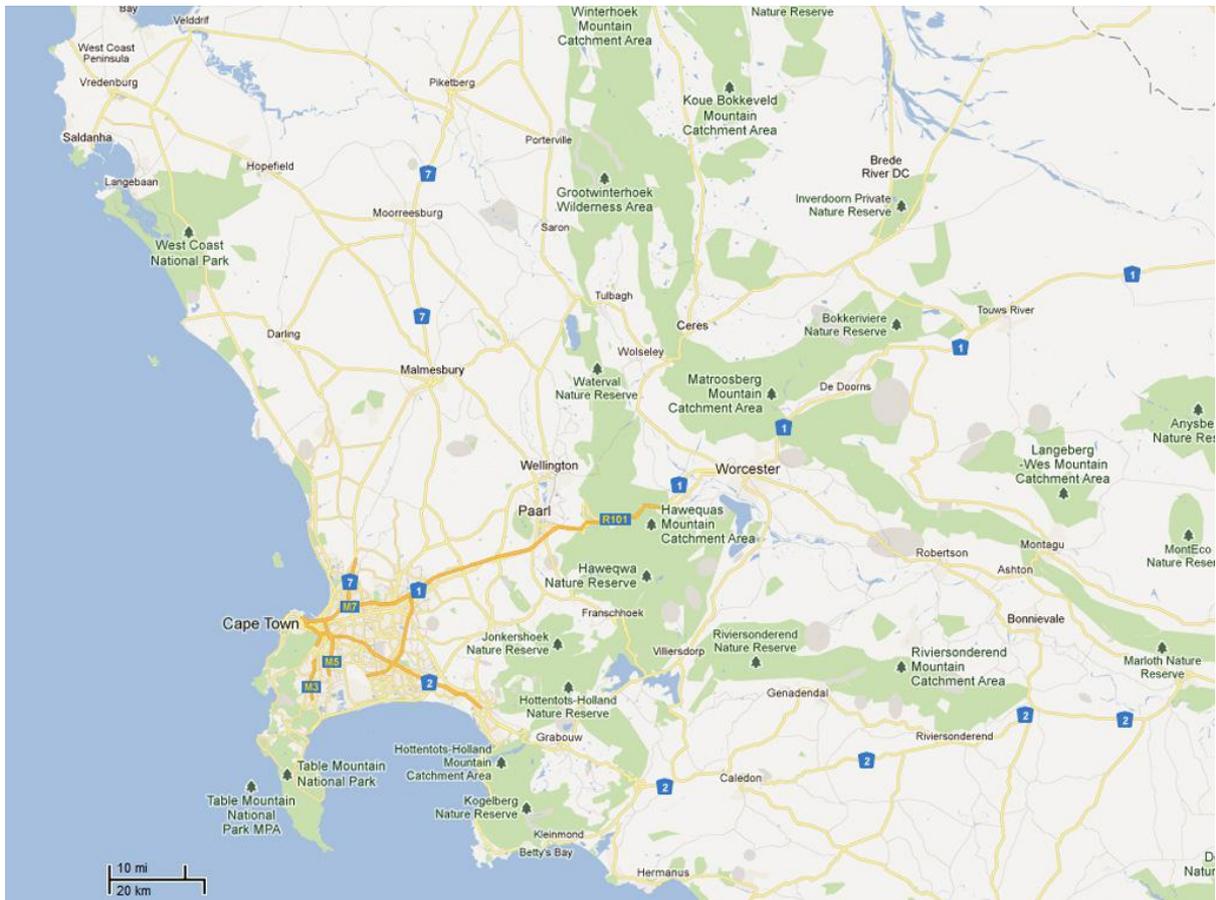
A bright sun shiny morning. Weather is a little better. After noon the wind and the sea is calming down a little and at night the wind got into the S E by E, a little on broadside of us and we were getting along a little faster.

Friday 11<sup>th</sup>

A very fine morning and weather quite calm. And it's a treat to us to have dry decks to walk about on once more. About midday a thick fog came over for the space of 2 hours. After it got clear, all the sailors are engaged in stowing all the sails and ropes and in making everything neat and tidy to go into port at Cape Town in the morning early.

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>

Arrived in Cape Town harbour all safe and well at 7 a.m. The agent came on board to meet us and told us to appear at the railway engineers office at 10 o'clock. And at 10 o'clock we complied with his request and met the engineer and got our orders and also those who wanted money in advance had it. Myself and John Perkins had orders to be at Cape Railway Station at 7 a.m. Monday morning to take the train to Wellington. We then took a stroll around the town and returned to the good ship *Danube* at one o'clock to partake of our dinner. After which the agent brought a cart for our baggage to the station and then we have to live on the ship until Monday morning. On our return to the ship we found that the *African*, another ship of the U. S. S. Co had arrived from Algoa Bay and leaves Table Bay on the 15 Sep for the port of Southampton with mails and passengers. Cape Town is a very pretty scenery and being under the foot of the mountain called Table Mountain and about one and a half miles from the harbour. The people are of a mixed nature – English, Dutch, Cappers, Malays and Hottentots. There are two railways out of Cape Town, one to Winburg, the other to Wellington about 58 miles. And from Wellington to Worcester is the new one now under construction. This is the one I am employed upon. It a single line of rails constructed with a light flat bottomed rail and fixed at the joints, laid on the sleepers and spiked down to a gauge of 3ft 6in.



