

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE.SIERRA LEONE.HANDSTRUCK STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

Little has been written about the Handstruck Stamps and Postmarks of Sierra Leone, and as the publications consulted have proved incomplete and often erroneous the following notes have been based on records made by Members of the Study Circle supported by the extensive records extracted from official sources by Mr. John Forrest of Robson Lowe Ltd. It is through the courtesy of Mr. Forrest that we have the dates of opening of the various post offices and agencies, and also records of many of the rare marks from items in his collection.

The comparatively small number of letter-writers in Sierra Leone during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no doubt accounts for the very few pre-stamp covers and examples of postmarks available for research. Accordingly it is emphasized that the following lists and records cannot be regarded as complete: Corrections and additional information will be greatly appreciated with a view to circularising an enhanced record at some future date.

The present Circular is restricted to the period up to 1930, and comprises:

1. Notes on the Handstruck Stamps
2. A summary of the Postmarks
3. An alphabetical list of the Post Offices and Agencies with additional notes where appropriate
4. Illustrations of the marks referred to

No reference is made to the Travelling Post Offices, which it is proposed to deal with in a separate circular.

Colin McCaig

July, 1967.

Handstruck Stamps.

In the early period the Handstruck Stamps were used on the front of the covers, but later were normally to be found on the back with the rate marks on the front. This was the practice for some time after stamps were issued - rate mark or adhesive cancelled with B31 on the front and PAID datestamp on the back. No doubt the extension of this practice was found necessary owing to the delay in issuing stamps of denominations other than 6d. leaving it impossible in a high proportion of cases to cover the exact postage by adhesives.

I SIERRA-LEONE / 2-line date with year in full (Fig.1)

R.L. type PL: Diam. 25mm.

Dates noted: 1854 to 1877 (as cancellation on adhesive)
and 1879 (as transit mark) - all in black.

II PAID-AT-SIERRA-LEONE / 2-line date with year in full (Fig.2)

R.L. type G: Diam. 24mm.

Dates noted: 1856 to 1877 - all in red

Note. The R.L. Encyclopedia refers to this mark in black but this has not so far been recorded by the Study Circle.

III SIERRA LEONE / Control letter over 2-line date / PAID (Fig.3)

R.L. type H c.d.s. Diam. 22½mm.

Date noted: 1863 - in red.

Note a. Thought to have been the "Paid" datestamp sent to the Colony on 22/3/61

b. Distinguish this mark from the similar type (diam.20½mm.) used as a canceller 1883 to 1886 (Fig.12)

IV PAID-AT-SHERBRO / 2-line date with year in full (Fig.4)

R.L. type G: Diam. 26mm.

Dates noted: 1879 to 1885 - in red

V SHERBRO-AND-SIERRA-LEONE / 2-line date with year in full (Fig.5)

R.L. type PL: Diam. 28mm.

Date noted: 1884 - in black

Postmarks, 1860 - 1930.

During the greater part of the period covered by these notes it was the practice to apply the town or village datestamp to the cover - not as a canceller of the adhesive. At Freetown and also perhaps at Bonthe the postage stamp was cancelled with the B31 mark and later with the Freetown (or perhaps Bonthe) datestamp. Accordingly it is not surprising that examples of the earlier country datestamps on adhesives are comparatively rare.

1. B31

This was the canceller sent to the Colony on 23/3/60. As the first 6d. postage stamp was put on sale in September, 1859, it is unfortunate that no covers attributable to the intervening six months have been recorded to give evidence of the practice operating before the canceller was brought into use. The B31 mark was in use up to the 1890s and a number of cancellers must have been issued. Five distinct types have been recorded as follows:-

- i. $21\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Lettering $13\frac{1}{2} \times 6$ mm. (Fig.6)
- Horizontal lines fine
 - Outer line at top and bottom often does not show
 - The termination of the lower arm of the "3" is often deformed and appears to point to the S.E.
 - The left base-line of the "1" often does not show giving the number a lopsided appearance.
- ii $22\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Lettering $13\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ mm. (Fig.7)
- iii 21×19 mm. Lettering $12\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ mm. (Fig.8)
- iv $21\frac{1}{2} \times 17$ mm. Lettering $13\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ mm. (Fig.9)
- Horizontal lines thicker than type i.
- V Vertical Format - $12\frac{1}{2} \times 24$ mm.
- Straight top to the "3"
 - Stop after "B"
 - Very rare. The purpose of this exceptional type is not known

B31 has been noted in black, red, brown, purple, green, and blue.

