

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE

The Gambia

The Country Post Offices & Postal Agencies.

The attached notes have been prepared from information recorded by members and owe much, particularly regarding the offices open during the last few years, to details supplied from the Gambia by W.L.Kinloch to Eric Lewis.

For ease of reference the nineteen offices have been listed alphabetically, but historically they fall into four groups:-

1. Pre-Great War:

Macarthy Island (1904) - P.O. now Georgetown

2. Between the wars:

Basse (10/11/21)
Fattoto (10/11/21)
Kunta-ur (7/1/24)

Kau-ur (19/11/29)
Jawarra (1932)
Kerewan (1937) - see notes

3. Colonial Development Corpn. period:

Mansa Konko (25/10/48)
Bansang (15/11/48)
Bwiam (17/1/49)
Gunjur (7/2/49)

Cape St. Mary (10/2/49)
Serekunda (1/3/49)
Brikama (April/50)
Karantaba (date? G.VI)

4. Pre-Independence period:

Farafenni (1959?)
Barra (1961?)
Soldier Town (1/9/61)

Half-Die (2/9/61)
Kerewan (1964?) - see notes

In addition to particulars of recent offices, Mr. Kinloch has obtained for us records of date-stamps held by the P.M.G. which relate to offices which so far as is known were never opened. These include:

Landing Stage Office
Jessadi (22/4/27)
Yundum (-/-/51)

Nainimaro
Kossemar

Such notes as these cannot be final, and it is hoped that any corrections or additional information will be the subject of a further circular in due course.

Colin McCaig.

July, 1965.

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BANSANG

On the south bank 186 miles up river, a Postal Agency was opened 15/11/48. Bansang is a District H.Q. of the Macarthy Island Division, and the P.A. is at the premises of a haulage contractor. V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 23/7/62.

Canceller:

BANSANG / GAMBIA separated by thick space-bars 27 & 16½mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date db1.crcls.

Dates recorded: 15/11/48 to 18/11/64

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / BANSANG

BARRA

On the north bank opposite Bathurst to which it is linked by a ferry. Listed as a P.A. in the 1960/61 Colonial Report.

Canceller:

BARRA / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 23½mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 15/4/64 to 20/11/64

BASSE

On the south bank 242 miles by river from Bathurst. Basse is the administrative H.Q. of the Upper River Division V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 3/12/62. The P.O. was opened 10/11/21 for letters only. It appears that it was closed in May, 1922, and not opened for the 1922/23 season. The P.O. was re-opened 7/1/24 for all classes of postal business.

Cancellers:

a. BASSE / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 23½mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 1/4/22 & 23/5/22 (1st.season)
12/1/24 to 20/2/48

b. BASSE / 2-line date / GAMBIA (finer and 23½mm.c.d.s.
narrower lettering than type a.)

Dates recorded: 1/3/50 to 18/11/64

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / BASSE

BRIKAMA

About 14 miles south of Bathurst, Brikama is a divisional H.Q. of the Western Division. The P.O. was opened in April, 1950, and is well laid out inside and quite up to date.

Canceller:

BRIKAMA / GAMBIA separated by thick space-bars 27 & 16½mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date db1.crcls.

Dates recorded: 28/4/50 to 16/11/64

BWIAM

On the Bintang creek, a southern tributary of the Gambia, Bwiam is 43 miles east of Brikama. The P.A. was opened 17/1/49, but was not listed in the 1960/61 Colonial Report and is understood to have been closed for some years. It was open again in 1964 but the year figures are sometimes missing - in February, 1965, the postmaster had not yet received the figures 65. Canceller:

BWIAM / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 17/1/49 to -/11/64 (the 16th but
no day inserted)

CAPE ST. MARY (Bakau)

The P.A. at Bakau was opened 10/2/49. Bakau is by Cape St. Mary at the mouth of the river on the Atlantic, and is the site of the first mission station established in 1823 by the Society of Friends. The area is described historically as British Kombo.

Canceller:

CAPE ST. MARY / GAMBIA separated by thick space- 27 & 16½mm.
bars enclosing * over 2-line date db1.crcls.

Dates recorded: 10/2/49 to 23/4/64

FARAFENNI

Near the northern frontier, Farafenni is about 68 miles east of Barra on the Trans-Gambia road from Senegal to Casamance which is maintained by the French, with a car-ferry over the river.

Canceller:

FARAFENNI / GAMBIA separated by thin space-lines 27 & 16mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date db1.crcls.

