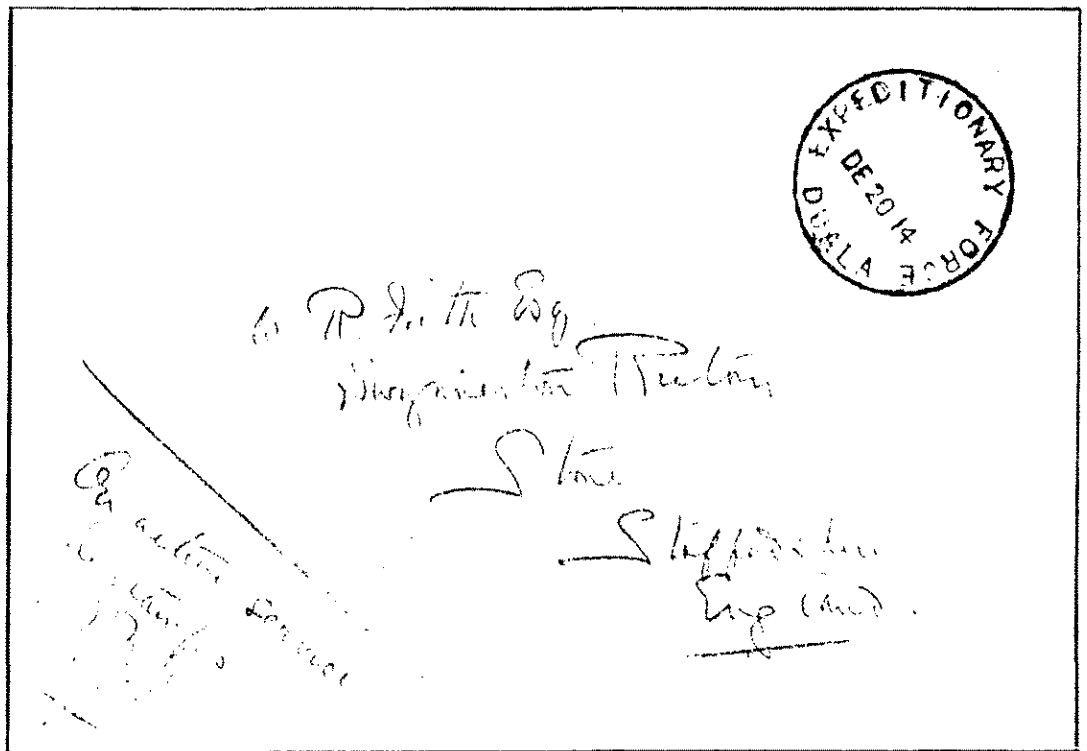


BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE

THE POSTAL HISTORY OF THE
BRITISH
OCCUPATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE
CAMEROONS

(1914-1961)

Written by M.St.J.Wright
on behalf of the British West Africa Study Circle
based largely on contributions from the members



BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE

MARCH 1983

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Postal History of the British Cameroons

I owe the Committee and members an apology for the length of time since I last circulated any information on the Cameroons. I have now completed what might be called an interim report. Perhaps a majority of members have joined since the material was last circulated, and I hope they will have plenty of new, or confirmatory, information to pass on, which could be circulated - rather more quickly - in a Supplement, or a completely new edition.

With the decease of many of the members who contributed to the original surveys of members conducted by Dr. Roche and later by myself, it may be difficult to clear up problems relating to earlier reports. I have indicated many special queries on particular pages, but there are some problems which are more general:

1) The lists do not distinguish clearly the different sizes of some marks (particularly the skeletons and the ovals) which exist. Reliable information on this point would be welcome.

2) The dates have been recorded only numerically, and without full data always on the number of lines used, the presence or absence of the time of day, stars etc. and the setting. It would be useful if members would always report dates in full, e.g. * / 10 JU / 57 (using oblique strokes as usual to indicate a change of line).

In addition, it should always be clearly stated if the postmark is not being used as a cancellation, or if its colour is not black. The spacing, particularly any asymmetry, of skeleton postmarks is of particular interest. If at all possible, use should be made of the possibilities of photocopying, which is so much more generally available than was the case twenty or even ten years ago.

I have made one change since the lists were first circulated. In them the German handstamp for Buea was called Type I; I have promoted the skeleton postmarks to that number and used Type II to cover the newly-reported postmarks from the 1920's without country names. I have allocated Type VIII to the undated parcel postmarks.

I hope in a Supplement, or new edition of this Report to add details postmarks of Field Post Offices, censorship and other markings and labels, including registration etiquettes.

I also hope to circulate also before too long a companion study of stamps and postal stationery relating to the Cameroons; principally the C.E.F. issue of 1915 and the CAMEROONS / U.K.T.T. issue of 1960-61. I should welcome any unpublished information that members could supply on this as soon as possible.

The Society has lost touch with Mr. Carøe, who, I believe, acquired Dr. Roche's collection. If any member is still in touch with him, I should be grateful to be put back in contact with him.

Finally, may I again appeal to members to contribute what they can, including long-established members re-checking their collections and re-submitting their observations. It would be ideal, though I am not the one to say it, if I could receive these by the end of the year.

Michael St.J. Wright
March 1983

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE BRITISH CAMEROONS

This study concerns the philatelic aspects of the British connection with the Cameroons, apart from the actual specific stamp issues. Apart from the need to split up the enormous area of Nigeria after 1914 in order to deal with it properly, the logic of writing about the British Cameroons separately lies in its differing international status from that of Nigeria proper - albeit that it was largely treated administratively as part of Nigeria. The following main periods can be distinguished, each of which had some philatelic consequences (though often only after a long delay):

- 1) The initial combined Anglo-French military campaign against the German colony from the outbreak of war in August 1914 and culminating in the occupation of the whole area on the German surrender on 18th February 1916;
- 2) The British administration of the relatively small area of the colony allocated to unilateral British control from 18th April 1916 (a small part of which was transferred to French control in 1920);
- 3) The British mandate over this area granted by the League of Nations and effective from 20th July 1922;
- 4) The British Trusteeship over the same area granted by the United Nations in 1946.

During the Mandate and Trusteeship periods the area was in practice largely administered as part of Nigeria. The more developed Southern Cameroons evolved by 1954 into a "quasi-region" comparable to the Eastern and Western Regions of Nigeria proper; the Northern Cameroons remained part of the Northern Region, divided between three separate provinces and consisting of two separate areas divided by an area where the French Cameroons extended to the pre-war Nigerian-Kamerun border.

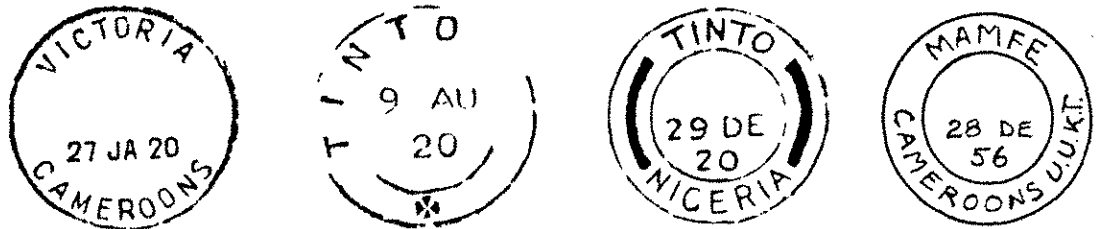
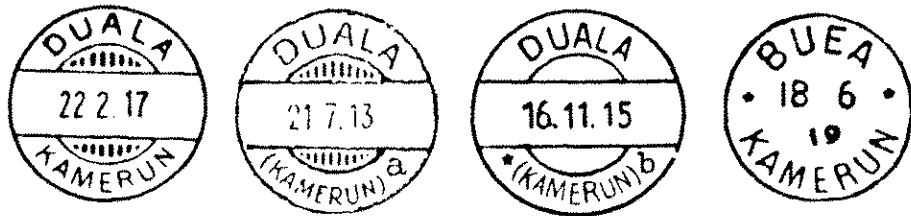
The Trusteeship over the British Cameroons continued after the independence of Nigeria on 1st October 1960, following plebiscites which showed that opinion in the British Cameroons on their future was divided. After a further plebiscite the Northern Cameroons became part of the Northern Region of Nigeria again on 1st June 1961. The Southern Cameroons, however, opted to join (on 1st October 1961) the former French mandate/trust territory (which had become independent as the Republic of Cameroun on 1st January 1960) as the Western Cameroon region within the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

This final year of the Trusteeship period in the South forms a fifth period in this study, while the Northern Cameroons has been treated, regardless of period, as a separate sixth section.

