

1933

3317

1933

3317

KENYA
CO 533/439

Kenia Hill

Previous

Dr. E. Green
1977

Subsequent

<i>Log 297</i>	<i>29/11</i>
<i>Kenia 309</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>M. Miller</i>	<i>2/10</i>
<i>H. P. F. Green</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Th. Seal</i>	<i>✓</i>
<i>Ross</i>	<i>4/10</i>
<i>1977</i>	<i>1/10</i>
<i>H. P. F. Green</i>	<i>10.10</i>
<i>H. P. F. Green</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Th. Seal</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>D. G. L. Green</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>1977</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>1977</i>	<i>17/10</i>
<i>1977</i>	<i>1/10</i>
<i>1977</i>	<i>1/10</i>

Trade Information Office _____ 21st Sept 53

Trans. for information a copy of a letter sent to the Director of Agriculture, Kenya together with enclos. regarding a new method of degumming Ramie fibre & stating it is understood Mr Dawson of Ujiji has ramie fibre on his estate.

Mr. Hibbit

Have you any info on Ramie fibre, and the possibility of culturing it profitably in E. Africa?

Advent
24.9

Mr. Freeston.

"Ramie" is the Malay name for Bahmnia nivea a plant of the nettle family which flourishes chiefly in China, India, Japan, and Malaya, but has also been cultivated in many other parts of the world including Queensland, Mauritius, the Cameroons, the West Indies, Brazil, Mexico and Southern Europe. I cannot trace any reference to its cultivation in East Africa.

The fibre of the plant has been extensively used for many purposes, including the manufacture of gas mantles, paper making, ropes, lines, nets, underwear, and for canvas and other fabrics.

It has the advantages of being very strong, resistant to atmospheric changes, little affected by moisture, and of being easily dyed.

Its disadvantages appear to be that it is liable to crack and break easily when sharply bent, and that the length of the fibre varies considerably,

which

which is of course a great disadvantage for spinning purposes. The plant contains a very adhesive gum, and as indicated in the correspondence sent by Major Dale, manufacturers have experienced great difficulty in successfully "degumming" the fibre.

If the process in question can really get over the degumming difficulty, there may be a good deal in the scheme, but I imagine that it has yet to be proved whether cultivation could be successfully undertaken under East African conditions.

If you like, I can write to Kew to see if they have any information, and I submit draft of letter. I would not suggest referring to the Imperial Institute, because Mr. Wigglesworth is Chairman of the ^{Joint} Committee which deals with such matters, and he does not like Major Walsh. Moreover, Major Dale attends meetings of the Imperial Institute's Sub-Committee, and would presumably be cognizant of any enquiry of this nature which might have been referred to the Institute.

J. H. M. [Signature]

2nd Oct., 1933.

We are obliged to Dr. H. H. H. As proposed

[Signature]
2/10

2 To Sampson s.o. cons.

4/11
4 OCT 1933

3 Sir A. Hill

S.O.

9 10 33

State that Ramie plant has been introduced to E.A. and trials made with it by the Kenya Agricultural Dept. No doubt that it can be successfully grown in parts of E.A. but the difficulty of extending from an experimental plot to a commercial scale.

Mr. Freeston.

This is quite interesting, and I have thanked Sir Arthur Hill verbally.

The inventor of the process referred to in the enclosures to (1) claims that his invention will get over the degumming difficulty, but Sir Arthur Hill's letter suggests that it will be up against high costs of cultivation and low market prices.

So far as I can see there is only a passing reference in the 1929 Kenya Agricultural Report to the trials, and there appears to be no reference at all in the subsequent reports for 1930 and 1931. This would suggest that the trials were not successful. Put by.

10th October, 1933

I think it would be well to send a copy of para 2 of 3.

[Signature]
11/10

[Signature]
11/10

[Signature]
11/10

I do not think there is anything in (3) that will be new to Major Dale, but

As proposed
[Signature]
11/10/33

4 U.S. Trade Information Office

B/2B

14. 10. 33.

(w/c of extract from No. 3)

(ND)

Noted in "Footnote" Part

5. S.A. 7. 7. 1. D.

14. October 33

Re: No. 9 suggests Director of Royal Botanic Gardens has not yet sent the new samples of degumming which might make same fibre as common royal bountiful fibre

? Part 5

Answer - 19/10

Director

19/10/33

Handwritten initials/signature

CHD/LMR.

54

TELEPHONE: WHITEHALL 3701/2.
CABLES: RAMATTERS, LONDON.
TELEGRAMS: RAMATTERS, RAND, LONDON.



TRADE & INFORMATION OFFICE
GRAND BUILDINGS,
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON, W.C. 2.
(ENTRANCE IN THE STRAND)

8347/33

17th October, 1935.