### Tent Life in Africa

Monday morning September 14<sup>th</sup> 1874. I left the steam ship *Danube*, went to the Cape Town railway station where the government agent provided a ticket each for me and my companion John Perkins. The train left at 7.20 a.m. and arrived at Wellington about half past 10 o'clock same day. We went and showed ourselves to the inspector. He examined our agreement and then sent us to the cashier

to get an advance of money. The cashier gave us a sovereign each and asked us no questions. We then went to the stores to get our bedding and a tent and other articles for our use. Got these all put on a cart and got on ourselves and way we went about three and a half miles out into the bush. There we pitched our tent with the help of some of the men that was working there at the time. Got our tent pitched and our furniture all inside by 6 o'clock at night. We the got bush wood and made a fire and boiled the tea kettle and had our supper. It was by this time dark so that we could not look around us as we had a candle. We sat and talked over our new residence for a while then made our beds and tumbled into them. Everything was quiet as death except croaking of bullfrogs and a bird called the night lark. These keep on from sunset until sunrise continuously the whole night through. But we both sleep well all night but in the early morning a heavy dew came over with a slight frost and made it bitter cold. But it was soon warm enough when the sun arose and at 6 a.m. we went to commence work as platelayers under the following officials. Mr Turner Chief Inspector. Mr Hines per way Inspector. Mr T King Foreman Platelayer and I Evans Ganger. The latter set us to spike the road to gauge and at dinner time we got our rations served out to us as follows: 1 ¼ lbs mutton, 1 brown loaf supposed to be 1 ½ lbs, 2 oz rice and 1 oz of salt each. This is served out daily except Saturday when a double quantity is served for Sunday. Saturday night came. We had orders to go to Wellington to remove some points and crossings working up to 10 o'clock. Then went home to our tents. Out again on Sunday morning at 5 a.m. and got home again at 2 p.m. Jolly well tired and hungry. But then we had the pleasure to cook our dinner before we eat it. So we go on cooking, eating, sleeping, working and doing our own washing into the bargain. Things go on pretty much the same, day after day. Only in wet weather and the tent rains in then it is cold comfort as we have to ait on the sun shine to dry our clothes and beds as we have no fire only what we make out of doors. We have had one wet night and I caught a very bad which caused me to lose half a day so that I could go to town and get something to make me better. With this I think all things as gone on pretty well up to now and we have removed our tents again about 2 miles father but it is very little different to the other place. September 30<sup>th</sup>

October 1874

A great alteration has taken place this month in the plate laying department. Mr Joseph King has contracted for the laying down of the rails and for lifting, packing and ballasting the road. Consequently most of the coloured men have asked for more wages as the government only pay from 2/6 to 3/6 per day with rations. King says he will not give any more money so a great many of darkies are leaving. On the 5<sup>th</sup> it rained all the fore part of the day until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We worked in the morning and got wet. Then came home to the tents. There we found it raining through onto our bedding. We then set to work to save that as much as we could.

Then we had to make a fire \_\_\_ rain as best we could or else have a cold breakfast. So Jack tended the cooking while I rectified the tent ropes for when they get wet they get so tight that they draw the stakes or break if not slackened in time. This done we had our breakfast then sit shivering with wet and cold for when it is wet it is very cold at the same time. But plenty hot enough when the sun shines in the afternoon. Jack went to Wellington and I stayed home to get the supper ready. Our camp is close to the high road from Wellington to the New Bush diamond fields. There are daily a great number of ox teams with from 10 to 18 oxen yoked to one wagon. Sometimes we can count 10 to 12 teams all close after one another reaching about a mile along the road with loads of a variety of articles. When the rails was laid to the 7 mile peg, Jack and me went back 5 miles to do some repairs. Also to lay two sets of points and crossings for the purpose of running into a new ballast hole. The

first set was laid down facing Wellington with a lead of 50ft. The second set are laid in the opposite direction with a lead of 54ft, each road running into the same hill where the ballast was to be got at. During this time we had to walk 5 miles home at night and then cook our own supper. This sort of thing continued for a week. Then we removed our tent back nearer the place of our work. Then the laying down of the rails was stopped altogether. And all hands came back to lift the road, ballast it up and complete the line as far as possible by the end of the month. The weather has been changeable all this month a good deal of it wet and cold and sometimes very hot. But the hot days are cooled by a breeze of wind in the afternoon. It is generally pretty hot until about 3 o'clock p.m. Then it gets cooler and by 6 p.m. we can bare our coats on.

The farmers are just busy now commencing there corn harvest. But it will not be much of a task for the crops are very light indeed. But the vineyards are looking very kind and prosperous for a good crop. October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1874.

#### November

The contract is still in the hands of J King and we are still going on with the lifting and ballasting and completing the road as we go. Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> being pay day. We were all paid by J King by one o'clock. No more work is done that day for it is a custom here with the men as soon as they get paid to work and go to town and when there they are soon in the canteen, drinking liquors by the bottle. First beer, then wine, then gin or brandy until they cannot drink any more. Then they start for home. But before they can get far they either tumble down or lie down and are soon dead asleep. And when they awake, they often find their pockets inside out and all the money gone. If they do not lose it they will not work anymore until all is spent and this will generally last them about a week. The ganger over the listing gang received over 10 pounds for his month's wages. He went to Wellington in the afternoon, got drunk on French brandy and fell asleep by the road side. And when he awoke he found his pockets turned out, his money every penny gone. His belt and also his watch was gone and nothing has been heard of them since. But he stopped drinking with some of other men and never came to work again until Monday morning. All this time our gang has been but small. Thursday 4 men till dinner, after which only me and the other ganger. So I would work alone. So I lost another half day. Friday 9 men all day. Saturday 11 men all day. But it thundered very heavy all the day from about 11 o'clock a.m. On Saturday 7 Nov and the rain came down in torrents and we all got wet through and when we went home our tents were nearly all down as they rain had softened the ground so that when the wind blew the pegs gave way. So that the tent was nearly down and the floor of the tent was flooded all over with water ankle deep. We then had to pitch the tent afresh which lasted us about an hour. Then we had great pleasure in going inside and take off our wet clothes owing to the rain continuing. We could not get a fire to burn so we had the pleasure to enjoy ourselves with a bread and butter dinner with cold water to wash it down. But we managed to make a pot of soup for supper and then turned into bed with the rain pattering on the canvas about a foot above our faces and the rain continued to patter on our tent thick and fast the greater part of the night. Notwithstanding all this, we both had a good night's sleep. On Sunday morning I got up about half past 7. It was a fine morning and the sun was shining brightly. But before I could light a fire the rain began to come down in torrents so that we had the pleasure to partake of a cold breakfast. Then we cooked our dinner between the storms. The rain continued all Sunday and all night and Monday and greater part Monday night. On Tuesday morning the weather cleared up and we commenced work again. Most of the men are about all got back to their work again with their pockets lightened so much that they have not a penny to bless themselves with. And the work