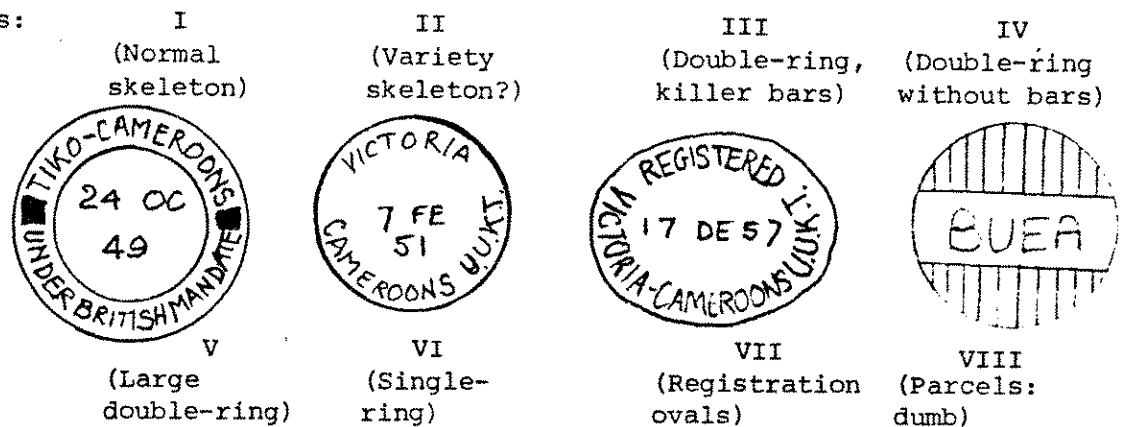
TYPES OF CANCELLATIONS

(The best-drawn of these have been kindly contributed by Dr. Schelling)

German Types:



British Types:



Principal references: Philatelic

Albert Friedemann: Die Postwertzeichen und Entwertungen der deutsche Postamtalten in den Schutzgebieten und in Ausland: Handbuch und Spezialkatalog (reprinted in 1967 by Dr. Wittmann.) (German period only)

The Philatelist Vols 22 & 23: Articles by G.Porter (all periods)

Stamp Collecting Vols 93 & 94: Article by D.B.Armstrong, and subsequent pieces.

Philatelic Magazine: Vol 79 No. 1: Article by Cyril Kidd (not our member!)

Vol 84 Nos. 6 & 7: Articles by R.J.Maddocks.

Cameo No 9: Article by Alastair Kennedy on Cameroons references in PO archives.

P.Beale & J.Martin: The Post Office Impression Books (BWASC November 1981)

Non-philatelic

HMSO: Colonial Office Reports on the Cameroons - various titles, 1921-38 & 1947-59.

Gerald Durrell: The Bafut Beagles

Pat Ritzenthaler: The Fon of Bafut

1st period: The Cameroons campaign and joint occupation, August 1914 - April 1916

History, from Reports on the Cameroons

On the outbreak of war with Germany in August, 1914, offensive action was begun from Nigeria and from French territory against the German colony of Kamerun. In the north Shehu Umar Sanda Mandarama of Dikwa tendered his submission at once but the Germans continued resistance at Mora till 1916. Further south an early British advance into German territory along the Benue and Cross rivers met with failure, the British troops in the north being driven back from Garua on the Benue river and in the south being similarly overpowered by superior forces at Nsanakang.

Subsequently an Anglo-French military and naval force under the command of Brigadier General C. Dobell, the Inspector General of the West African Frontier Force, compelled Duala to surrender on the 27th September, 1914, and after hard fighting drove the German forces from the surrounding districts. On the 10th June, 1915, Garua fell after a siege of a few weeks by forces from Nigeria and the French Chad territory under the command of Brigadier General Cunliffe, the Commandant of the Nigeria Regiment, West African Frontier Force; having cleared the north of the Cameroons, except Mora, where the Germans were entrenched in a very strong position, these forces marched southwards driving the Germans before them to the Sanga river.

French forces, with a Belgian contingent from the Congo, invaded the Cameroons from French Equatorial Africa, and gradually pushed forward from the south-east and south towards Yaounde, which had become the headquarters of the German forces. Finally in 1916, the main German force, being almost surrounded by the converging advance of the Allied troops, retreated southwards into the Spanish territory of Rio Muni where they were interned, and the isolated garrison of Mora then surrendered.

By an arrangement which came into effect on the 18th April, 1916, the Cameroons was provisionally divided into British and French spheres...Boundary adjustments with the French took place in 1920 in accordance with an agreement signed by Lord Milner and M. Simon on the 10th July, 1919.

Postal activity in the joint occupation period.

This was largely centred on Duala (activity at Buea is covered in the next section).

(A) It seems logical to deal first with a skeleton postmark reading EXPEDITIONARY FORCE / DUALA, although this is not actually the first mark seen. This seems to have been used briefly around the end of 1914, although Dr. Roche had examples of it used to cancel, on pieces, some unoverprinted Kamerun stamps with the date 26.5.15. More respectable use is reported as a backstamp on 11.12.14, and as the principal postmark on 16.12.24. The date seems to have been set in one line, e.g. DE 16 14.

Reports of all examples of the use of this postmark would be appreciated

(B) The captured Duala had three quite similar postmarks in use by the Germans in 1914. The main one was a double-ring postmark inscribed DUALA / KAMERUN, both rings being broken by a 'bridge' for the date, which was shown simply in one line of 'arabic' numerals - day, month, and a two-figure year. The upper and lower segments were filled in with vertical lines.

The other two versions had the word KAMERUN in brackets; in the first case this was followed by the letter 'a' (set horizontally, not curved around in the band between the rings) while in the second case there was a similar letter 'b' and also a star preceding the first bracket - this variety also lacked the vertical in-filling lines.

Distinction between these three postmarks may not have been made consistently in Circle Bulletins in the past, and I have often seen them mis-described in auction catalogues. Please take care to separate them properly in any future reports.

The earliest date reported for one of these postmarks is 27.10.14 on a stampless cover; Dr. Roche reported a piece with a Nigerian stamp dated 3.11.14. The earliest date reported on a C.E.F. stamp was 7.9.15, and the last date on a stampless cover was 6.2.16.

My impression is that the initial postal arrangements were run solely by the British from Duala. The first item in the sale on 24/3/82 by Robson Lowe of the Read collection was a cover from a Frenchman to France, bearing a large dumb postmark TRESOR ET POSTE / AUX ARMEES which nevertheless bore the manuscript "Via Lagos . Liverpool / Corps exp. fr.ang. du Cameroun / W. African expeditionary force".

Alastair Kennedy's researches in the GPO records, published in Cameo No 9 concern mainly the arrangements for mail from Britain to the Cameroons, but they give some clues to what was going on at the other end. The first definite indication of a functioning post office came on 11th November when General Dobell asked for permission to issue Postal Orders from the Post Office at Duala. On 23rd November a Press Notice was issued announcing that "The Mail Service to the Cameroons has been re-established". There was some uncertainty about the correct postage rate; on 2nd December an enquirer was told that letters could be prepaid at 1d per oz (i.e. the Imperial rate rather than the foreign rate that would have applied before the war) but on 14th December, confirmed on 3rd February 1915, it was fixed at the foreign rate again (although this was not done in the case of Samoa and some other occupied territories). On 3rd December 1915 it was stated that mail to the Forces in the Cameroons could still be sent at 1d per oz.

On 11th April 1916 it is stated in the Records that the British Post Office at Duala apparently closed on 31st March 1916, and on 15th April the UPU advised that a French Post Office had opened on 10th November 1915. Presumably these were only theoretically separate, and operated from the same building. The first French overprinted set is dated as November 1915. In the Read sale stamps of this set were seen postmarked TRESOR ET POSTES AUX ARMEES / CAMEROUN on 18.2.16 - but it is possible, I suppose, that this postmark could have been applied somewhere other than Duala.

I have a philatelic cover to Switzerland (to W. Thon, not the usual Blatter) with stamps of the third French set cancelled with the Duala 'b' handstamp on 17.3.16, i.e. they had access at least to that handstamp before the British left - unless the British were prepared to accept the CAMEROUN / Occupation / Francaise stamps.