18 OCT 1935
C. O. HQY

Now

Sir,

RAMIE FIBRE.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 14th October, No. 5517/35, enclosing me a copy of an extract from a letter from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, dated the 9th October, 1935, for which I thank you.

2. The remarks made by the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, are, of course, entirely in agreement with the information which is in my possession, but he has evidently not yet come across this new method of degumming, of which I have seen the results, and which puts a very different complexion on the possibility of its uses, and might make it a very serious rival to Sisal and other fibres.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Commissioner.

The Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office,
Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.



ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

KEW, SURREY

All communications should be addressed to
THE DIRECTOR.

9th October 1939

Dear Mr. Hibbert

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 6th instant addressed to Mr. Sampson in which you refer to the possibility of cultivating Ramie in East Africa.

This plant has been introduced to East Africa, as well as to other British possessions, and trials have been made with it by the Agricultural Department in Kenya (Kenya Agricultural Department report for 1929). There is no doubt that the Ramie plant can be successfully grown in parts of East Africa. Unfortunately one of the great difficulties in Ramie production on a commercial scale has always been the extraction of the fibre. In China this is done for the most part by hand. Attempts have frequently been made in the past to prepare the fibre by mechanical or chemical means but the result has usually been the production of an inferior, frequently discoloured, fibre. Other difficulties are the comparatively high cost of cultivation, the yield of useful fibre from the stalks being lower than that of other textile fibres - degumming, inflammability and low market prices.

A short while ago attempts were made by Kew to procure some of the strains of Ramie cultivated in China for trial by Agricultural Departments, but unfortunately without success.

Yours faithfully,

W. H. Hill

Director.

J. G. Hibbert, Esq.,
Colonial Office,
2, Richmond Terrace,
S.W.1.

C. O.

C. D.

2

Mr. Hibbert

3/10/33

Mr. Freeston

Mr. Seal

Mr. Parkinson

Mr. Tomlinson

Sir C. ...

Sir J. ...

Perm. U.S. of S.

Partly U.S. of S.

Secretary of State

Cto. for Mr. Hibbert's sig.

2, Richmond Terrace,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

October, 1933.

Dear Sampson,

We have received a

DRAFT.

H. C. SAMPSON, ESQ., C.I.E.,
B.Sc.

(Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew)

suggestion that the cultivation
the Ramie plant might be under-
taken successfully in East Africa,
for spinning purposes,
and I should be very grateful for
your views as to whether you think
that local conditions would be
such as to afford reasonable
possibilities of a venture of
this kind turning out an economic
proposition.

Yours sincerely,
J. C. HOBERT

TELEPHONE: WHITEHALL, 2761/2
CABLES: SAMATTYS, LONDON.
TELEGRAMS: SAMATTYS, RAND, LONDON.
OHD/DKH.



TRADE & INFORMATION OFFICE
GRAND BUILDINGS,
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.2.
(ENTRANCE IN THE STRAND)

7543/33

RECEIVED
22 SEP 1933
C. O. REG.

21 September 1933.

copy to be sent to the Under Secretary
Sir,

RAMIE FIBRE.

For your information, I have the honour to enclose you herewith, a copy of a letter which I sent to the Director of Agriculture, Kenya, dated the 9th September, No. 7284/33, together with enclosures.

2. I also sent a similar letter to the Secretary of the Tanganyika Trade & Information Local Advisory Committee. I regret that I have no further samples of the material referred to in para. 1 of my letter, but do not think you will require them.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

C. H. S. G.
Commissioner.

The Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office,
Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

In Confirmation of
Telephone Conversation -
Enclosure to our Ref. No.
7543/33.

With the Commissioner's
Compliments.

H.M. EASTERN AFRICAN DEPENDENCY
TRADE AND INFORMATION OFFICE,
ROYAL MAH BUILDING,
34, COCKSPUR STREET,
LONDON, S.W. 1

23rd. Sept. 1933.

7204/33

7th September, 1933.

Sir,

RAMIE FIBRE

I have the honour to enclose you herewith a copy of an interview which I had with Mr. N. Likely on the 22nd August, and copies of two further interviews which I had with him on the 25th and 28th August respectively.

2. From these you will see that Mr. Likely states that he is acting with a gentleman (Mr. Smith) who claims to have discovered a new method of degumming Ramie Fibre, with complete success, from the point of view of using Ramie for all kinds of raw fabric, either by itself, or mixed with silk, cotton, wool, etc.

3. I went up to Mr. Likely's Office in the City and saw all these samples, etc., and was very impressed with the results.