2. SIERRA-LEONE / Control letter over 2-line date (Fig.11)

R.L. type PQ c.d.s. Diam. $19\frac{1}{2}$ mm.

Dates noted: 1884 to 1888 - in black.

Note. Beach is believed to have this on cover AU 20 / 61

3. SIERRA-LEONE / Control over 2-line date / PAID (Fig.12)

R.L. type H c.d.s. Diam. $20\frac{1}{2}$ mm.

Dates noted: 1883 to 1886 - in black
1885 to 1886 - in red

4. POST-OFFICE / Placename / SIERRA-LEONE

Oval $26\frac{1}{2}$ x 21mm.

These were used as cancellers in the 1890s and possibly the late 1880s. The only cover seen has the adhesive cancelled by the Manoh Salijah oval and additionally has the Manoh Salijah c.d.s. dated 4/12/93 on the cover.

Recorded for: LAVANAH - in red and in black (Fig.13)
MANOH SALIJAH - in red (Fig.14)
SHAINGAY - in red and in black (1 only) (Fig.15)
SULYMAH - in red
YORK - in black (1 only)

the first four of the above were ports in Sherbro, where in 1884 the senior Customs Officers were authorised to act as deputy postmasters.

5. Circular Date Stamps - with placenames.

i Freetown.

Many circular datestamps must have been sent out for Freetown and further study is needed.

A. FREETOWN / Control over 2-line date / SIERRA-LEONE

The following distinct types have been noted on QV :-

a. 23mm. Large wide lettering: Control C (1887)

b. $22\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Wide lettering: Control B (1896)

- continued

- c. 22½mm. Narrower lettering: Control A or B (1894-1897)
- d. 21mm. Narrower lettering: Control A (1897)
 - " B (1894)
 - " C (1895-1896)
- e. 23mm. Small wide lettering: Control A (1900)
- f. 23mm. Narrow lettering: Control A (1904)

Strikes have been noted in black, red and brown.

- B. FREETOWN / PARCEL POST over 2-line date / SIERRA-LEONE
Diam. 24½ mm. (Fig.27)

This canceller was sent to the Colony on 12/3/08
and dates have been noted from 1908.

ii Country Offices.

In addition to Freetown, circular datestamps were issued to most of the country P.Os. and P.As. The standard type showed the placename at the top, and Sierra-Leone at the bottom, enclosing Control letter or asterisk over a 2-line date.

Those issued during the nineteenth century usually had large well-spaced sans serif lettering and varied in diameter from 21mm. (Newton) to 26mm. (York Island Sherbro). Many of these included stops between the placename and Sierra-Leone, a feature not found in later marks. (Figs.18 & 19) Most of these cancellers were replaced during the first decade of the twentieth century by datestamps with more compact lettering. (Fig.28).

iii Exceptional Types.

- A. Large Segmented Circle (Fig.21) Diam. 33mm.

Cancellers of this type were sent to the Colony on 10/11/99 for:

BULLOM
GLOUCESTER
MANGE
KAMBIA
& MO-PALMA

Only the last two have been recorded.

iii Exceptional Types (contd.)

B. Small circular datestamp with asterisk over
2-line date but nothing at the foot

Diam. 21mm. (Fig.22)

These were sent to the Colony on 15/11/02 for:

BO
MABANG
MANO
& ROKELLE

Mano has not yet been recorded

On 13/9/04 a slightly larger c.d.s. was sent
for PANGUMA with Control C over 2-line date
but nothing at the foot. Diam. 24mm.

C. Large Double Circles Diams. 36 & 22½mm. (Fig.23)

These were sent to the Colony on 16/12/05 for:

BAIIMA
DARU
& KASSI (Diams. 27 & 16)

The last item has not yet been recorded

On 20/6/01 a double circle canceller was sent
for SHENGEH with asterisk over 2-line date and
space bars between the name and SIERRA LEONE
- Noted 14/7/03. Diams. 26½ & 15½mm.

On 18/9/01 a double circle canceller was sent
showing POST OFFICE / * over 2-line date /
KAREMA

D. Circular datestamps with SHERBRO at foot.

This type of c.d.s. was sent on 9/4/08 for:

BENDU
GAMBIA
& SERABU

SHENGAY has also been noted (1910)

As cancellers with SIERRA LEONE at the foot
were issued for these places on 16/9/08, those
with SHERBRO appear to have been little used and
are scarce.