seems to be got into full swing again for the remainder part of the month. Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> is a very fine day and I got some raisins, some flour and suet and made a plum pudding for dinner, this being the first plum pudding I had ever made in my life. Also the first dainty we have had in the Cape. Monday 16<sup>th</sup>. The two gangers J Everet and W Clews have subcontracted under J King for the lifting and ballasting but having taken it under price, they were obliged to give it up at the end of first week. Then King had to take to it again on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup>. Then me and Jack were sent back with the press to straighten all the crooked rails which lasted us three and a half days. The other half day being so wet we could not work. Then we went back to our former occupation; that is trimming the ballast and making into the proper form according to the plan. On Sunday night 22<sup>nd</sup> heavy thunder and lightning was heard and seen in the east and a Capper man who was stopping in the next camp ahead of us he was missed out of his tent on Sunday night and found on Monday morning lying dead and flat on his face out a little way in the bush. It is supposed that he was struck by the lightning and no help being near, he died from the effect of the shock. On the Monday night a strong south east wind arose and blew a tremendous gale. Blew down a great many tents and J King's house. It first burst open the door then carried away the west side leaving the east side and the roof to fall with a terrible crash right onto the bed. But luckily Mr and Mrs King managed to get clear of the wreck unhurt. Next day they removed into another house of the same sort and about 5 miles farther up the line. On the last day of the month began laying down plates again. The harvest round about here is about all in now and the grapes are hanging in clusters and looking very prosperous for a good wine gathering. Also almonds, peaches, plums and all kinds of fruits are in abundant crops.

November 30<sup>th</sup> 1874 W Sterry

December 1874

December is set in and it is the hottest December that ever I experienced in my life. Me and my mate are transferred over to the government again and are at Wellington at present. About a fortnight ago one of the signed navies, T West, was found dead by the river side at Parrl, a distance of 10 miles from Wellington. By order of the magistrate of the above place a hole was dug by the side of the dead man as he lay and he was rolled into it without any ceremony, after the fashion of a dog. When the rest of the Englishmen came to know of it they appealed to the engineer of the line for an exhumement of the body and to have it put into a coffin and interred according to the rites of the English church. And forthwith proceeded to make a subscription to defray the expenses. And Mr Hill, the engineer, said in the meantime he would do all in his power assist them in their efforts. But time has passed away and nothing has been done yet except that nine pounds have been collected by the men and placed in the hands of Henry Birch, one of the gangers for that purpose. So now the men think of erecting a stone in his memory. Also to mark the place of interment and the remainder of the money to be sent home to his aged parents, as he was a single man.

We are still at Wellington station and working on the first length, which extends 5 miles up the line. We are a long way from our tent so that we cannot get home to our meals. Therefore we have to take dry food with us and with that and some water we have to work all day under a sun which is so hot that you may cook a mutton chop on a stone lying in the sun. This sort of fare has been ours for about 3 weeks and is likely to continue for a while. I have written 4 letters home but have received no answer. (W Sterry, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1874)

January 1<sup>st</sup> 1875



We are still at Wellington and working on the same length. New Year's day here is a holiday with most people but the railway men those who wanted to work did so. But the railway work was all closed on Christmas day last. And it was the hottest Christmas I ever experienced as yet. It did not appear to me like Christmas time at all. On Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst, I received a newspaper from Birmingham, the B'ham Weekly Post, dated November 7<sup>th</sup> 1874. But no letters. The paper contained a lengthy description of the royal visit to Birmingham. We had some very rough winds during early part of the month which made great attacks on our tent and it rent it so that it was impossible to fasten it up at night. So on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> I only worked until breakfast time then went down to the office to see the Chief Inspector about a new tent. After a very deal of talking, he consented to give me an order on the stores for another tent. The old one was standing in the yard at Wellington at that time. I took the new one out of the stores and laid it against the engine shed. And went to once and packed up our furniture and carried it all to the engine shed. And straightaway took down the old tent, folded up and to the tentmaker, leaving it in his care. I then proceeded to the spot where my new house lay, rolled up all in a large bundle and also all our furniture. There to await the arrival of the engine. The engine arrived at 2.00 p.m. While the men got their dinner, I loaded my things into a wagon and at 3.00 p.m. proceeded with the train about 2 miles up the line. After arrival at the proposed new building land I put my things off the wagon, laid the, on one side of the line. The engine then proceeded on up the line and I sent for my mate to come to help erect the new house. He came and we had our house built and the furniture all inside and in its place by 6.00 p.m. Our time going on for the whole day all the same.

About 12 miles up the line from Wellington, a very large river has to be crossed. This is done by a substantial stone abutment at each side at a distance of 100 feet and in the centre of this a pier of masonic work, dividing the whole into two 50 feet spans. The bridge is of wrought iron, in two spans of 50 feet each. One large girder on each side of roadway in each span and 14 cross girders in each span, making in all four sides and 28 cross girders. Our gang had to go to put this bridge across on the piers and put the cross girders all into their proper places. The first side girder on the first span on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1875. Our work lasted a fortnight. Then we came back to our own length to do some lifting. Our ganger is now sent to take charge of another gang of men and I have to take charge of the lifting gang pro tem. In the case of T West, no exhumement took place nor the erection of any stone to his memory. But £9-11s-0d was collected by the men and sum with the exception of one shilling in the pound for a post office order and 1/- for a stamp was posted enroute for England on the 24<sup>th</sup> inst. And directed to the mother of the deceased, T West. Weather very hot during the month. (Wm Sterry January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1875)

February 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

This month is set in very hot but generally good breeze of wind in afternoon. I still remain on the Wellington Length as ganger pro tem. On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> inst., a signed man named John Davey from Bradford in Yorkshire and also being one of my gang, he was going something with some gun powder and leaning over it. Having his pipe alight and in his mouth at the same time and some ashes fell from the pipe and ignited the powder. The latter exploded and caught him under the chin