The French quickly introduced a postmark in their own style - a smallish double-ring, the inner circle being dotted, not a solid line - inscribed DUALA / CAMEROUN (note not Douala as they later spelt it). The Read sale included a cover with this postmark dated 3 / JUIN / 91 (the year figures were inverted for some months). Nevertheless they continued to use the old German postmarks; I have the basic unlettered one on a non-philatelic registered to France dated 29.11.21.

I have read a story somewhere that the actual German Post Office building had burned down around this time - this was said to explain the lack of stamps, in spite of the C.E.F. overprinted issue, which is said to have been available from July 1915. There seems to be little doubt that nearly all these were acquired at once by the occupying forces for their philatelic value.

Both before and after July 1915 nearly all mail from Duala bore no stamps, and was marked "No stamps available" or something similar. In addition most of it is marked "on Active Service" or just "O.A.S." Would such mail have qualified for free postage in any case? The only item I have seen on which postage was collected in England was on a cover apparently from a civilian. The envelope had a printed heading for The Ambas Bay Trading Co., Limited, Victoria. and it was sealed with a fancy AB monogram in wax. This was postmarked with the Duala 'a' handstamp on 13.5.15. In England it was struck with a postage due mark for 1d, and this was collected by a label which was postmarked SOUTHPORT 3PM / 18 JU / 15. It is noteworthy that the official who assessed the charge accepted the statement "stamps not available" which was written on it and did not levy a double charge; he also collected only the Imperial rate, although as we have seen the foreign rate was being charged on mail to the Cameroons. Another letter from the same correspondence, however, posted on 25.5.15 escaped without any charge.

Mr. Kennedy's researches reveal that on 4th December 1915 the office of the Director of Posts and Telegraphs, Duala, signed by a J.B.Laidlaw, Lieut. R.E., advised that there was no system of registration within the colony. The French certainly operated such a system - I have a non-philatelic registered letter to France dated 1.4.16. More interestingly, I have an apparently registered letter to England dated 7.10.15, with the Duala 'a' postmark, and a British (not German or French) style registration label with Duala filled in by hand. In the bottom left corner it is signed M. McGilvray, below which is handstamped Director / Posts and Telegraphs. It is neatly addressed to a C.P.Day Esq., but is an old German envelope; was it philatelically inspired? It is backstamped (not with special registration postmarks) in Plymouth on 12.11.15 and in Warrington the next day.

*As well as reports of any interesting dates or usage of the Duala postmarks that members would care to make, I should particularly appreciate reports of other examples of mail charged on arrival in the U.K. or elsewhere, and of registered mail. I have never seen any mail sent to the Cameroons in this period, which would tie in with Mr. Kennedy's researches - this too would be of especial interest. Indications of censorship would also be appreciated.

It would also be interesting to know for certain whether any stamps other than the C.E.F. issue were ever made generally available by the British in Duala - indeed, even the C.E.F. issue may not have been. The earliest date seen for a Duala postmark on a Nigerian stamp is 3.11.14 and on a Southern Nigerian stamp is 24.11.14. These were probably the result of private enterprise - not necessarily philatelic - people may have brought the stamps there in their wallets. I doubt whether any of the Nigerian stamps that appeared on philatelic covers after 31.3.16 from Duala (i.e. from the French-controlled office) actually paid any of the postal charge - can anyone demonstrate otherwise?

(C) Activity other than through Duala (or Buea) exists from the campaign period but is scarce, and bears no postmarks applied in the Cameroons. Covers (often written only in pencil) are usually marked 'O.A.S.' and 'No stamps available' and are first postmarked when they entered the Nigerian postal service. Examples include:

From the Cross River area:

IKOM / SOUTHERN NIGERIA JU 21 / 15 backstamped in Calabar on JU 25 / 15.

From the troops attacking Garoua:

YOLA, NORTHERN NIGERIA SE 14 / 1915 backstamped LOKOJA, NORTHERN NIGERIA SE 29 / 15. This was actually written from M'bula which was in Nigeria, but was from a Frenchman to France and was endorsed inter alia Troupes Franco-anglaises du cameroun Nord.

IBI, NORTHERN NIGERIA / + DE 23 / 1915 backstamped NARAGUTA / +
JA 6 / 16 and ZARIA, NORTHERN NIGERIA / + 8 JA / 16.

2nd and 3rd periods: The British area - pre-Mandate and Mandate periods

The area assigned to the British in 1916 included the following places where the Germans had maintained post offices - the dates of operation are taken from Friedmann:

Bamenda	15.11.04	to	22.10.15	
Bibundi	5. 7.91	to	8.10.14	(closed 8.1.97 to 22.5.06)
Buea	15. 2.00	to	15.11.14	
Dschang	9.07	to	2. 1.15	
Fontendorf	1.11.04?	to	9.07	(replaced by Dschang)
Johann-Albrechtshöhe	1.11.04	to	21.11.14	
Ossidinge	17.12.04	to	31.12.14	
Rio del Rey	9. 1.97	to	8.14	
Victoria	12.12.88	to	4. 9.14	

Dschang (spelt by the British as Chang) was in the area transferred to French control in 1920, and no British postal activity has been reported from there. (It must have been inconvenient to relinquish control of that area - I believe as a swap for somewhere further north - because the telegraph line to Bamenda ran through there from Tinto. Mandate Reports also mention that colonial officials travelling to Bamenda had to go through that way.) There is also no report of any British postal activity from Bibundi, Fontendorf or Rio del Rey. Johann-Albrechtshöhe was quickly renamed Kumba, and Ossidinge was renamed Mamfe in about 1922, before any British postal activity has been reported from there, under the old name.

The British quickly reopened the Post Office at Buea, the old administrative capital on the cool slopes of the Cameroon mountain, and after leaving Duala solely to the French, at the other old port of Victoria. They appear next to have opened an office in a new location at Tinto (in the area of Mamfe), then at Kumba, Bamenda and Mamfe. Finally at the end of the 1920's they closed the office at Tinto but opened one at Tiko (another port, and the site of the later airport).

(A) The postmarks up to 1929

The old German single-ring cancellation inscribed BUEA / KAMERUN was the only one of its kind used by the British. It is known used as early as 7.12.14 on a campaign cover that received the Expeditionary Force postmark four days later. The postmark continued to be used occasionally up to 25.7.19.

Was the later use only on philatelic mail? Was the Post Office open continuously from 1914, or only reopened in 1916, when the first skeleton postmark is recorded?

The British then introduced skeleton postmarks at Buea. These come in a bewildering variety of inscriptions and settings, and unless there was a lot of deliberate switching around and back again, there must have been at least two and possibly three different handstamps, if the reports of overlapping dates are correct. I suppose that it is possible that they were prepared to remake an old description for a persistent philatelist?

Again, complete reports of all dates, and the type of covers (especially if non-philatelic) would be welcome to sort out this problem.

All of these skeleton postmarks (which we classify as Type I) have, as far as I can tell from the reports, the date in one line, but without any star above it; sometimes the date is set low in the circle but occasionally it is across the centre. (Please see footnote ϕ)

BUEA / BRITISH KAMERUN	22. 7.16	to	24. 6.19	(date low)
B U E A / KAMERUN)	22. 1.20	to	17. 5.21
BUEA / KAMERUN)			(date low - see below*)
BUEA / CAMEROONS	9. 1.21	to	15. 6.21	(date central)
B U E A / CAMEROONS	8. 8.21	to	19. 4.23	(date low)
				(date central)
BUEA / NIGERIA	10. 2.20	to	28. 5.23	?
BUEA / N I G E R I A	26. 6.23	to	14.10.23	?

*In this setting, the word KAMERUN is too far round (clockwise) for symmetry. I hope the other spacing varieties are correctly reported!

In contrast to all this activity at Buea, the similar skeleton used at Victoria persisted unchanged for a very long time (the date is always in one line, set low, without any star above it):

VICTORIA / CAMEROONS	6. 7.16	to	26. 2.22
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The next two offices to be opened (as far as we know this was not until after the war) were first issued with a different style of postmark, which I have now listed as Type II. It has always had me slightly puzzled. It appears to have continuous double-rings, but at the top, where the letters appear, these show only fragmentarily. They are similar, in that they have only a Maltese Cross at the bottom, and not the country name, to some Nigerian postmarks of the period, but my guess is that they are a different form of skeleton postmark. If the loose letters were very slightly proud of the surface, they would inhibit the fixed rings from appearing properly. Further evidence lies in the equal allocation of space to each letter, regardless of width - e.g. the I of TINTIO, and also the asymmetrical placing of that name in relation to the Maltese Cross at the bottom. The date is set in two lines, in rather large letters and figures.