Dates recorded: 6/9/59 to 20/11/64

FATTOTO

Fattoto is 288 miles up river and is the highest point to which the river boats ply. The station is flooded during the rainy season when the temperature reaches about 120. It is a place of dwindling importance. A P.O. was opened 10/11/21 for letters only and is believed to have been open for a few months only. According to the Gambia Gazette the office was re-opened for three seasons: 19/11/29 to 31/5/30; 1/11/30 to 31/5/31; and 1/11/31 to 31/5/32. However, a cancellation dated 29/5/26 has been noted so that it must have been open during at least one of the intervening seasons. A P.A. was opened at Fattoto 15/1/49. This is said to have been closed in 1955 and only re-opened during the last few years.

Cancellers:

- a. FATTOTO / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.
Dates recorded: 29/11/21 (1st.season)
29/5/26 (unrecorded season)
14/12/29 & 22/2/30
(1929/30 season)
20/12/30 & 30/12/30
(1930/31 season)
- b. FATTOTO / GAMBIA separated by thick space- 27 & 16½mm
bars enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.
Dates recorded: 15/1/49 to 21/9/54
- c. FATTOTO / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA (finer 24mm.c.d.s.
and narrower lettering than type a.)
Dates recorded: 15/4/64 to 20/11/64

GUNJUR

Gunjur is 11 miles south-west of Brikama, near the Atlantic coast. The P.A. was opened 7/2/49 but is believed to have been closed for an extended period up to 1961.

Cancellers:

- a. GUNJUR / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.
Dates recorded: 7/2/49 to 4/9/51
Note. From 1/8/61 to 20/11/61 the mark in the date impression book was indistinct and the P.M. had printed GUNJUR over the strike. Covers may have been marked similarly.
- b. GUNJUR / GAMBIA separated by thin space-lines 27 & 16mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.
Dates recorded: 23/4/64 to 16/11/64
Note. This canceller came into use 21/11/61.

HALF-DIE

A ward of Bathurst, Half-Die is to the south of the town on what used to be swampland. Native settlers were badly hit by a cholera epidemic in 1869 which probably accounts for the name. The P.A. was opened 2/9/61 but does not deal with registered mail.

Canceller:

HALF-DIE / GAMBIA separated by thin space-lines 27 & 16mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.

Dates recorded: 23/4/64 to 24/11/64

JAWARRA

Jawarra is about 40 miles east of Barra, close to the Senegal frontier on a creek about 10 miles north of the river. A P.O. was opened for the 1932/33 season. Actual dates have not been traced and the only evidence is from the rare examples of the canceller seen on stamps. The Office was re-opened 31/1/49 and was finally closed 4/5/58. Postal business is now handled at Kerewan.

Cancellers:

a. JAWARRA / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 18/10/32 to 18/3/33

b. JOWARA / GAMBIA separated by thick space-bars 27 & 16½mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.

Dates recorded: 8/1/51 to 4/4/53

KARANTABA

Karantaba is 200 miles up river on the north bank and was included in the list of steamer calling places issued by the Marine Department in 1930. It is reported to have been in a derelict condition between the wars, but it was opened up after the last war by the United Africa Company. It is interesting to note that there is at the G.P.O. Bathurst a 24mm. circular date-stamp reading KARANTABA / * / 20 OC /21/ GAMBIA which appears not to have been used. This suggests that an office was contemplated but not opened.

Canceller:

KARANTABA / GAMBIA separated by thick space-bars 27 & 16½mm.
enclosing 2-line date dbl.crcls.

Recorded: 3 incomplete examples on G.VI stamps

Note. There was another Karantaba, on the south bank less than half the distance from Bathurst, which was the centre of affairs before the township of Mansa Konko was built after the last war.

KAU-UR

Kau-ur is on the north bank of the river, about 30 miles below Kunta-ur. A P.A. was opened 19/11/29 and closed 31/5/30. It was re-opened the following season from 1/11/30 to 31/5/31, after which postal facilities lapsed until 6/12/48 when an office was again established. V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 23/6/62.

Cancellers:

a. KAU-UR / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 18/11/29 to 10/2/30 (1st.season)
8/2/31 to 25/5/31 (2nd.season)

The first date suggests that the Postmaster was operating before the official date.

b. KAUR / GAMBIA separated by thick space-bars 27 & 16½mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.

