

THE TRAVELLING POST OFFICE OF SIERRA LEONE.

By Cyril Kidd.

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(with additions, *see supplementary notes on page 10*)

The Sierra Leone Government Railway has a total mileage of 338 miles - consisting of a main line from Freetown to Pendembu (in the Kailahun District, near to the frontiers of French Guinea and Liberia) and a branch line from Boia (64 miles from Freetown) to Kamabai. The gauge throughout is 2 ft. 6 in.

Construction of the railway was commenced on the 16th November 1895, and reached Pendembu - 227½ miles from Freetown - in 1908.

In 1910 the northern branch from Boia (or Bauya) was opened as far as Yonibana, and reached Makeni, in the Northern Province, on the 12th January, 1915, a distance of 84 miles.

On the 12th February 1916, the line reached Kamabai, another 27 miles further north, but this section was closed to traffic on the 3rd July 1930, so that Makeni is now the northern terminus.

I cannot give the date of the introduction of the T.P.O., but the impression of the Type I datemark is struck in the G.P.O. records book dated the 15th August 1906, and this stamp was sent to the Colony on the 21st August, 1906. At that date the railway terminated at Baiima (or Baoma). The T.P.O. was therefore introduced before the line was completed throughout its length. *Freetown - Boia - Makeni - Kamabai - Pendembu 1.6.15.*

This type of datemark continued in use until the line was divided for T.P.O. purposes at Bo, and the names Freetown-Bo and Bo-Pendembu were given to the two parts.

On the Freetown-Bo section a large rectangular datestamp (Type 2) came into use, but I have no record of a companion mark for the up-country section. This rectangular mark is known used between 30th January 1914 and a date in October 1917. The error of B.O. for Bo seems reasonable proof of the English origin of the datestamp.

Whether there was a war time suspension or not, I have been unable to discover - but my next date is the 11th March, 1920, and surprisingly this is Type I once again in service. It may be noted here that a second stamp of Type I was sent out to the Colony on the 13th November 1906. The only suggestion I can offer is that Type 2 was a rubber stamp and deteriorated beyond use, necessitating the resurrection of the steel Type I.

My dates for the re-use of Type I extend to the 10th July, 1922, but by the 1st April 1921 a new datestamp was in concurrent use with it. Once more the names of the towns appeared (Type 3). Two datestamps appear to have been in use, one with and one without a six pointed asterisk above the date. Without the asterisk I have examples from 1921 to 1943; with the asterisk from 1922 to 1941. By 1944 these datestamps were badly worn and almost illegible. Owing to war time difficulties it was not until 1942 that a new datestamp (Type 5) could be made, the earliest date of which I have any record being the 1st August, 1942. On a commercial registered cover dated 14th July 1956, this datestamp is used with a printed registration label of the British type inscribed "T.P.O. BO."

From the Pendembu section I have no earlier record than the 29th May 1923 in Type 3, but an earlier rectangular mark may exist. This continued in use until 1945 when a new datestamp in Type 5 was introduced. Type 9 is a handstruck mark on a registered cover of the 25th July, 1927, the stamp being cancelled with Type 3.

In 1956 the Bo-Pendembu T.P.O. was extended to commence at Freetown and a datestamp lettered "W.S.-Pendembu T.P.O." in Type 5 was introduced. 'W.S.' signifies Water Street, the station in Freetown. Another new datestamp which came into use on this extended T.P.O. is shown in Type 6.

Turning now to the branch line running North I have two types of cancellation. Type 4 was in use as early as the 18th November 1913, and was still in use, though badly worn, when Type 5 was introduced. The mark shown in Type 8 is a skeleton datestamp which appears to have had a very short life. It may have been used on the Freetown to Boia section of the Freetown-Makeni T.P.O.

Type 7, an oval registered mark was sent to the Colony on the 21st August 1906 with Type I; and a second copy was also sent on the 13th November 1906. It was at first used on registered mail on the main line T.P.O.

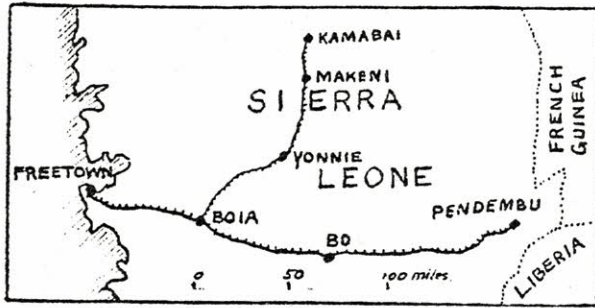
'Patrol Post No. 1' and 'Patrol Post No. 2' datestamps originate on occasional T.P.O. services which have to be run when the normal service is interrupted and a relief train is needed.

No. 1 is not now in use, not having been replaced when it's useful life was finished. It is known with date as early as 1917.

No. 2 (Type 10) is currently in use, and a registered cover of 1956 in my collection is accompanied by the British type of registration label inscribed 'T.P.O. Water St/Bo.'

### CHECK LIST.

TYPE.	INSCRIPTION.	EARLIEST DATE (Actually seen.)	LATEST DATE
1.	Post Office. Sierra Leone Govt. Railway.	7/12/07 13/ 4/09	10/ 7/22
2.	Freetown-B.O. T.P.O.	13 30/ 1/14	Oct. 1917
3.	Freetown-Bo. T.P.O.	21/ 4/21	4/ 5/43
	Bo-Pendembu T.P.O.	29/ 5/23	17/ 5/46
4.	Boia-Yonnie T.P.O.	18/11/13	27/ 1/44
5.	Freetown-Bo T.P.O.	8/12/44	to date
	Freetown-Makeni T.P.O.	10/ 5/46	to date
	Bo-Pendembu T.P.O.	1/ 8/42	1955.
	WS-Pendembu T.P.O.	12/ 8/56	to date
6.	Freetown-Pendembu T.P.O.	8/ 1/57	to date
7.	(Oval registered mark)	Examples known in 1921 and 1926	
8.	F.town-Bauya T.P.O.	23/ 1/46	5/ 7/46
9.	Bo-Pendembu T.P.O.	25/ 7/27	
10.	Patrol Post No. 1.	Example known in 1917	
	Patrol Post No. 2.	30/ 3/54	27/10/56



1

TRAVELLING POST OFFICE  
30 JAN. 1914  
FREETOWN-B.O.  
SIERRA LEONE

2.



3.



4.



5



6.



7.



10.



8.

R BO.PENDEMBU  
No 945

9.