KUMBA / +	7. 1.21
TINTIO / +	16. 3.19 to 20. 1.21

Around the end of 1920 the first British-style definitive postmarks appeared for the Cameroons, at first for the offices already covered and later for Bamenda and Mamfe when these were reopened. These (classified as Type III) were double-ring postmarks with the office name at the top and NIGERIA at the bottom; these words were separated by thick 'killer' obliterating bars. The first example sent to Bamenda was misspelt BEMENDA; this was later corrected. The date was set in two lines, with space for the time in a third line - but this was inserted only by the two busiest offices. Usually a date without a time was set with a blank space above, but occasionally a two-line date was set evenly within the circle.

ϕ Our member Dr. J. Schelling is making a special study of these skeleton postmarks from Buea, and I would like to suggest that members send him as much information as possible about them - if possible, including photocopies. His address (altered since the last list) is Gerestein 23, Drumpt, 4003 GD, TIEL, Netherlands.

BEMENDA	22. 5.21	to	30. 5.21	without time, set low
BAMENDA	13.11.23	to	27. 1.50*	without time, set centrally
BUEA	16.12.23	to	12. 3.30	with time
KUMBA	8. 6.21	to	7. 3.50*	without time, set low
MAMFE	1.10.24	to	10.10.29	without time, set centrally
TINTO	29.12.20	to	25. 5.28	without time, set low
VICTORIA	17. 7.22	to	15. 7.30	with time

*The use of these in Bamenda and Kumba in 1950 seems to be strange, as other postmarks were available and more appropriate. It would be interesting to know of the last date of use before the introduction of the Mandate postmarks in 1930, and then all later dates, in 1950 and perhaps in between.

The office at Tinto seems to have been closed in 1928 or so; around the same time a new office was opened at Tiko. This started with a skeleton postmark (details uncertain) but appears to have been fairly quickly supplied with a definitive postmark. This is in the same style as the ones above (Type III) but it is somewhat larger.

I	T I K O / NIGERIA	22. 6.29	
IIIa	TIKO / NIGERIA	24. 7.29	to 21. 3.30 (no time, set centrally)

Special oval postmarks (Type VII) for registration were also issued to some of these offices. They had the word REGISTERED at the top, and at the bottom there was the office name followed closely by NIGERIA, but separated from it by a stop. The date is always set in Type VII marks in one line; there is no room for any time.

BUEA.NIGERIA	17. 5.24	to	1. 7.30
VICTORIA.NIGERIA	8. 9.22	to	14. 5.30 (2.7.30 as a backstamp)

A postmark in the same style (with a stop at the bottom) also exists for Mamfe, and may have been made then, but I have only listed it later around the time when it is recorded. Certainly in 1924 Mamfe was using an ordinary postmark on registered mail (as was Kumba in 1928). No marks in this particular style with a stop have been seen for Bamenda, Kumba, Tiko or Tinto.

(B) The expression of Mandate status on postmarks from 1930

At the end of the 1920's the League of Nations began to assert itself on the extent to which the Cameroons was administered as though it were part of Nigeria; they objected to the expression 'British Cameroons', and it was agreed that the territory should be called 'Cameroons under British Mandate'. Furthermore, as the 1929 Report put it in paragraph 14:

"The third point which was criticised by the Commission is the lack of an issue of stamps peculiar to the Cameroons under British Mandate, and the use of the word Nigeria in the postmark."

The Report went on to dismiss the claim for stamps, but conceded that for postmarks, and confirmed in the Report for 1930 that the change had been made. As far as the existing offices was concerned, this was true, but as will be seen constantly through the rest of this Study, the decision to include the word Cameroons instead of Nigeria was often overlooked.

In at least two cases the situation was regarded as sufficiently urgent to correct that skeleton postmarks were briefly introduced:

BUEA / UNDER BRITISH MANDATE	31. 5.30 to 15. 7.30
BUEA UNDER BRITISH MANDATE	20. 9.30
MAMFE / UNDER BRITISH MANDATE	28. 6.30 to 27. 9.30

Further details on these are not available - and I wonder whether the second setting for Buea is simply a reporting error? As Mamfe was not one of the bigger offices, if a temporary postmark was provided for there, perhaps they exist, unreported, for all the six offices?

The definitive postmarks which followed these were very large double-ring handstamps with -CAMEROONS following the office name in the upper part of the band and UNDER BRITISH MANDATE in the lower part, with vestigial 'killer' bars in between; these are called Type V. The date was set centrally in two lines, the time never appearing. These postmarks initially replaced the special oval registration postmarks as well as the ordinary ones.

BAMENDA	22. 1.31 to 7. 3.50
BUEA	30. 9.30 to 6. 2.50
KUMBA	14. 4.32 to 22. 4.47
MAMFE	13. 1.31 to 23. 5.50
TIKO	2. 2.31 to 14.12.49
VICTORIA	30. 9.30 to 3. 8.50

Victoria also had a special postmark occasionally used as a cancellation which was set slightly differently, and with no vestige of killer bars. Finally in this Type there is recorded a mark for one of the postal agencies (whose development is described next). In it "the lower wording is about half normal size, just inside the outer circle, leaving a noticeable space between the inner circle and the top of the lettering". Any further dates for (and particularly a photocopy of) this rare postmark would be appreciated.

VICTORIA (MAILS) / CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH MANDATE	4.4.37 to 13.2.50
MUYUKA / CAMEROONS-UNDER BRITISH MANDATE	20.5.41

About this time there also appeared a new handstamp for Victoria with simply CAMEROONS in the lower half, separated by small killer bars. In shape and size it was something like Type IIIa (see Tiko above). This seems to have been rarely used as a cancellation; the date below has been recorded on a First Day Cover of a 1d. Coronation stamp. It was sometimes seen as a backstamp on mail coming into the Cameroons during the war

VICTORIA / CAMEROONS	12. 5.37	date set in two lines, set centrally.
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Lastly, probably sometime in the 1930's there appeared at least for some offices special dumb cancellations, believed to be for use on stamps on parcels (Type VIII). They consisted of circles with vertical lines except for a clear middle band which bore the office name. These have been seen on stamps from the reigns of KGV and KGVI.

Any on pieces which included dated postmarks would be very useful.

BUEA
MAMFE (struck in violet)
VICTORIA

The Development of Postal Agencies (1935? - 1961)

With the opening of Tiko and the closing of Tinto the number of post offices settled at six, and in the Southern Cameroons this number was never increased. The 1937 Report said that "full postal and telegraphic facilities" existed at these six offices. The 1938 Report mentioned that there were six Savings Banks. At the end of the year there were 544 depositors, with total deposits of £3,240.

It is difficult to establish the date of opening of the lesser Postal Agencies, but some dates were given (I do not know on what authority) in the Bulletin that Dr. Roche circulated among members many years ago. At least one appears to be wrong - but of course the first reported date may be wrong; the dates also do not fit the clues given in the Reports, but these may also have been wrong. Apart from the special Mandate postmark for Muyuka, which is listed with those from the six offices above, the details of the postmarks are given below in the Trusteeship section.

Agency	'Opening date'	First reported date
Ndian	3. 4.35	6.10.47
Muyuka	14. 8.39	20. 5.41
Nyasoso	7.10.40	10. 4.46
Bai	1. 4.47	10. 4.46
Nsaw	?	13. 4.46
Bakebe	?	23. 4.46
Mbonge	1. 2.48	19. 1.49
Bali	17.10.49	27.10.49

The first Report to mention these was in 1947, which quotes 5 (but the above suggests 6, unless one was temporarily closed at the time). 1948 quotes 7, which fits, but 1949 quotes 9, which is very difficult to understand, as 1950 quotes 8, which fits with the above, and was the number of agencies which first had Trusteeship postmarks.

The 1951 Report quotes only 7 again, but specifically mentions that Mbonge was closed following a burglary. The 1952 Report mentions 9, and says that the new ones were at Batibo and Ndu. For the next few years the Reports talk only of "an increasing number" of agencies, until the 1956 Report mentions 20; this number is repeated in the 1957 Report, which goes on to explain that 5 of these were in the Northern Cameroons (which I consider separately later). It also mentions that Bali had Savings Bank facilities. By the 1958 Report there are 26 (of which 6 were in the North); fortunately these are listed - the Report actually having given the number as 25! From this we can list the 11 that had been opened since 1952 (of which 6 were probably by 1956) as follows: Bafut, Ndop, Njinikom, Nkambe, Manyemen, Mbakwa Supe, Mbengwi, Sante (sic), Tombel, Muea and Wun. In addition Mbonge is listed, having re-opened, but Ndian is omitted, presumably having been closed (though it re-opened later - see postscript).