and literally skinned all his face, also his hands and wrists. Was very badly burnt. I persuaded him to go to the hospital at Cape Town and I heard that he is very bad indeed. The 4<sup>th</sup> was also our pay day. After the pay, some of the navies as is their custom went to the canteen and got drunk and fighting among themselves. Then beat a darkie about the head with a knobbed stick and left him for dead. Then went and took forcible possession of the railway station at Wellington and assaulted the station master, also threatening his life. Then to finish up with they went to a farmer's grape yard to get some of the fruit thereof. The farmer came and ordered them out of his grape yard and they nearly killed him by pelting him with large stones. In the meantime a telegram was sent to Cape Town for a body of police and accordingly 8 officers and one sergeant came up and arrested some of the bravados and marched them off to Parrl where they were locked up and there to await their trial. At the trial it was found that the darkie was not dead. One was fined 10/-; another was fined £2; and one committed for trial at the Sizes; and another was fined £5 and let off and the 4<sup>th</sup> was acquitted. The one for trial was bailed out. Two bondsmen £50 each and self in £50. We have been encamped for a fortnight close to a vineyard and the farmer, Mr Van de Merval to whom it belonged, has gathered all the best of the grape which are good for use either for wine or raisins and he has gave us leave to get as many as we liked. And as there are plenty, we have not yet gone short of a few grapes. They are the raisin grape and very fine ones too. Plenty of them as large as a walnut and some days we 6 in number have eaten over a bushel a day. In fact we eat them until we could scarce eat anything else. But now there has been a thunderstorm of rain on them and when hot sun came upon them again, it spoiled what was left so that we had to leave off eating them. But however we have had a jolly good feed on them while they were good. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> I received a letter from home being the first letter that has reached me since I have been in the county and the 4<sup>th</sup> which has been sent out here. But I have not seen the other 3 yet. The weather has been very sultry hot and we have had some very hot winds too this month and a thunder storm of rain at the tail end. On Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> me and two others took a stroll down the banks of the Burg River. It is from this river all the railway men and engines have been supplied by means of water carts drawn by 2 horses to each cart. And we have in the camp a cask sunk into the ground a little. And the man with the water cart comes and fills our cask daily to each camp. And the rest of the time he draws to the tank for the use of the engine. To ramble along the banks of the river is very pretty and romantic scenery. All as nature has placed it, with exceptions of places where the power of the stream has altered some of its foundations by washing the sand out to a great depth in some places and placing the sand in large hills in other places. This sand where it lies high and dry is as white as snow and is full of sparks resembling silver. And what with the whiteness of the sand and the dazzling brightness of these sparks, with the blazing sun shining upon it, these sands hills are very dazzling to the eyes. But beautiful in the extreme on each side of the river are a great mass of green bushes and reeds. Some of these reeds reach the height of 20 feet and as thick at the bottom as a man's thigh; and so close to each other that it is impossible to get along amongst them. There are one or two passages through them where the reeds have been chopped off with an axe. We went about a mile down the side of the river. The bushes and reeds continue; also the sparkling sand hills. But as some different shapes and forms and reach about a quarter of a mile in width from one side to the other. We then sat down to rest under a fine shady bush and before leaving the latter place, I took out my pen knife and carved my name, or rather the two first letters of my name, on the back of one of the large limbs of the bush. Then to get back to our tents we had to leave the river and thread our way through the thick bush across two large hills and a large valley which lie between the two hills. Crossing these, we put up some wild guinea fowl and two or three hares and plenty of partridges. But none of us

had any fire arms. Reached home about dinner time. We had some bread and cheese and cold tea for our dinner. Then lay down and went to sleep for an hour or two. Then cooked our dinner for supper. Then I took up my journal and began writing and that done, closes the scene for the little month of February. (William Sterry, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1875)

March 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

After breakfast, we removed our tents about a mile down the line, got pitched and had our dinner and turned out to work at 2 p.m. on the 6<sup>th</sup>. I went to the post office at Wellington to get an order for £3 to send home. When the lady at the office heard my name, she says there is a letter for you and there is 3/- to pay on it. So of course I paid the demands and took away the letter with me. This makes tow letters I have received out of 4 which has been sent to me and this is dated January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1875.

The man on bail at Parrl, F Williams and H Birch, two of our gangers was bail for him. At his trial he was sentenced to 15 lashes on the bare back and I am sorry to say he is one of the navies which came out on the Danube with me. On the 1th we removed our tents again to within 300 yards of the place where we pitched our tent the first time on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Just as we were leaving work at 6 p.m., two of the government carts came to our camp. One of the drivers had a sealed note addressed to me, bearing the following orders.

Wm Sterry & J Perkins, I have sent two carts to bring you both with your tent and all your things into Wellington tonight as I have a telegram from Mr Pauling, Engineer, for you both to go to Cape Town tomorrow morning by the first train to do some platelaying there. Yours truly, J H Turner Inspector, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1875.

After reading the order we all hands set to work and took down the tent, packed up the furniture, loaded all up on the carts, shook hands with our mates and away we went. Arrived at Wellington about 7.30 p.m. A tent being already pitched for us, we had to fix our furniture again for just one night. We then had our supper and turned in for the night. It was a wet night and very cold and what with wet, cold and suspense of mind, I did not sleep much all night. Turned out in the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, packed up our traps and carried them over to the railway station, got them booked for Cape Town and received our pass at the Inspector's Office, took our seat in the train and left Wellington for Cape Town at 6.30 a.m. Arrived Cape Town 9.30 a.m. Went to the office and reported ourselves to the engineer who gave us a note to take to Mr Wm Scott, Inspector, he being the man whom we were to work under. By the time I had found Mr Scott, it was dinner time and we had had no breakfast as yet. So we went to the White Horse Hotel and had our dinner. Which is the first meal I have sat down to in a house since my breakfast on the morning on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1874 and this my dinner on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1875. For our dinner and beer we paid 1/9 each. After dinner we both on the work and there we met George Kingswood, who was a ganger at the time. I asked him if he could give us any idea where we could meet with good lodgings. Well says he I keep a canteen in Sir Lowry Street and I have a room to let. So I thought as we have got our own beds and things for our own use that it would suit us best and I told Jack about it. So we agreed for the room at 12/- per month. We then took 2 men off the work and a hand cart and conveyed our things from the railway station to the Coopers Arms Inn, Sir Lowry Street, placed them in the room, then went for a stroll round the town. Came home at night and made arrangements with the land lady for our board at 13/6 per week and went our work at 6 a.m. on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>. Commenced laying

down the road in continuation of what was already begun. Both I and Jack took charge of a gang of men this morning 24<sup>th</sup> March for the purpose of laying down a new line of rails to the shipping harbour and continued to this date, March 31<sup>st</sup> 1875. (W Sterry)