6. Ovals.

- a. Sent to the Colony 8/5/95:
OFFICIAL PRE-PAID / -/date/- / FREETOWN.SIERRA-LEONE
(Fig.25)
- b. Sent 15/4/96:
REGISTERED / C / date / FREETOWN.SIERRA-LEONE
(Fig.24)
Noted in red and black, also with Control A, 1896
to 1902
- c. Sent 14/7/99:
- as type a. but larger letters
- d. REGISTERED / * / date / SIERRA-LEONE
Noted from 1904
- e. Sent 10/10/07:
REGISTERED / 1-line date / G.P.O.SIERRA-LEONE
- but Cameron notes this 1903
- f. Sent 9/4/08:
Registered cancellers for RONIETTA / SIERRA-LEONE
and for BENDU, GAMBIA, SHENGAY and SUMBUYA / SHERBRO
- also on 16/9/08 for BOIA and PENDEMBU with SIERRA-
LEONE. Mark reading REGISTERED / 1-line date /
PUJEHUN SIERRA-LEONE noted 1914. (Fig.29)
- g. Sent 21/6/09:
RECEIVED FROM GARRISON / 1-line date / FREETOWN SIERRA
LEONE

Alphabetical List of
Post Offices & Postal Agencies to 1930.

To facilitate study the list distinguishes the opening dates of three periods: before 1901, 1901 to 1920, and 1921 to 1930. Names of Offices opened during the second and third periods are commenced a little to the right of those opened during the preceding period.

Dates of opening are given, and Offices from which no postmarks have been recorded are marked *.

To 19001901-19201921-1930

ABERDEEN 1/3/26

BALIMA 1/1/06 Large double circles: standard type noted 1930

BANANAS (replaced DUBLIN BANANAS) noted 1918.

BANDAJUMA 9/8/99 Only noted on E VII

BAOMA 1/3/26

BATHURST 1/10/92 With stops: only noted on E VII

BATKANU 2/1/03

BAUYA (Thought to be re-spelling of BOIA) noted 1928

BENDOO SHERBRO 1/10/92 later re-spelled:-

BENDU / SHERBRO 1908 & 1909 noted: closed 1916

BENGUEMA 1/10/92 Only noted on E VII

* BENKE 16/3/25

BLAMA 1/4/05

BO 1902 Small c.d.s. noted to 1910; standard type c.d.s.
from 1911

BOIA 1908 Noted to 1926

* BOMPEHTUK 1/4/05 Closed 1907

BONTHE 28/10/73 Noted from 1906: earlier canceller described
SHERBRO, noted 1896 & on E VII

BRADFORD 1/1/04 Closed 1909 to 1925

* BROOKFIELDS 1906

* BULLOM 1899 Large segmented circle

CLINE TOWN 14/8/00

- * COMBRAYMAH 22/1/84 No evidence of canceller having been issued,
and not included in subsequent official lists
- COMMENDI 10/3/25
- DARU 1/1/06 Large double circles: standard type noted 1914
- DIA SHERBRO 1/1/11 Noted on E VII
- DUBLIN BANANAS 16/3/93 Noted on Q.V; replaced by BANANAS q.v.
- FALABA 1/5/99
- GAMBIA / SHERBRO 1908 Standard type noted 1923 & 1924
- GARRISON MAIL Noted from 1914: Skeleton type GARRISON POST
OFFICE noted 1928
- GBANGBAIA 1/2/26
- GBANGBAMA 2/5/27
- GERIHUN 13/3/25
- GLOUCESTER 1/10/92 Large segmented circle: standard type noted 1910
- GODERICH 26/2/96 Closed 1910 to 1932
- HAMILTON 1/10/92 With stops noted 1899
- HANGHA 1/1/05
- HASTINGS 1/10/92
- HILL STATION 1/1/05
- * ISLES DE LOS 1/10/92 No evidence of canceller having been issued.
Islands transferred to the French in 1904
- JIMMI 15/1/26
- KABALLA 1901
- KABINKOLA Noted 1916
- KAMABAI Noted 1919
- KAMBIA 9/8/99 Large segmented circle: standard type noted from 1917
- KANGAHUN 1/5/25
- KANRE LAHUN 1/1/26
- * KAREMA 29/7/01 Double circles POST OFFICE / KAREMA: Closed 1902
- KARENE 1/5/99
- KASSE 1/6/06 Large double circle KASSI: standard type noted
1908 & 1909: Office closed 1911