The 1959 Report (the last) does not add to this list (although it does mention that Muyuka as well as Bali had Savings Bank facilities). Nevertheless at least one more agency was opened before the end of the Trusteeship period, at Lobe, and there was possibly another one, at Kembong.

Part 4 The Trust Territory period - up to the Independence of Nigeria

(A) The introduction of the amended status had no philatelic impact until late in 1949. Before then there was a brief use of a skeleton postmark by Buea which referred to the 'British Cameroons'. More surprisingly three of the offices started to use registration marks inscribed NIGERIA. These Type VII postmarks came in slightly different styles and sizes; Mamfe has a stop between its name and NIGERIA, like the earlier examples (and may well have been made then), Kumba has a hyphen between its name and NIGERIA while Tiko has just a space NIGERIA, but is a rather short, more circular oval.

Type I	BUEA P.O.	BRITISH CAMEROONS	17.11.48	to	14.12.48 (setting?)
Type VII	KUMBA-NIGERIA		13. 8.49	to	22. 2.50
	MAMFE.NIGERIA		1. 3.49		
	TIKO NIGERIA		19.12.47	to	15. 9.49

As previously mentioned, eight postal agencies had opened by 1950. Apart from the definitive postmark for Muyuka already recorded, their very varied settings are all varieties of skeletons, all (?) with two-line dates:

BAI CAMEROONS / U B M	10. 4.46	to	27. 4.47
BAKEBE CAMEROONS / U B M	23. 4.46		
BALI PA / NIGERIA	27.10.49	to	13.12.49
MBONGE PA / NIGERIA	19. 1.49		
MUYUKA PA / NIGERIA	28. 4.48		
NDIAN / NIGERIA	6.10.47		
NSAW / CAMEROONS	13. 4.46		
NYASOSO CAMEROONS / NIGERIA	10. 4.46		

Reports and photocopies of any dates of these postmarks would be appreciated.

(B) The new Trusteeship Postmarks (U.U.K.T.)

A complete reform of the postmarks at last took place at the turn of 1949-50 reflecting the status current since 1946 as a Trust Territory under the United Nations. The first of these new postmarks to appear was a single-ring smallish postmark (Type VI) for Buea, with a longish inscription:

BUEA CAMEROONS / UNDER U.K. TRUSTEESHIP 7.11.49 to 17.12.59

All the offices and agencies (including Buea, but possibly not Bakebe) were then allocated new, consistent and well-composed skeleton postmarks with the new designation, which replaced both ordinary and registered postmarks. These had CAMEROONS after the name of the office or agency, and U.U.K.T. at the bottom. (Victoria, having the longest office name, had no room for the final full stop.) Exceptionally Nsaw was set CAMEROONS / NSAW U.U.K.T.

BAMENDA	3, 4.50	to	6.11.50
BUEA	5, 6.50	to	2.11.50
KUMBA	29, 3.50	to	20. 9.50
MAMFE	20, 7.50	to	6.11.50
TIKO	6, 3.50	to	6.11.50
VICTORIA	12, 5.50	to	6.11.50

BAI	9.10.50	
BAKEBE	(not reported)	
BALI	22. 7.50 to 31.12.56	(this seems too late?)
MBONGE	24.12.49 to 11. 7.50	
MUYUKA	9. 8.50 to 19.10.50	
NDIAN	1. 8.50	
NSAW	4. 3.50 to 21.10.50	
NYASOSO	18. 1.50 to 24. 8.50	

The postmarks from Kumba, and also from Mbonge, Nyasoso and possibly one or two other agencies are slightly different; the letters of the main inscription look smaller and slightly further in from the ring than is normal, and the date is in one line, beneath a star, rather than in two lines.

These skeleton postmarks lasted about a year. They were replaced by single-ring postmarks, like the earlier one for Buea, but with the U.U.K.T. abbreviation used for the skeletons. Normally the office or agency appears in the top part and CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. in the bottom (exceptionally Victoria also had a mark with CAMEROONS also in the top half and only the U.U.K.T. in the bottom; it also had a parcels mark set like the others). Only Bali did not have this style of postmark.

BAMENDA	15. 1.51 to 25. 1.58
BUEA	13. 1.51 to 15. 9.56
KUMBA	7.12.50 to 1. 2.58
MAMFE	10.11.50 to 30.12.58
TIKO	13.11.50 to 22. 6.61
VICTORIA CAMEROONS	11. 8.50 to 15. 2.51
VICTORIA	10. 1.51 to 3. 2.58
VICTORIA PARCELS	(reported by a non-member)
BAI	18. 1.51 to 12. 5.60
BAKEBE	27. 1.51 to 9. 6.56
MBONGE	8. 1.51
MUYUKA	19. 1.51 to 4. 7.61
NDIAN	15. 1.51 to 3. 9.55
NSAW	17. 2.51 to 26. 5.55
NYASOSO	9. 2.51 to 4. 9.61

The offices were also issued with oval registered postmarks (Type VII) with REGISTERED in the top half and the office name followed by CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. in the lower half.

BAMENDA	14. 2.51 to 26. 6.59
BUEA	24.10.50 to 3.11.55
KUMBA	6. 3.51 to 3.10.56
MAMFE	17. 1.51 to 3. 9.56
TIKO	15. 1.51 to 6. 7.61
VICTORIA	30. 1.51 to 5. 8.61

Other single-ring postmarks were issued in the 1950's, probably each time for all of the offices, but not all of these have been noted. At one time or another all of these were pressed into service as cancellations, although the first series (which turns up most often from Kumba) had the word NIGERIA in it, and the other two were designed for other counter work.

The first series had simply the office name at the top and NIGERIA below:

BAMENDA	(not reported)
BUEA	6.10.59
KUMBA	1. 2.58
MAMFE	3. 1.59
TIKO	(not reported)
VICTORIA	(not reported)

The second series had the word TELEGRAPHS after the office name at the top, and the usual CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. at the bottom:

BAMENDA	10. 1.51 to 6.12.60
BUEA	30.11.55 (reported by non-member)
KUMBA	30.12.53 to 31.12.54
MAMFE	1. 9.54 to 4. 4.58
TIKO	(not reported)
VICTORIA	(not reported)

The third series had simply the office name at the top and below it the words SAVINGS BANK, but these are preceded and followed by the number of the office in the Nigerian system - clearly based on alphabetical order. There is no country name at all.

BAMENDA	(107)	30. 7.55 to 25. 1.58
BUEA	(118)	10. 7.53 to 11.11.55
KUMBA	(429)	2. 4.55 to 29.12.56
MAMFE	(485)	14. 3.55 to 22. 6.59
TIKO	(630)	(reported by non-member)
VICTORIA	(700)	(seen after end of period)

In the case of Tiko at least the definitive Savings Bank postmark was preceded by a skeleton - although I am surprised at how many letters appear to have got into a constrained skeleton postmark - perhaps this was actually a definitive postmark in Type IV or VI? I do not know the date-setting:

TIKO CAMEROONS / U.U.K.T. M.O. & S.B. 27.2.53 to 6.3.53

As mentioned above, the agencies at Bali and later Muyuka also did Savings Bank business. Perhaps they also had special skeleton or definitive postmarks that may one day be reported as cancellations on letters?

Meanwhile double-ring postmarks came back on the scene. This was pioneered by Bali (which used one rather than a single-ring to replace its U.U.K.T. skeleton) and then for another agency and for at least four of the post offices. These were in Type IV, which differs from Type III only in not having any 'killer' bars between the upper and lower wording (although sometimes dirt could build up and make marks in those spaces).

The Type IV postmarks for the agencies had the word CAMEROONS after the name of the agency at the top, but those for the offices had it, more logically, alongside the initials U.U.K.T., which always appear at the bottom.