Dates recorded: 6/12/48 to 25/2/58

c. KAUR / GAMBIA separated by thin space-lines 27 & 16mm.
enclosing * over 2-line date dbl.crcls.

Dates recorded: 5/7/59 to 19/11/64

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / KAUR

KEREWAN

In the North Bank Province, Kerewan is on the river, south of Jawarra and about 40 miles from Bathurst. A P.A. here was referred to in the Colonial Reports for 1937, 1938 and 1939 but no cancellations of the period have been seen. An agency has been re-established with V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 27/11/61.

Canceller:

KEREWAN / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 23/4/64 to 20/11/64

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / KEREWAN

KUNTA-UR

Kunta-ur is on the north bank 150 miles up river at a ferry point. A P.O. was opened 7/1/24, and appears to have remained open apart from closures during the rainy season (June to October). V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 16/4/62.

Cancellers:

- a. KUNTA.UR / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 18/1/24 to 9/6/48

- noted with month in manuscript (5/7/43)
and with manuscript "T.P.O." over the name (30/11/24)

- b. KUNTA-UR / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.

(smaller and finer lettering than type a.,
and a hyphen replaces the stop before the UR)

Dates recorded: 17/3/52 to 19/11/64

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / KUNTAUR

MACARTHY.ISLAND / GEORGETOWN

The Island, 6 miles long by 1½ miles across, lies about 160 miles up river from Bathurst, and it was here that the first country office was established. Ferries link the island with both the north and south banks. A P.O. was operating in 1904 at which time mails were made up weekly for transport by the "Mansah Kilah" or by other conveyance when available. There was no house-to-house delivery in Bathurst or Macarthy Island. The name GEORGETOWN has been used on cancellers for some years. V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 21/5/62.

Cancellers:

- a. MACARTHY.ISLAND / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24½mm.c.d.s.
(name divided by a stop in position of
a hyphen)

Dates recorded: 30/3/06 & 31/10/06 (rare)

- b. MACARTHY ISLAND / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.
(no stop in name or *)

Dates recorded: 31/8/12 to 15/7/48 (common)

- c. MACARTHY ISLAND / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 24mm.c.d.s.
(includes *)

Dates recorded: 17/2/10 to 30/8/43 (uncommon)

-continued-

MACARTHY ISLAND / GEORGETOWN - continued

(Cancellers)

- d. MACARTHY.ISLAND.GAMBIA / 2-line date / M.O.O. 24mm.c.d.s.
(names divided by stops in position
of hyphens)
- a Money Order Office mark

Dates recorded: 15/11/21 to G.VI stamps

- e. WIRELESS STATION / * / 2-line date / GEORGETOWN
- probably not for regular postal use 25mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 27/4/20 to 8/10/26

- f. GEORGETOWN / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 23mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 13/3/48 to 17/11/64

- g. REGISTERED / B / 1-line date / 34 x 26mm.
MAC CARTHY ISLAND.GAMBIA oval

Dates recorded: 13/2/15 to 15/12/28

- h. REGISTERED / C / 1-line date / 34 x 26mm.
MAC CARTHY ISLAND.GAMBIA oval

Dates recorded: 21/1/27 to 3/2/47

Note i. The P.M.G. still holds cancellers (d) and (e).

- ii. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed
TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / GEORGETOWN

MANSA KONKO

On the south bank about 85 miles up river, the township has been developed since the last war. The P.O. was opened 25/10/48 and has V.H.F. Radio Telephone and telephone kiosk since 12/3/62.

Canceller:

- MANSA KONKO / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA 23mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 25/10/48 to 16/11/64

- seen struck in blue

Note. There is a circular date-stamp inscribed

- TELEGRAPH STATION / * / 2-line date / MANSAKONKO

SEREKUNDA

Serekunda is a few miles south of Cape St. Mary in the Colony area. The P.A. is said to have been opened 1/3/49.

Canceller:

SEREKUNDA / * / 2-line date / GAMBIA

23mm.c.d.s.

Dates recorded: 22/5/50 to 2/12/64

SOLDIER TOWN

Soldier Town is a ward of Bathurst on the west side of that town.. Founded by disbanded soldiers of the Royal Africa Corps and West India Regiment under Captain Grant about 1816. The P.A. was opened 1/9/61.

Canceller:

SOLDIER TOWN / GAMBIA separated by thin space-lines
enclosing * over 2-line date

27 & 16mm.
dbl.crcls.

Dates recorded: 1/9/61 to 25/11/64