- KENNEMA 22/9/06 Noted in violet, 1922: Later re-spelled:-
 KENEMA Noted 1929
- KENT 1/10/92 With stops: standard type noted from 1907
 KING TOM BRIDGE 1/7/04 Closed 1916
- KISSY 1/10/92
 KUMRABAI MAMILLA 1/5/26
- * KUNSO 1901
- * KWALU 1/5/99
- LAVANAH 22/1/84 Ovals in red or black, & c.d.s. in red or black
 noted 1889 to 1896: Office closed 1897 and
 business transferred to Sulymah
- LEVUMA 1/5/25
- MABANG 1902 Small c.d.s. noted to 1910; standard type
 noted from 1927: Office closed 1916 to 1925
- MABANTA 1901 Noted 1903
 MABUM 1/5/25
- * MAFWEH 1/3/98
- MAGBELLI 1899 Later re-spelled:-
 MAGBELE Noted 1919: Office closed 1921
- * MAGBENKA 1/5/25 Office closed 1935
- MAKENE 21/12/14
 MAKUMP 1/10/20
- * MAKUNDO (or MAKONDO) Office closed 1909
- * MAMUNTA 1/5/25
- MANGE 9/8/99 Large segmented circle: standard type noted 1915
 MANO 21/9/03 Small c.d.s.; standard type noted from 1909
- MANOH SALIJAH 22/1/84 Ovals in red, & c.d.s. in red noted 1886 & 1887:
 Later respelled:-
 MANO SALIJA Noted from 1910 (in black)
- MANSANKI 1/2/29
 MATTRU 7/1/25
- * MOA RIVER 18/1/07
- MO-PALMA 9/8/99 Large segmented circle noted to 1908; standard type
 noted 1913 & 1914: Closed 1916 to 1927;
 finally closed 1928

MOYAMBA 1899
 MURRAY TOWN 1/10/92
 NEWTON 1/9/00
 N'JALA 1/5/26
 PANGUMA 1/5/99 Skeleton type noted 1906 with no SIERRA LEONE
 at foot: standard type noted from 1903

 PENDEMBU 1908
 PORT LOKKO 1/5/99
 PRINCE ALFRED TOWN 1/10/92 Noted 1896
 PUJEHUN 15/4/13
 REGENT 1/10/92 With stops
 * ROBENKE 1/1/04 No evidence of canceller having been issued
 ROKELLE 1902 Small c.d.s. noted 1907: Later re-spelled:-
 ROKEL 16/7/28
 RONIETTO 19/3/08 Noted 1909
 RORUKS Noted 1912
 ROTIFUNK 7/1/01
 RUSSELL Noted 1913
 SEFADU 1/4/30
 SEGBWEMA 1/4/05
 SEMBEHU 1/6/04
 SERABU / SHERBRO 16/5/08 Noted 1910: Office closed 1923
 SHAINGAY 1/10/92 Ovals in red or black, & c.d.s. in black with
 stops noted 1896: Later re-spelled:-
 SHENGAY / SHERBRO 1/9/07 Office closed 1913
 SHENGEH 1/6/01 Double circles noted 1903: Office closed
 1916, & probably the office re-opened with
 the name re-spelled:-

 SHENGE 21/1/25
 SHERBRO see BONTHE
 SONGO 3/11/03
 SULYMAH 22/1/84 Ovals in red, & c.d.s. in red: Name re-spelled:-
 SULIMA 7/7/00

- SUMBUYA 1907 Noted 1908 to 1920: Name re-spelled:-
 SUMBUYAH Noted from 1921
 TABE 1/6/25
 TASSOH 1/1/98
 TIAMA 22/2/29
 TOMBO 1/10/92 Re-opened 1913; Noted 1915 to 1919
 * VICTORIA 1/10/92 No evidence of canceller having been issued:
 Office closed 1897 & business transferred
 to Bonthe
 WATERLOO 1/10/92 With stops noted 1900 to 1906; standard
 type noted from 1908
 WELLINGTON 1/10/92 With stops noted 1896; standard type
 noted from 1925
 WILBERFORCE 1/10/92
 YUMANDU 1/10/25
 YONNI BANNA 22/7/13 Name re-spelled:-
 YONIBANA Noted from 1928
 YORK 1/10/92 With stops noted 1894 to 1910; standard type
 noted from 1910
 YORK ISLAND SHERBRO 1/10/92 With stops noted 1896: Later
 described:-
 YORK ISLAND Noted from 1913
 YOYEMA 1/5/25
 ZIMI Noted 1930



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