BALI	6.10.51 to 23. 6.61	date in two lines, set low
MUYUKA	29. 5.56 to 4. 8.60	ditto, but date below a block
BAMENDA	24. 3.59	/ without time over date
KUMBA	4. 5.56 to 26. 7.61) with time over date
MAMFE	5. 6.56 to 11. 7.61) with time over date
TIKO	10.12.55 to 27. 9.61)

Then at least three offices and three agencies reverted to the use of NIGERIA in the bottom part of these double-ring postmarks. Use of these was normal for NDIAN and NSAW, but not for the others

NDIAN	3. 3.56 to 11. 8.60
NSAW	27. 4.56 to 9. 9.60
NYASOSO	13.12.56
BAMENDA	?
BUEA	11. 8.52 to 7.10.52
VICTORIA	18. 9.52 to 6.11.52

(C) The later postal agencies

Meanwhile new postal agencies were being opened. For three of them skeleton postmarks in Type I were made up as far as possible to conform with the 1950 reform (but in two cases with the initials P A without stops added).

BATIBO / CAMEROONS UUKT	25. 2.55 to 21. 6.61	* over 1-line date
MEAKWA SUPE P A / UUKT	(seen after end of period)) date in two lines
NJINIKOM P A / U U K T	19. 9.55 to 5. 8.60)

Soon this policy was forgotten, however, and later agencies reverted to having NIGERIA in the bottom half of their Type I skeleton postmarks

BAFUT PA	(reported by non-member)	
MANYEMEN PA	27. 3.54 to 18. 7.60	
MBENGWI PA	24. 6.55 to 25. 8.55)
PA MBENGWI	2. 3.59 to 31. 3.60) was it closed for a period?
MUEA PA	(reported by non-member)	
NDOP P A	7. 8.53 to ?..11.60	
N D U P A	16. 5.52 to 29. 8.52	
NKAMBE P A	31. 8.55 to 22. 7.60	
SANTA PA	5. 1.55 to 29. 6.60	
TOMBEL PA	3. 2.54 to 27.12.60	
WUM PA	1. 9.55 to 8.11.60	

LOBE PA / NIGERIA may also exist. Bafut and Muea were reported by non-members, and I have no details of dates etc. In all the examples of the above that I have seen, the date is set in two lines, but some may have only one-line dates. The details of the spacing of the names, and particularly the PA may also be wrong in one or two cases. More data on all of these agencies would be welcome.

(D) Cameroons U.U.K.A.

In 1957 there was a minor change in the title of the territory to Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration - the status of the territory as a Trust Territory of the United Nations did not change; I have heard that the new title was thought to be more grammatical! (The French used the more euphemistic title of Tutelage.) This change was reflected in the postmarks of the offices of the Cameroons but not, in practice, in those of any of the postal agencies. According to Beale & Martin, all offices were sent new Type IV double-ring postmarks in November 1957, and Type VII registration postmarks in January or February 1958. In both cases, however, only four seem to have been put into use - the Type IV postmark for Kumba only just before the end of our period, although ironically it was then used extensively - see the postscript on West Cameroon. All the Type IV postmarks in this period had the time over the date, but the positioning of the word CAMEROONS was erratic.

Type IV	BAMENDA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.A.	30. 9.58 to 19. 9.61
	BUEA CAMEROONS / U.U.K.A.	7.12.57 to 27. 9.61
	KUMBA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.A.	18. 9.61
	MAMFE CAMEROONS / U.U.K.A.	(not seen)
	TIKO CAMEROONS / U.U.K.A.	(not seen)
	VICTORIA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.A.	14. 8.58 to 15. 9.61
Type VII	BAMENDA	19. 7.59 to 7.12.60
	BUEA	23. 3.59 to 24. 8.60
	KUMBA (without gap)*	5. 4.60
	(with gap)*	18. 2.59 to 4. 8.61
	MAMFE (without gap)*	10. 8.60 to 11. 8.61
	(with gap)*	7. 2.59 to 31. 7.59
	TIKO	(not seen)
	VICTORIA	(not seen)

*The Post Office impression Books show for these offices examples with the first letter of the office name very close (though upside down in relation) to the R of REGISTERED. These postmarks also exist with a distinctly wider (though not very wide) gap. Please distinguish these carefully in reports of dates.

(E) Postmarks with agency and office names

Beale & Martin record the despatch of single-ring postmarks (Type VI) to most of the agencies in June or July 1959 with the name of the controlling office added - a policy that was being introduced generally in Nigeria. None of these (except one for the Northern Cameroons, which is covered later) has ever been recorded. I imagine that this was because they all included the erroneous NIGERIA in the lower part as well - and this was becoming a much more sensitive matter as independence and plebiscites drew near. The agency and office formula, however, was used on the last phase of skeletons in the last year of Trusteeship, after the independence of Nigeria - see later.

BAFUT BAMENDA	NDU BAMENDA
BALI BAMENDA	NJINIKOM BAMENDA
BATIBO BAMENDA	NKAMBE BAMENDA
MANYEMEN KUMBA	NSAW BAMENDA
MBAKWE SUPE KUMBA	SANTA BAMENDA
MBENGWI BAMENDA	TOMBEL KUMBA
MUYUKA BUEA	WUM BAMENDA
NDOP BAMENDA	

Agencies not involved - some of which may not have been open at the time - were Bai, Bakebe, Lobe, Mbonge, Muea, Ndian and Nyasoso.

Period 5 The final year after Nigerian independence.

Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1960, but the Cameroons remained under U.K. control. With opinions, at least in the South, very divided on whether to join Nigeria or Cameroun (to which the French had also given independence nine months earlier) it became more important than before to avoid the implication that the Cameroons were already part of independent Nigeria. Not only was a separate issue of stamps made (albeit these in practice these and unoverprinted Nigerian stamps were mutually acceptable) but the word Nigeria was completely purged from the postmarks once again (though with some delay in the case at least of Tombel - see the last date of its skeleton postmark recorded above).

No action was required in respect of the offices, which all had CAMEROONS U.U.K.A. (or U.U.K.T.) postmarks available for ordinary and registered use. Some of the postal agencies (Batibo, Mbakwa Supe, Njinikom and the first eight) had, or at least had had, Cameroons postmarks, either definitive or skeletons, although Nsaw at least seems to have lost its one.

Two agencies simply dropped NIGERIA from their skeleton postmarks (or never had it, if Lobe was first established in this period), but Mbengwi was more inspired - rather strangely, this was the only time that the expression SOUTHERN CAMEROONS was used on a postmark; the letters are in one virtually continuous circle.

LOBE / PA	18.11.60*	to	2. 9.61	(*year reads 1909)
MBENGWI SOUTHERN CAMEROONS	7.11.60	to	19. 8.61	
MUEA PA	8. 6.61	to	15. 7.61	

The majority of the agencies, however, adopted the new Nigerian style of adding the name of their controlling office, but with no country name at all. All had previously been using skeletons, except Nsaw. All dates are (?) in two lines; spacing details may be inaccurate in some cases.

BAFUT / BAMENDA	10. 7.61			
MANYEMEN / KUMBA	22. 8.61			
NDOP / BAMENDA	23. 6.61			
N K A M B E / B A M E N D A	31. 3.61	to	9. 9.61	
N S A W / B A M E N D A	30. 6.61	to	8. 7.61	
S A N T A / B A M E N D A	8. 6.61			
TOMBEL / KUMBA	21. 5.61	to	16. 7.61	
WUM / B A M E N D A	3. 6.61	to	26. 8.61	

I have a strike of Nsaw (not on a stamp) in which the W has been placed at the wrong end, before the N and next to the B (16.10.61 - post-Trusteeship).

What happened at Ndu and Ndian is unknown - I think the latter at least was closed at this time. It would be nice to have confirmation from all the agencies deemed not to need new postmarks that they did not in fact have any.

Postscript: British-style postmarks used in West Cameroon after Trusteeship ended.

The Cameroun authorities supplied for immediate use from 1st October 1961 new French-style postmarks with the office or agency name at the top, and REP. FED. CAMEROUN at the bottom. The offices used single-circles (somewhat larger than the British type) and the agencies used hexagons, with a broken outline. These were supplied to all six offices and most of the agencies. In 1962 there appeared similar postmarks but with simply CAMEROUN at the bottom; BAMENDA now appeared as MANKOM-BAMENDA, and I have also seen MANKOM-BAMENDA TELEGR. (sic).

British style postmarks did not go out of use at once, however; in particular the oval registration postmarks (with U.U.K.T. for Tiko and Victoria and U.U.K.A. for the other four offices) remained in use for some time - certainly into 1963; beyond that is difficult to say, because the year plugs were not available.

