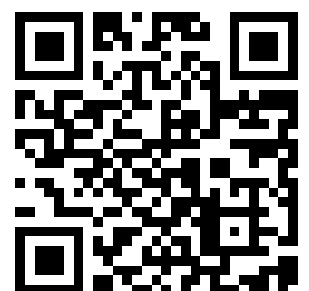

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F I F E M A I L S.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 3 May 1866 :—for,

COPY “of REPORT by the POSTMASTER GENERAL to the TREASURY upon
Complaints as to the FIFE MAILS.”

Treasury Chambers, }
3 May 1866.

HUGH C. E. CHILDERS.

— No. 1. —

Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., M.P., to the Secretary of the Treasury.

Balcaskie, Pittenweem, N.B.,
11 December 1865.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to enclose, for the information of the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, the last communication which I have received from the Postmaster General upon the subject of the Fife postal arrangements.

I need scarcely point out to my Lords that, as this is the concluding decision after a negotiation extending over 18 months, it is most unsatisfactory.

Either the offer of 2,000 *l.* a year is adequate or inadequate. If the former, then the powers given to the Post Office by the Act 1 & 2 Vict. c. 98 should be exercised with as little delay as possible; if the same is insufficient, I would submit to my Lords the expediency of increasing it.

The Railway Company is quite willing to accept 2,250 *l.* a year for the postal service, and my constituents cannot but feel it a great hardship that so paltry a sum as 250 *l.* a year should stand between them and the improvement of their most defective postal system.

I beg to enclose a return laid before Parliament in June 1865, which will sufficiently show the utter inadequacy of the present arrangements for the purpose required.

I have, &c.

(signed) Robert Anstruther, M.P., Fife.

The Secretary of the Treasury.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Sir,

General Post Office, 20 November 1865.

With reference to your letter of the 2d instant, I am directed by the Postmaster General to inform you that his Lordship has renewed the offer of 2,000 *l.* a year to the North British Railway Company for the general use of their trains in Fifeshire, but that he regrets that it has been again declined.

I am, &c.

(signed) J. Tilley.

Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., M.P.

The Postmaster General to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury.

My Lords,

General Post Office, 30 December 1865.

In returning herewith Sir Robert Anstruther's letter of the 11th instant, respecting the Fifeshire postal arrangements, which was forwarded to me by your Lordships on the 13th, I have the honour to enclose, for your information, a memorandum showing the whole state of the case up to the present time.

I am sorry to observe that Sir Robert Anstruther persists in regarding the negotiation as a dispute between the Post Office and the Railway Company, as to the just rate of payment for the services on their lines, instead of seeing that the question is not so much whether the sum which the Company ask is exorbitant or otherwise, as it is a question whether that sum is such as the Post Office can afford to pay, having due regard to the correspondence to be benefited.

The important towns in Fifeshire have no complaint, which a general use of the Company's trains running at their own time would remove, and the enclosed return, called for in the House of Commons on the motion of Mr. Waldegrave Leslie, shows that the correspondence for the places which would be benefited is very small indeed.

The 2,000 *l.* a year which the Post Office has offered for the general service, is the utmost which the circumstances would warrant, the Company having declined to make the alterations in the hours of trains, which alone would justify the payment of a higher price.

The Lords Commissioners of
Her Majesty's Treasury.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Stanley of Alderley.*

Enclosure in No. 2.

MEMORANDUM of the State of the Negotiations respecting the *Fifeshire* Postal Arrangements.

THE annual payment at present made to the North British Railway Company for the conveyance of mails on the Fifeshire lines is about 1,760 *l.* For this payment the Post Office is entitled to the use of certain trains, but has not the general power of using any or all the ordinary trains.

In the latter part of 1864 the Post Office negotiated with the Company for the general use of any or all the trains, and offered to increase the amount of the annual payment to 2,000 *l.* in consideration of this privilege. It should be observed that the Post Office in making this offer did not contemplate getting any control whatever over the working of the trains, but simply the right of sending bags by any trains which the Company might run for their own purposes. The offer of 2,000 *l.* was refused, and the Company proposed 2,260 *l.* (or 500 *l.* more than the present payment); but the Post Office considered its offer of 2,000 *l.* sufficient, and declined to increase it. The negotiation was thus for the time broken off.

In the early part of this year (1865) the attention of the Post Office was again drawn to the subject of the Fifeshire posts by Sir Robert Anstruther and Mr. Waldegrave Leslie, the latter of whom gave notice in the House of Commons for a return, which was afterwards furnished, and a copy of which is sent herewith

The principal points complained of were (1), the delay in sending on from Edinburgh letters arriving by London night mail for certain places of the towns in Fifeshire; and (2), the want of an evening delivery in Edinburgh of letters arriving from Fifeshire by the train due at 7 p.m.