April the 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

I am still on the dock line and still continue to gain the good will of my employers, the respect of those around me. We are laying two lines of rails upon one set of sleepers. The one road is the 4ft 8½in gauge and the other is 7ft ½in gauge, leaving a space of 11½in on the outside of the 4ft 8½in. This is done in some places then in others. The narrow gauge runs out on first one side then the other of the broad gauge. I sent a letter home on the 5<sup>th</sup>. But I cannot get any letters at all from home by no chance whatever and my store of suspense is quite exhausted and make me feel as though I had no one belonging to me. But I feel thankful that I enjoy good health and am much more contented here in Cape Town than I was up the county as it is much better to live in a house than it is to live in a tent. I still remain on the dock line as a ganger platelayer. The weather has been moderately hot all through this month with now and then a shower of rain and also southeast wind or tow which blew as terrific as though it meant to blow the very element up. (April 30<sup>th</sup> 1875. W Sterry)

May the 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

I still remain at Cape Town, also on the New Docks line. But I have not heard from home since February 22<sup>nd</sup> ult. I expected a letter by the mail on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I accordingly wrote to the post office requesting them to keep my letter instead of sending it to Wellington and I could call for it. But I was doomed to disappointment again, for when I called there was nothing for me. I have written home on 15<sup>th</sup> inst. Wit Sunday I went upon Lion's Rump to the signalling station where they signal all the shipping from all quarters into the harbour.

*Signal Hill aka Lion's Rump, is a landmark flat-topped hill located in Cape Town, next to Lion's Head and Table Mountain. Together with Lion's Head, Signal Hill looks like a lion sphinx.*

*Signal flags were used to communicate weather warnings as well as anchoring instructions to visiting ships in order to ensure that they prepared adequately for stormy weather while in the bay. Similarly, ships could use flags to signal for assistance if, for example, an anchor line parted during a storm.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signal\\_Hill\\_Cape\\_Town](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signal_Hill_Cape_Town)

While up there I had a good look round for a good open view of the sea is there to be seen and for a very many miles round the country.

Our railway department has decided on making their own points and crossings. They made some and we could not do nothing with them. So the engineer chose myself to go to the Smith's shop along with crossings to have them made right. So I have been Inspector for several days over the alterations and constructions of points and crossings and in a few days after I was sent to the shop again to see another crossing made which was for the Wellington yard. And in a few days after that I was sent for to the office. When I came there, I was wanted to go to the government stores to pick

out one complete set of points and crossings, with fittings, all complete. And lay them on one side for a pattern for the store keeper to send others away by. There is about 4 foremen at that stores and neither of them knows after 2 years practice, what a set of points consists of. I am being called for sometimes 2 or 3 ways at once, just to show the people what they want to complete the different orders. The Docks Line open for traffic about the middle of this month. When the first engine came up from the railway to the Docks to test the road, 5 of the head men who has the management of the work was on the engine at the time when she came up to the Docks. As soon as she was up as far as she could go, I called 3 men and ordered them to take out one rail on the curve side so that they could not bring the engine back until they had christened the road by giving us some allowance which after some consideration they decided to give some of us two glasses of brandy each. The rail was then replaced in about 2 minutes and the all right signal given to the driver to bring the engine back again as soon as he pleased. At night when we left work the Inspector called the 4 gangers together and told us that he was authorised give us 2 glasses of brandy each, himself included. So we all went together to the christening the same night. The weather has been very changeable this month. Some very strong southeast winds and heavy rains have prevailed and very cold night.  
(William Sterry May 31<sup>st</sup> 1875)

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1875

I still remain at Cape Town and also on the Docks Line and the work is progressing very favourably. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> inst. I received a letter from home bearing date May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1875, being the third letter I have had the pleasure to receive since I have been in the colony and as my wife shows a willingness to come to the Cape, I therefore sought to obtain a permanent situation so that she might come out here and that we could settle here for a time at least. After some little enquiry I was promised a situation as Inspector on a part of the Wellington & Worcester extension railway. But I would not be required to enter upon the duties of that situation until the middle of August next. Jack is still lodging at the same house with me but he is working on the main line. All things for the most part are going on pretty well and the weather has been very cold and wet.  
(June 30<sup>th</sup> 1875 Wm Sterry)

July 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

I still remain on the Docks Line as sole ganger on that department with very little instructions from anyone. On the 12<sup>th</sup> inst. I received a letter from home asking the reason why I had not answered a registered letter dated from home February 24<sup>th</sup> 1875. As I had not received it at this time, I thought it might be still at Wellington post office. So I at once wrote to that office an enquiry respecting the registered letter. The reply was that the letter had been sent to Cape Town on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month. I then went to the office at Cape Town and after a great deal of enquiry at first one department of the office and then another, I at last found it at the dead letter office. After I had signed the register receipt I brought away the prize and opened it and found it contained the portrait of my wife and two children. The portrait was so perfect that when I looked at it, although I was walking along the street in open daylight, I could not refrain from shedding tears of joy as I walked along. For it was so perfect that at first sight I fancied I was looking on the real personages of my family. But all at once I was aroused out of my dream by a cabman calling out, stand out of the way there will you. (Omitted remarks)

(July 4<sup>th</sup> 1875 I posted a letter for the English mail steamer which left Table Bay on the 5<sup>th</sup> containing an order to my wife and children to leave England on the 25<sup>th</sup> August next. With instructions how to

arrange her affairs and what to bring with her and to embark for the Cape of Good Hope by the Royal Mail Steamer leaving the Port of Southampton on August the 25<sup>th</sup> 1875.)