More surprisingly, in spite of the fact that a French-style postmark was made, one ordinary British postmark became the norm from its office; ironically this was the double-circle postmark with U.U.K.A. from Kumba - which was only put into use just before the end of Trusteeship. I have this as early as 5 OC / 61 (set low in two lines, but without the time). In 1962 it was set unusually: 1962 / 3 DE (i.e. the year in full, and set high in two lines). In 1963 the year again appeared in full, but set (more normally) below the other part: SP 23 / 1963.

Other definitive British handstamps were usually seen only up to the end of 1961; I have the following:

Type IV KUMBA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. 8-AM / 13 / 61
VICTORIA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.A. 1030 / 29 DE / 61

Type VI MAMFE / CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. 1 DE / 61 (no star over date)
VICTORIA / 700 SAVINGS BANK 700 * / 23 OC / 61

There are some later examples of these 'counter'-type postmarks in Type VI, sometimes used to cancel postage stamps:

BAMENDA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. 13 AP (set centrally, in 1963)
BUEA / 118 SAVINGS BANK 118 * / 28 JA (set high, in 1963)
VICTORIA / CAMEROONS U.U.K.T. * / 12 SP (set high, with 62 for the year carefully added by hand, and the U.U.K.T. similarly deleted - this was used to validate a reply coupon, not to cancel an adhesive stamp.)

Some agencies do not seem to have been issued with the new style postmarks; it is possible that they were not open at the time the Cameroun authorities made their preparations, or they may have regarded them as having a more inferior status - some at least were based on the plantation estates, and may not have been in practice available to the general public.

Whatever the cause, two old agencies made do with their old skeleton postmarks, with more or less success:

MBAKWA SUPE P A / UUKT 8 DE / 19 (this lacked the full year plugs - the 19 is not 61 inverted, though no doubt that is where the numerals came from, because the stamp that is cancelled was not issued until 1963. In addition the UUKT is too far round clockwise, and the T is inverted - but it seems very odd that these letters were not removed altogether!

Somewhere a proper set of letters and numerals was available, because the skeleton for Tombel was refashioned with the new name for the region:

TOMBEL P A / WEST CAMEROON 4 DE / 1963

Also seen in this period is yet another agency which may or may not have existed in the British Administration period:

KEMBONG / POSTAL AGENCY 8 NO (in 1962)
21 AU / 19 (in 1963)

Finally Ndian did not have a new French-style postmark, nor did it have a skeleton postmark to adapt - though a little-used agency in a remote area it had had more than one definitive postmark (inscribed NIGERIA). It obtained from somewhere a postmark more like a grocer's receipt stamp - an impression confirmed by the usual use of light violet ink; the postmark is however quite well made. It seems a strange echo of the 'Company' handstamps on British stamps used in the adjoining area of Nigeria some sixty years before. It was set as an oval with a thick outer line and a thin inner one; across the top it reads NDIAN POSTAL with AGENCY in slightly smaller letters, not curved around, below; at the bottom it reads very correctly * REP. FED. CAMEROUN *. The date was set in the middle in one line - e.g. 25 JUN 1962.

The above I have seen - Cyril Kidd in his article in the Philatelic Magazine recorded two more later uses of skeleton postmarks, one an adaptation for Bai and another for a further new agency at Nguti:

BAI POSTAL AGENCY / CAMEROONL (sic) 9 NO / 1965

NGUTI P AGENCY / W CAMEROON 28 DE / 1965

Section 6: Northern Cameroons

This area consisted of two narrow strips of undeveloped territory which at the end of British rule formed parts of three different provinces of the Northern Region of Nigeria: Bornu, Adamawa and Benue. Although its distinct international status was always accepted, the administration was always totally integrated with that of Nigeria; this was defended to the U.N. Commissioners on the grounds that they had been detached from the main part of the German colony of Kamerun in 1916 largely to restore local patterns of allegiance which had only recently been broken by the Nigeria-Kamerun frontier. The population in 1926 was estimated at 313,000 - not far short of that of the more developed Southern Cameroons, but including precisely six Europeans.

Although a plebiscite in 1959 had established that the people of this area wished to stay part of Nigeria (unlike more divided opinions in the South) it was decided that when Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1960 that it should temporarily remain under British administration as a Trust Territory. Following a further plebiscite, however, it was reunited with Nigeria on 1st June 1961 (four months earlier than the Trusteeship ended in the South). It was then designated a separate province of the Northern Region, named Surdauna in honour of the Surdauna of Sokoto, the prime minister of the Northern Region. Following the further division of the Regions into states under General Gowon, and later administrations, it now forms parts of the States of Borno and Gongola.

As far as the Reports show, there were only six postal establishments in the entire area at the end of the Trusteeship period (though there is now some evidence of a possible two more). At no period before or even after its temporary separation from Nigeria did the word CAMEROONS ever appear in any postmark from this area, and NIGERIA often did (though at the end of the period this was also often omitted, as this became policy in Nigeria). All the communications links were to Nigeria, not to the Southern Cameroons, and it is therefore not surprising that the CAMEROONS U.K.T.T. overprinted stamps were not available there at once on 1st October 1960 - though it is more surprising that the Nigerian Independence stamps were actually issued! Eventually the Cameroons stamps were supplied; their nomenclature was perfectly appropriate, but catalogue editors have usually listed them as Southern Cameroons because the Crown Agents publicity had attributed to issue to that government.

The first reference I have found to any postal activity inside the Northern Cameroons in the Colonial Office Reports was in the one for 1954, when it was stated that there was a once-a-week service between Yola (in Nigeria, where the Cameroons parts of the province of Adamawa were separated by an unchanged Nigeria-Cameroun frontier) and postal agencies at Mubi and Jada. In the 1957 Report it mentions that of the 20 postal agencies in the Cameroons 5 were in the North; it does not name them, but the 1958 Report names 6, of which it says that Madagali was new - this leaves Bama, Gembu and Gwoza as the three which were probably opened sometime in 1954-56. The 1958 Report goes on to say that there was a once-weekly motor mail service between Yola and Mubi operated by the Northern Region Department of the Posts and Telegraphs, and a twice-weekly service between Maiduguri and Gwoza and Bama run by the Native Authority. Finally it mentions a once-weekly runner between Yola and Gembu.

The last Report (for 1959) mentions that there were new Post Offices built to replace the agencies at Bama and Mubi. Beale and Martin's researches suggest the possibility of two further agencies being open before the end of Trusteeship, at Genye and Serti.

Postmarks from this area are so scarce that I would request members to report all dates seen, not just those outside the ranges that are shown, and to report full details of all date-settings - and skeleton spacings - if they cannot send photocopies. There is no need to confine the dates to the Trusteeship period; you will see from the list below that some are only known from the subsequent period even if they were sent out before and may have been used during it.

The recorded postmarks

These fall into three categories: skeleton postmarks as Type I, single-ring postmarks as Type VI and double-ring postmarks as Type IV but with thin line spacing arcs (not thick killer bars as Type III) between the upper and lower inscriptions. An asterisk indicates where even the earliest report of a postmark is after the end of the Trusteeship period (31.5.61). According to Beale and Martin, however, all the definitive postmarks listed here were despatched in June 1959.

<u>Skeletons</u> (Type I)	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>	<u>Date details</u>
BAMA / POST OFFICE	28. 7.59	8. 9.59	
GEMBU / POSTAL AGENCY	4. 8.61*		
GWOZA P A / NIGERIA	24. 4.56	3. 3.60	
JADA PA / NIGERIA	6. 4.61	(as transit)	date in two lines
MADAGALI / POSTAL AGENCY	61		
P A MUBI / NIGERIA	57	59	date in two lines
MUBI / POST OFFICE	6.11.59	8. 3.60	
MUBI / P.O.	19. 1.60		
<u>Double rings</u> (Type IVa)			
BAMA 1 / NIGERIA	1. 6.61*	30. 11.62	with time over date
MUBI 1 / NIGERIA	17.10.60	17. 4.62	with time over date
<u>Single rings</u> (Type VI)			
BAMA / 122	17. 4.64*		star over date
BAMA 2 / NIGERIA	29. 9.60	28. 8.61	no star
GWOZA BAMA / NIGERIA	31. 8.61*		no star
MUBI / 500	9. 1.61	7. 6.62	star over date
MUBI 2 / NIGERIA	20 .2.61	2. 2.63	set 19 / 2 FE / 6

Postscript: Northern Cameroons as Surdauna Province

Beale and Martin show that on 27th July 1961, less than two months after the end of Trusteeship, a further batch of postmarks was sent out to what had been the Northern Cameroons. The current policy in Nigeria, however, was no longer to include the country name in the postmark!

