THE MAURITIUS PROJECT

Recovering, imaging, digitising, archiving and preserving of old weather observations extracted from ship logbooks in 188 volumes of Charles Meldrum’s ‘anemological’ journals from 1853 to 1914 and terrestrial weather observations for Mauritius (including data from Colonel Lloyd’s Colonial Observatory at Port Louis) from the late 18th to the early years of the 20th century held by the Mauritius Meteorological Services, National Archives of Mauritius and the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute.

Old weather data records in Mauritius – 2011
Old weather data records in Mauritius – 2014

Lt.-Col. John Augustus Lloyd From 1831-1849, he was Surveyor-General of Mauritius, and build the ‘Colonial Observatory’ at Port Louis in 1831. Said to be the first meteorological observatory in the Indian Ocean, it was used for cyclone warnings and astronomical observations. When the Royal Engineer’s Observatory started to operate, the old Observatory was sold in October 1866 to the New Mauritius Docks Company.
Royal Alfred Observatory, Mauritius
The Meteorological Society of Mauritius, with a small government grant, established an observatory in 1851, some 200 yards away from the Colonial/Government Observatory.

The Royal Alfred Observatory at Pamplemousses was opened in 1874, with Dr Charles Meldrum as its first Director.

Sources of Charles Meldrum's 'anemological' journals from 1853 to 1914

“The objects which the Meteorological Society laid down for itself were: to procure instruments of the best description; to provide for meteorological observations being made in Mauritius and its dependencies; to tabulate meteorological observations taken daily on board vessels in the Indian Ocean and to encourage these to be made on a systematic basis .........” [Only the January to March charts over the Indian Ocean for 1861 were ever published]

“A clerk was employed by the Society to visit every ship anchoring in Port Louis harbour. He used to present a letter from the Secretary of the Society to the master to obtain access to the ship’s log, and copy the meteorological observations it contained. It is interesting to note that the Meteorological Service continued this practice right up to the 1960s.”


The practice of extracting weather observations from ships in harbour was at least also undertaken by:

Georg von Neumayer: Flagstaff Observatory, Melbourne, Australia - 1850s-1860s
Indian Meteorological Department: Calcutta, Bombay and Madras – 1890s=>
Hong Kong Observatory: 1890s-1940 at least
Jesuit Observatory’s: Shanghai and Manila
HISTORICAL DAILY INDIAN OCEAN CHARTS DRAWN BY MELDRUM

Only 1st three months of 1861 published
1st January 1861