I am still on the Docks Line and my mate Jack is doing some alterations on the main line making it ready for the mixed gauge that is to lay down a third rail between the other 2 rails at a gauge of 3 ft 6 in., being 1 ft 2½ in narrower than the present gauge. This is on purpose to run narrow gauge right through from Cape Town to any part of the colony, wheresoever the line may be extended to. But although he is working on the main line, we are still living together in the same room. The weather for the most part has been very cold. But very dry to what it general is in this month of the winter. (July 31<sup>st</sup> 1875, Wm Sterry)

August 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

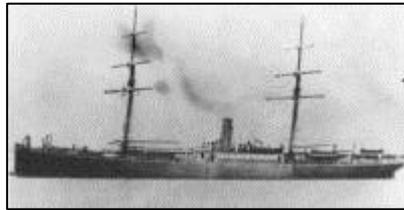
I have very nearly finished the Docks Line, at least as far as is intended to present. But I want one crossing which will have to be made at Salt River Works. I have taken the order for it to the Superintendent of the Works. He said he could not let me have it for a fortnight or more. So in the meantime I am putting the finishing stroke on some of that which is already down. I had to turn my men all over to lack for a day or two whilst I went to Salt River Works to superintend the making of the crossing. When it was made I had it sent to the docks and then took my men back again and put it in its proper place and proceeded on with the roads in connection with it.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1875 brought the work to a close and received my orders to go to Wellington. Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> I went to the Engineer's Office and received my instructions, my books, passes and also my wages. I then took a conveyance to my lodging, settled my account there and packed up my traps and away to the railway station and left for Wellington at 12.00 noon. Arrived at Wellington 3.00 p.m. I then made application to the Chief Inspector of the construction, Mr Turner, for a place to stop in. So he gave me the key of a square tent and in that I placed my furniture and settled down for the night. I had no time to gather wood so I had bread and cheese and cold water for supper. Then it rained very heavy all night so that the wood was too wet to burn in the morning. So by way of am change for breakfast I took cold water and cheese and bread. At 10:15 a.m. I had to meet the train from Cape Town by which the Engineer, gangers and 2<sup>nd</sup> men was to come. After their arrival, we had one of the extension engines and 2 or 3 wagons loaded. Our men and their goods on these and then started down the line leaving the men at their appointed places as we went along arriving at Tulbagh at 4.00 p.m. Left again at 4:40 p.m. and after a long, cold and hungry journey we arrived at Wellington at 7:30 p.m. stiff with the cold and very near blinded with dirt and smoke from the engine. I therefore had the same opportunity of a cold supper and also the kind of a breakfast the next morning for I had to leave early by a special train to go to Hermon station which is the end of my district at present. And then to set out and walk back to Wellington, a distance of 15 miles. After walking 10 miles I called a tone of the ganger's houses and his wife made me some tea. That was the first time I had anything warm from Thursday morning. They also invited me to take dinner on Sunday with them. I did so and spend the greater part of the day with them at their house. On Monday the new carriages was run to Tulbagh and back for a trial trip. So I went through with it and took the new time keeper with me to show him his beat. And on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> an excursion train left Wellington at 10:15 a.m. for the purpose of opening the line for traffic as far as Tulbagh Road station. I had the lorry put on for the purpose of conveying our tools onto the various lengths along the way and I returned by special train. This month the weather has been tolerably fine but rather cold. (Wm Sterry, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1875, Wellington)

September 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

The opening of part of the extension as far as Tulbagh Road took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1875. Wellington Station was decorated with flags and green bushes intermingled with a quantity of wild flowers. And at the spot where the new line commences there was an arch of green bush and flowers with a banner stretched across bearing the following inscription: Western Railway Progress. Also three sets of signal flags, one set on each side and the other in the centre, each set spread out in triangle showing the railway colours red, white and green. Under this arch the train had to pass as soon as it left the platform at the Wellington Station. I had some little difficulty in getting my men and tools arranged. After which things went on tolerably well the remainder of this month.

*Anglian* [Union Steamship Company] was built in 1873 by Aitken & Mansel at Glasgow with a tonnage of 2206grt, a length of 314ft, a beam of 35ft 9in and a service speed of 12 knots. She entered service in March 1873 as a mail steamer. [<http://www.red-duster.co.uk/UNION6.htm>]



On the 20<sup>th</sup> my family arrived at the Cape by U. S. S. *Anglian* and we settled down at Wellington. (Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1875, W Sterry Insp.; T E Glendenning, Timekeeper)

October 1<sup>st</sup> 1875

All is going on steady. But we find plenty to do on this new road and have to employ more men than was at first anticipated by District Engineer and there is a deal of wet weather just now and that is very much against us. But still we are improving a little and we are all beginning to know where we are and how to act. I have three lengths, each consisting of 5¼ miles, making a total of 15¾ miles. That is from Wellington to ½ a mile beyond Hermon Station. (October 31<sup>st</sup> 1875, Inspector W Sterry, Timekeeper T E Glendenning)

November 1875-6

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov I received instructions to take over that part between Hermon and Piquetberg Road Station. Also 2 gangs of men on the 3<sup>rd</sup> when the line would be opened for traffic as far as Ceres Road Station (Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 1875. See page 70) The whole of the road is in very bad condition at present. The line between Tulbagh and Ceres Road was opened before it was ballasted or lifted and was in a very dangerous state of construction. The banks and slopes was left in a most slovenly state. The line of rails was laid down to match with the state above mentioned and the train passing over it reminds me of a ship crossing a very rough sea. This part of the line is inspected by Inspr. A Vine.

Nothing of note occurred up to May 1876 when T E Glendenning was removed to Cape Town to keep time on the construction which was going on there. And one J Aldridge came to take to take over the timekeeping between Wellington & Ceres Road Stations. He was not up to the mark at all in timekeeping and therefore was always in trouble through the mistakes he was continually making.

So after about 6 weeks service he absconded altogether and I had to keep the time for a fortnight. (My own district, Inspector Sterry)

June 16<sup>th</sup> 1876

The line was opened on this day for public traffic from Ceres Road to Worcester by a traffic of 2 trains each way daily (Sundays excepted). This last section is divided into two districts. From Piquetberg Rd to Worcester is inspected by 2 inspectors, A Vine and T Mullinux, the latter has the Worcester end. It was reported that the locomotive run into Worcester Station for the first time on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May ulto.

About the first week in July, Arthur Haganive was taken on as Timekeeper from Wellington & Ceres Road and T Atchard there to Worcester.

Durban Road to Wellington. The narrow gauge being prepared and constructed between the 4 ft 8½ in gauge from Muldersvlei to Wellington and the Loop Line from Durban Rd to Muldersvlei being ready to open for traffic on Saturday night September 2<sup>nd</sup> & Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The gauge was changed from broad to narrow and I was called upon to superintend the alteration of roads in the Wellington yard. A special train (narrow gauge) consisting of 1 engine, 8 trucks, 4 carriages & 1 break van left Wellington Station at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> 1876 for Durban Road Station. Driver McNamason, Guard John Larrance, Carring with them, the Railway Engineer for the colony. The resident Engineer and the assistant Traffic Manager for the purpose of opening that part of line between Durban Road & Wellington Stations on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sep 1876.