As regards the first of these points, it should be explained that the London night mail is due at Edinburgh Station at 7.10 a.m. (at the Post Office at 7.25 a.m.), and that there is a train leaving for Fifeshire at 9.45 a.m. (involving a dispatch for the Post Office at 9.35 a.m.), and, as will be seen by reference to

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page 4 of the accompanying return, the train is already employed for conveying the letters to some of the towns in Fifeshire; as for instance, to Cupar, Kirkaldy, and St. Andrews. Sir Robert Anstruther would wish the train to be used more extensively, and if the department had the power which it sought for as regards the use of all ordinary trains, advantage would no doubt be taken of it in this respect. An earlier dispatch of this train from Edinburgh would also be very desirable, in order to expedite the arrival of the London night mail letters in Fifeshire.

With respect to point No. 2, viz., the evening delivery in Edinburgh of letters from Fifeshire, there can be no doubt that such an arrangement is very desirable, but the train due at 7 p.m., bringing the mails from Fifeshire, is too late for the last delivery in Edinburgh, as at present arranged, and any postponement of that delivery for the purpose of including the Fifeshire correspondence would be productive of great inconvenience. The object could only be effected, therefore, by an earlier arrival of the train.

In the negotiations with the Railway Company above referred to, the Post Office had confined its endeavours to obtaining the general use of all the ordinary trains without obtaining any control whatever over their working, but with the view of meeting the wishes expressed by Sir Robert Anstruther and Mr. Waldegrave Leslie, it reopened the negotiation with the Company upon the basis of obtaining, not only the use of all ordinary trains, but some slight alterations in the working; and provided the Company would have consented to two or three such changes, the Postmaster General would have agreed to the payment which they had previously demanded, at the rate of 2,260*l.* a year. A good deal of personal communication took place between the officers of the Post Office and those of the Railway Company, but the latter were unable to make the desired alterations, and this further negotiation also failed.

By the return called for by Mr. Waldegrave Leslie it was intended to be shown that Fifeshire is in a very much worse position than other parts of Scotland, as regards its communication with London; and a comparison is made between Fifeshire towns and other towns in Scotland, which for the most part are either much larger, or happen to lie on or near the main lines of post to the north, such a comparison does not go for much; but notwithstanding this, it will be found upon examining the return that the number of Fifeshire letters which suffer any long detention in Edinburgh is very small; and that the result shows that there is very little grievance, especially when it is borne in mind that Fifeshire is peculiarly situated, and has to be reached by a ferry service, both from Edinburgh and Dundee.

The Post Office would still be willing to pay 2,000*l.* a year for the general use of all the ordinary trains, with the view of effecting such improvements as would in that case be practicable; but this sum is fully as large as the postal advantages to be derived would warrant as payment for the railway service, exclusive of the expenses for conveyance of bags to and from the stations, &c

— No. 3. —

The Secretary of the Treasury to Sir *Robert Anstruther*, Bart., M.P.

Sir,

Treasury Chambers, 6 January 1866.

I AM directed by the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to acquaint you, in reply to your letter of the 11th ultimo, on the subject of the Fife Postal Arrangements, that my Lords are informed that the Post Office authorities are still willing to pay 2,000*l.* a year to the North British Railway Company for the general use of all the ordinary trains, with the view of effecting such improvements as would in that case be practicable; but that this sum is fully as large as the postal advantages to be derived would warrant, as payment for the railway service, the Company having declined to make the alterations in the hours of trains which alone would justify the payment of a higher amount.

I am to state with reference to the observations contained in your letter, that it appears to my Lords to be not so much a question whether the sum which the Company ask is exorbitant or otherwise, as whether that sum is such as the Post Office

Office can afford to pay, having due regard to the correspondence to be benefited.

My Lords are informed that the important towns of Fifeshire have no complaint which a general use of the Company's trains running at their own time would remove; and it appears from the return, called for in the House of Commons by Mr. Waldegrave Leslie, that the correspondence for the places that would be benefited is very small indeed.

I am to state, in conclusion, that my Lords are of opinion that the 2,000 *l.* a year which the Post Office have offered for the general service, is the utmost which the circumstances would warrant, and that they therefore do not consider that they would be justified in taking any action in the matter.

I am, &c.
(signed) *Hugh C. E. Childers.*

Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., M.P.,
Balcaskie, Pittenweem, N.B.

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F I F F E M A I L S.

COPY of REPORT by the POSTMASTER GENERAL
to the TREASURY upon Complaints as to the
F I F F E M A I L S.

(*Mr. Childers.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
3 May 1866.

234.

Under 1 oz.