4. I am sending you under separate cover:-

- (a) Sample of the raw ~~artificial~~ Ramie (China Grass) as it is at present sent to this Market from China
- (b) The degummed Fibre or Filasse, which is the new material after it has been treated by Mr. Likely's new process.
- (c) A sample of the spun degummed Ramie 100%
- (d) A sample of the degummed Ramie and Wool 100% of each
- (e) A sample of the degummed Ramie, mixed with artificial silk 50% of each.

5. The process is a secret one, and is not going to be patented, and will always be used as a secret process, and I am therefore unable to give you more detailed information.

6. Mr. J.R. Martin of Messrs. Richardson, Tyson & Martin, Ltd. has already been in communication with Mr. Likely on this subject and you will see I took him along to one interview I had with Mr. Likely.

7. I understand that Mr. Dawson of Njoro has some of this Ramie Fibre growing on his estate.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

The Hon'ble,
The Director of Agriculture,
Nairobi,
Kenya Colony.

G.H. DALE.
Commissioner.

28th August 1955.

Mr. H. Likely,

4, St. Mary Axe,
London, E.C.3.

By arrangement I called for Major Walsh and took him along to Mr. Likely's office where I introduced him to Mr. Likely. In addition to Mr. Likely there were present Mr. Skipwith who is apparently a spinning expert and has a brother in the "Financial Times", and Mr. Smith the interior.

Mr. Likely showed Major Walsh everything that he had shown me, and they had a general discussion together, all of which I did not hear as I was talking to the two Mr. Skipwiths.

Afterwards Major Walsh told us that he was very glad I had taken him along, and that apparently Mr. Likely had already got in touch with Messrs. Matheson & Co., Ltd. (China side) with a view to securing himself supplies of raw material, and this made it easier for Major Walsh to take the matter up and they will certainly go into the matter.

With H. Likely, Esq.:

At:- 6, St. Mark's Ave,

London, E.C.

25th August 1934

I called at Mr. Likely's office, which is under the name of Arthur Legal & Co. Ltd., (Ship Brokers) and he showed me samples of the raw fibre without the bark, the raw material of this would be degummed by certain processes. The degummed fibre mixed with 30% silk and also another mixed with 50% wool. He showed me a large piece of aeroplane fabric, made from pure degummed Ramie fibre. I took some out of it, some pieces of rope, for which he explained the breaking strength was 4 times that of Manila. And a square of aeroplane fabric, after it had been dyed for testing purposes. He told me that the price of Ramie fibre was about £50 per ton, at the present, as there was a shortage, due to various reasons, but that the average price was about £28 per ton; and he could probably pay £40 per ton for the Ramie Ribbons f.o.b. East African Port.

I had a long general talk with him and Mr. Smith, the inventor, and Mr. Martin. Mr. Martin promised to take the matter up with the Agricultural Department, and Mr. Brown on his return to Kenya next week, and find out what efforts could be made of the fibre, and let Mr. Likely know.

I was very much impressed with the samples, and I subsequently asked Mr. Likely (privately) whether he would like to meet one of the big Sisal Growers, and he said he would.

Next day I telephoned Major Walsh, and told him about my interview, and arranged that he should go to see Mr. Likely at 12 o'clock on Monday 28th inst., and that if he did not hear from me to the contrary, he should be expected to be definitely booked. I telephoned Mr. Likely, and booked the appointment accordingly.

H. Likely, Esq.:

22nd August 1933.

4, St. Mary Axe,

London, E.C.

Mr. Likely called by appointment having seen the copy of the interview between the "Daily Telegraph" and myself. I explained to him that the reporter had made rather a hodge of the information I had given him, which Mr. Likely quite understood. He also brought me 2 letters which he had received in 1932 from Messrs. Richardson, Tyson and Martin (he had been in correspondence with them about Ramie Fibre) in one of which they said, that Mr. Dawson of Lyons had some of the fibre on his Estate, but had never done anything with it, as he (Mr. Dawson) understood that manufacturers had always experienced difficulty in degumming it. Mr. Likely said that this had been so in the past, but that he had now got hold of a new process which was most successful in degumming Ramie Fibre so that it could be spun with silk, or cotton or jute, and anything of this nature, and met with wonderful results.

He told me he had all sorts of materials which had been made out of it in his office, which he would be pleased to show me, when I was next in the City. He told me he would be interested in buying Ramie from Kenya, as at present it all came from China, where the bark was stripped from the fibre by the Chinese, very roughly by hand. It would not be necessary for the fibre to be stripped in East Africa, as he will be prepared to buy it, in what they call, "ribbons". I told him that Mr.

Martin...

Martin (who had signed the letters to him) was at present at home, and suggested that he might like to get into touch with him, and gave him his (Mr. Martin's) address.

NOTE:

Mr. [redacted] subsequently rang me up, and told me that Mr. Martin was calling to see him at 12 o'clock the next day, and I agreed to be there.