The narrow gauge continued Durban Rd to Cape Town by a third rail system and opened for traffic Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 1876. (Narrow Gauge System, Cape Town to Worcester, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1876, Wm Sterry, P. B.R.S.)

Wednesday August the First 1877

This morning I took over the length through the Tulbagh Rloop, a distance of 4½ miles. I have my full length and full pay now. District 30¼ miles. Wages on and after this date twelve shillings per day. Wm Sterry, permanent Way Inspector, No 3 District, W. P. R.

September 1877

Although I have taken over the Rloop length I still reside at Piquetberg Road Station. The ganger that I took over with the length of the name of Wm Hurst, an Englishman. He gave in his notice and left on the 18<sup>th</sup> of last month. When H Wylds, also Englishman, was appointed to take charge of that (No 15) length, I have plenty of troubles to look after with having to make gangers of men that has had very little experience in the work. And the length has been very much neglected and therefore is in a very bad state at present. But we are improving it daily. (Wm Sterry per Way Inspector, Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1877)

April 1878

John Perkins, platelayer, Cape Town, intended leaving for England on the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. But owing to some business he had to attend to he was delayed and did not go at that time. I went to Cape Town to see him off. But I was disappointed. He sailed in the Steam Ship *Asiatic* on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. And landed home on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 30 days passage. (W Sterry)

May 1878

On Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. great preparations are being made to make the new station ready for opening on the 6<sup>th</sup> inst. Inspector Scott and 3 or 4 of his gangers & their men; Inspector Martin from Wellington and 12 of the best of his men were present to assist in the work of connecting the lines of rails into the new terminus Station at Cape Town. These were working all Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night. Several of the Engineer's was present nearly the whole of the time. The line being of both gauges, that is 4' 8½" and 3' 6". Therefore one engine of each gauge were kept waiting there all the time to test the roads before the ordinary traffic could be allowed to pass over them. At 7:00 a.m. the narrow gauge train was admitted to the new platform to take on passengers and mails & at 7:30 the signal was given to start the train. The driver opened the whistle as is the custom at starting. But the train was scarcely in motion when the engine came to one of the new crossings which had just been laid in. When the engine left the rails with 6 wheels. Passenger train delayed 1½ hours. This caused a great deal of unpleasantness among all hands. Insp. Scott was terribly out of temper and went on in his usual way at such times and cases. The Engineer was heard to say that he would give 20 pounds out of his own pocket if it would bring back John Perkins to complete this and other similar work. (Wm Sterry, May 31<sup>st</sup> 1878)

1889 Western Railway open to Beaufort West on the 6<sup>th</sup> February

On the opening of the Western Railway to Beaufort West for public traffic there was a grand do at Beaufort West. Also two special passenger trains were despatched from Cape Town on the 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. carrying all the railway officials. H B and Lady Frere in the State carriage. The officials travelled in a long carriage about 150' long running on bogeys. The first of the class on the Western Railway.

The Western Railway Department has partly constructed and fully laid down 357 miles of rail. Besides alteration of the gauge of about 30 miles, there is now in the Western Province open lines mileage:

Main Line, Cape Town to Beaufort	338 miles	50 chains
Kraaifontein to Malmesbury	29 miles	27 chains
Durban Road to Stellenbosch & Mulder's Vlei Junction	25 miles	79 chains
Wynberg to Salt River Junction	7 miles	0 chains
Total	400 miles	76 chains

Worcester to Beaufort has been surveyed since November 1874. Also from Durban to Mulder's Vlei Junction & Malmesbury since October 1874.

The progress of these lines have been very energetic, considering the quality of the earth, rocks, mountains, tunnels and bridges. Labour has also been a difficulty as greater part of the skilled labour has had to be imported from England &c. (February 1880 by Wm Sterry per Way Inspector, Tulbagh Road to Wellington)

### Grammar in Rhyme

Three little words you often see,  
Are articles a, an and the,  
A noun's the name of anything,

As school, or garden, hoop or swing.  
Adjectives tell the kind on noun,  
As great, small, pretty, white or brown,  
Instead of nouns, the pronouns stand,  
Her head, his face, your arm, my hand.  
Verbs tell of something to be done,  
To read, count, sing, laugh, jump or run,  
How things are done the adverbs tell,  
As slowly, quickly, ill or well.  
Conjunctions join the words together,  
As men, and women, wind and weather.  
Preposition stands before a noun,  
As in, or through a door,  
Interjections show surprise,  
As oh, how pretty, Ah how wise.  
The whole are called nine parts of speech,  
Which reading, writing, speaking teach.  
(Wm Sterry)

#### **A dream at about 5:00 a.m. on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1879**

As I lay fast asleep in my bed on the morning in question, I dreamt that I saw my mother and my step father both laid out dead, each on a separate couch. This gave me great trouble of mind and I then awoke out of my sleep. After lying awake for a short time, I fell into another sleep. I dreamt I was in England and my family with me and that I had very much difficulty in obtaining employment. But after a long search I found employ in a very large manufactory. But of the nature of the manufactory I cannot recollect. But my work was very embarrassing to me as I was not accustomed to it and I had to work about 14 hours a day at a rate of 4/- a day. I then as it were went to see my employer to tell him that I was not used to the work and therefore would rather leave at once. When I came to see my master's face it turned out to be my old Inspector T. Pugh and he said to me, "As I thought. Why Bill I am surprised at you saying that you cannot do the work that you have been sent to do. You seem to me as if you have forgotten your abilities instead of improving them since you have been in South Africa." This accusation seemed to raise my temper. So I told him that I was very sorry that I ever left the Cape. For, said I, there is a great contrast in the amount of respects I receive here over as in the Cape Colony. Also great odds in the wages of 4/- per day and of 12/- per day. I thought I said to him (T. Pugh) I have a few pounds by me and before that is gone I will take my passage back to the Cape of Good Hope where I am respected by better people than you and also can demand more wages. With that I received my wages due and left at once. I thought I then went to my wife and stated the case to her. But as we could not find enough money for all to return to the Cape, we came to the conclusion that it would be best for me to go alone. I said to my wife if I do not succeed in as good a situation as before I have not the least doubt but Mr Beam will give me a situation as good as he can. I then started to procure my passage ticket for the Cape of Good Hope. When I came in sight of the office of the S Ship Company I then awoke from my dream. And a great feeling of delight crept over me to find myself already established in the much wished for country and also very

comfortable in a good warm bed. (Dreamt and written by William Sterry, Tulbagh Road, Cape Colony,  
July 27<sup>th</sup> 1879)

### A Piece of Land

October 13<sup>th</sup> 1880

Mr J Cooney of Salt River near Cape Town purchased a piece of land at New Brighton also near Cape Town measuring 116 feet by 58 feet for a sum of £30-0-0 exclusive of expenses.

The above was purchased on account and for Wm Sterry of Tulbagh Road Station.

Payments made by W Sterry for the above piece of land.

	£	s	d
Auction dues		19	6
Purchase money	30	0	0
Interest on purchase money at 6 per cent from day of sale to 8 <sup>th</sup> Feb		11	8
Surveyors fees	3	3	-
Stamp duty	1	4	-
Transfer dues	3	11	-
Total	£39	9	2

Settled August 11<sup>th</sup> 1881

The above was purchased from B. Van Reit on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1881 and stamped and registered February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1881 and duly transferred to Wm Sterry, Tulbagh Road July 7<sup>th</sup> '81. Wm Sterry. (The above was sold again to Mr J Wedel for £50 in 1884. W Sterry)



William dressed apparently in full Masonic dress

## **Notes on Phenology**

Phrenology is a science which enables the character of persons to be indicated. It renders the minds of persons to practitioners as open as the placard on the wall even though it be the greatest stranger.

The advantages of phrenology are many and good. It teaches self-knowledge, how to develop the organisation as a whole, harmoniously. It enables us to govern and educate each faculty to control the propensities to cultivate and direct the moral feelings. It indicates the particular calling or pursuits by which everyone may succeed in life. It enables the parent to be more faithful in the discharge of his duties to his children. It assists in the choice of servants. It is an important aid in the practice of the different professions. It teaches charity for the frailties of others. It makes valuable suggestions for treatment of criminals. It gives many important hints with regard to the cure and prevention of insanity. It enables a person to choose an agreeable, congenial companion for life. It teaches that moral perfection is the most desirable end to be attained in this life. That phrenology give us self-knowledge, the most important to be gained ought to be a sufficient reason the community should be interested in the doctrines. It helps us to understand mind in the abstract and to comprehend our own individual natures. We see by the light of physiology that we have a body and that it is composed of parts and functions. The mind is not only a unit, an individual whole. But it is made up of parts or separate powers that to us to enable us to discharge certain duties, to sustain certain relations in life. These powers of the mind are distinct in their action and require an individual organ, the brain, through which they can be manifested.

We learn by phrenology what our own peculiar powers are, our weak and strong tendencies of mind, the direction they take in the development of our excesses and deficiencies. We learn how to shield and ward ourselves against these circumstances that would lead to an excess in the one case and a failure in the other. For Man is not fated to be always in a certain position to develop in a prescribed course to have the same quantum of mind in education. He may have more or less within the limits that belong to a human being.

## **Western Railway**

February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1885

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1885. I have taken over the lengths of No 16 & 17 gangs, road, men & tools and all old & new materials from Inspector Vine. From Tulbagh Road Station to 85¼ miles which is ½ a mile beyond Ceres Road Station. All this extra work without any extra pay for it.

My length is now 40 miles, thus 45¼ to 85¼ miles Main Line and 2¾ miles on the Cambrinks branch which runs out from Piquetberg Road Station to a large slaughter house belonging to Cambrink & co Butchers. (This branch was constructed in June & July 1884 by contractor Mannix and superintended by myself. I also had the contract to fasten up the per Way materials at 3½d per yard in which I done well. (Wm Sterry, per Way Inspector, Western Railway, Cape of Good Hope, February 1885)

Western Railway Department

My Services in the Above Employ

I joined the service as a platelayer under a signed agreement for one year at 8/- per day. September 12<sup>th</sup> 1874

I was appointed per Way Inspector from Wellington and Hermon Stations on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1875 at 10/6 per day

My district was extended to Piquetberg Road Station on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1875

My district was again extended to Tulbagh Road Station on the first of August 1877 at a rate of 12/- per day.

My district was again extended to the 85¼ mile peg on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1885.

My salary was fixed at £200 per year without overtime or extras in August 1885

(Wm Sterry, per Way Inspector, from 45¼ to 85¼ miles, 8/11/85)

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1886 my wages was increased to £220 per year.

Then on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1891 I was removed from Tulbagh Road to Cape Town to assist Inspector Magall owing to the redistribution of the districts on reaching Mapaking Station. My district was handed over to Inspector Ricks at Worcester. I then removed my family to Salt River June 12<sup>th</sup> 1891. Remained at Salt River until October 1895. I then received a certificate from Mr Brown Engineer in Chief to the effect that I was the first per Way Inspector who had completed 21 years in that capacity on these railways. Another sub Inspector was appointed to take the duties which I had hitherto performed and it was then decided to put me on an easier billet and was removed to Kalk Bay to reside there and take the lighter duties as referred to above.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1898 I was again removed to reside at Newlands in some newly acquired property near the Newlands Station. (W Sterry, Newlands, March 1898)

December 28<sup>th</sup> 1898

This being the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day of my birth I shall just dot down a few items with respect to the period of the last 60 years. In the beginning of which I do not know but very little. But when I was 8½ years I had to turn out and earn my living. Without education on any kind I struggled until I was 19 years old. I then attended night school at my own expense. But only for a very short time as the school broke up and I had to get along as best I could. Which I did by the help of a dictionary until I could make myself understood in writing. I followed a variety of employment during the first 26 years of my time. First as a farmer, then salt making. Boating on the canal. Down a coal pit. On the top of the pit. At the blast furnace. At the puddler's furnace. At the rolling mills. In the Bridge & Bailler Works. I was married on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1860 and in 1866 I commenced to work on the Midland Railway near Bromsgrove as a repairer in the gang and have followed railway per-way work up to the present day. (28<sup>th</sup> December 1898, W Sterry, aged 60 years)



I was pensioned off March 1<sup>st</sup> 1899. My length of service was from the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1874 up to February 28<sup>th</sup> 1899, a service of 24 years and 5 months. Pensioned off from March 1<sup>st</sup> 1899 at a pension of £89-10-7 per year.