The list also includes the names of two new postal agencies which Dr. Schelling first noted were also in the area of the former Cameroons (although they were subsidiary to the office at Yola, which was always in Nigeria). These are Ganye and Serti. It seems unlikely that these postmarks were not preceded by skeletons, so far unrecorded, in the Trusteeship period. On the other hand, I happen to have a letter from the GPO in Lagos dated 24th May 1962 which listed only the six offices and agencies mentioned previously as existing in the Surdauna. Possibly these others were merely planned, and not yet (or never) opened, or had been closed again. It is also possible of course that in Lagos they were not fully aware that they were in the Surdauna Province - it was hardly of importance - especially as their controlling office was not. The list also includes an agency subsidiary to Mubi at Uba - but this was definitely in Nigeria proper all the time.

<u>Double-ring</u> (Type IVa)	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>	<u>Date details</u>
MUBI	15.10.63	12.12.63	with time over date
<u>Single-rings</u> (Type VI)			
GANYE - YOLA)
GEMBU - YOLA)
MUBI - 1 / 500)
MUBI - 2 / 500)
MUBI - 3 / 500)
JADA - YOLA)
MADAGALI - MUBI)
SERTI - YOLA)

none of these have been reported; none in the impression books show any star over the date.

Further details from the Reports on Postal matters

Apart from an early reference to a telegraph line, and to the question of special stamps and postmarks for the Cameroons mentioned elsewhere, there was little or nothing in the Reports about postal (or telegraph) affairs until 1935. It was then stated that the authorised staff of the Nigerian Posts and Telegraphs Department in Cameroons Province (which then covered all the Southern Cameroons) consisted of one European and 71 African staff. The 1936 Report makes it clear that the European was an engineer for the wireless telegraphy (stations having been established at Buea, Mamfe and Bamenda in 1932); it seems to forget the postal staff because it mentions only 50 Africans. The 1937 Report gets it right by talking of 49 Africans in the engineering branch and 35 in the postal branch.

The 1935 Report stated that "Mails have been despatched and forwarded on all suitable occasions overseas, advantage being taken of the services of the Woermann Linie, Messrs. John Holt and Company Ltd., and Messrs. Fr. Laeisz Company (African Fruit Company) in addition to Elder Dempster Lines Ltd. The 1936 Report states that "Overseas mails have been conveyed by the regular sailings of the Elder Dempster line and by the fruit boats of the Laeisz line, and an average of one mail a week in each direction has been maintained. To accelerate the mail service between the Cameroons Under French Mandate and the Cameroons Under British Mandate a weekly mail service between Kumba and Mundane for the exchange of mail has been instituted." The 1937 Report put it yet another way: "Overseas mails are received and despatched at Victoria and Tiko by all available boats. There is a regular weekly service in each direction by the ships of the Laeisz Line and a fortnightly service by Elder Dempster Lines."

The first to mention internal services is the 1947 Report: "Internal mails are exchanged bi-weekly between the chief towns and weekly between the others. External mails are exchanged in both directions with Nigeria" - a rather strange way of referring to another part of the same postal area - "and Great Britain". U.K. surface mail went from Tiko, U.K. airmail via Lagos. Nigerian mail was despatched and delivered weekly by surface mail via Calabar, airmail via Port Harcourt, Benin and Lagos. Links with French Cameroons were by ferry across the Mungo at Tombel and via Santa. There would soon be a road link with Nigeria via Mamfe and Ikom. Only in the 1948 Report did it confirm that there were mail exchanges also with Cameroons under French Trusteeship and Fernando Po (probably for migrants working on the Cameroons plantations). The internal service was now thrice weekly between the chief towns and once or twice weekly between the others.

The 1949 Report proudly mentioned that mail vans would be used early the next day on the route Victoria-Buea-Kumba, but the 1951 Report confessed that these had broken down all the time, and were not in use. In 1953 four-wheel drive vehicles were successfully introduced. There was now a daily service for Buea and Victoria and thrice-weekly for Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda. By 1951 Nigerian mail was sent via Calabar and Enugu; there were four air journeys each week, and by 1957 these were daily except Tuesdays. The final 1959 Report mentions that the Cameroons Co-operative Engineering and Transport Union Ltd. operated a daily service for Buea, Tiko and Victoria and three times a week from Victoria to Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda; from the latter there was a weekly service to postal agencies at Ndop, Nsaw, Nkambe, Wum, Bafut, Mbengwi and Njinikom.

Cameroons Province - Extract from Revenue and Expenditure accounts (£)

	1921-22	22-23E	22-23A	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30
Revenue:										
Sale of stamps etc			451	479	853	1732	956	1246	1143	1903
Transmission of telegrams			368	354	405	468	338	448	403	430
Telephone rentals			88	366	364	326	351	328	832	818
Postage on parcels from overseas			108	134	156)				(271	439
Commission on MOs and POs			18	22	26)				()	
Other			3	4	10)	272	280	461	() 119	120
Total Posts & Telegraphs	1216	1217	1036	1359	1814	2798	1925	2483	2770	3710
Total	64766	46881	56299	66324	71507	85153	90224	107922	88904	82590
Expenditure	143600	125881	106356	119662	129708	115923	126306	136326	141748	147083
of which Posts & Telegraphs	7908*	8518*	5934*	6634	7200	6266	7126	13052	11107	5917
	1930-31	31-32	32-33	33-34	34-35	35-36	A-D 36	1937	1938	
Revenue:										
Sale of stamps etc	1185	821	975	919	695	946	776	1073	1076	
Transmission of telegrams	499	435	572	608	818	913	624	1376	1159	
Telephone rentals	754	399	741	653	869	1020	1137	1719	1462	
Postage on parcels from overseas	486	316	314	264	217	184	194	319	253	
Commission on MOs and POs)									(117	
Other)	217	155	148	130	140	145	262	187	(130	
Total Posts & Telegraphs	3141	2126	2750	2574	2739	3209	2993	4665	4137	
Total	81945	73461	81042	91336	94624	100730	84041	125075	110249	
Expenditure	149952	140149	129829	120067	121791	122418	110760	173092	188427	
of which Posts & Telegraphs	6089	6777	5965	5468	6670	6162	5398	8410	7210	

* In addition Special Expenditure of 6950, 5450 and 2210 respectively for the reconstruction of the telegraph line from Nsanarati to Ossidinge.

I had typed up the previous two pages before my attention was drawn by a non-member to the existence of the Reports and Accounts of the Nigerian Posts and Telegraphs Department - which can be found in the library of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

These emphasise that the initial work of the Department in aiding the Cameroons Expeditionary Force was in relation to the telegraph system. The first of the Reports on the area, which I had already mentioned above had nothing on the postal facilities but included the following paragraph:

"A telegraph line runs from Victoria to Buea, Kumba, Tinto and Ossidinge to Ikom, where it is connected with the Nigerian system. The line is of a temporary nature, being partly constructed by the British during the war. A branch line runs from Tinto through Chang in the French sphere (formerly British) to Bamenda. Buea is also connected with Duala, where the nearest cable office is situated."

The new source gives more details of the earlier history of this line. For 1916 it talks of the completion of the temporary light line between Buea and Ikom (at a cost of £1,998!), which it describes as a line of 300 miles built from Buea to Obubra through difficult country and in many cases heavy forest. In 1922 it says in passing that a telegram from Ibadan to Victoria involved no fewer than 14 operations (presumably of keying and writing out), as transmission took place at Lagos, Onitsha, Abu, Obubra, Tinto and Buea.

The 1916 Report states that in the Cameroons "Posts and Telegraphs offices" were opened at Victoria, Buea, Kumba, Tinto and Ossidinge. This looks like a great revelation, but until someone can come up with evidence of postmarks etc., I suggest that the phrasing does not imply that necessarily post office business was carried out at all of these so early; the last three mentioned may well have had telegraph business only - as shown above they were all on the telegraph line.

The usefulness of the mail service even from the major centres was limited. The Posts & Telegraphs Department Report for 1919 says that the mail service between Lagos and Victoria continued irregular and unsatisfactory, and owing to the scarcity of craft the creek and coast services were subject to a good deal of public criticism. For 1920 it states that three steamers arrived every four weeks at Lagos from the U.K. and one went down the coast calling at Bonny, Calabar and Victoria (from March 1921 calling also at Port Harcourt). Victoria had to rely almost entirely upon the monthly "South Coast" steamer.

This source has also some more financial details:

	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Sale of stamps	935	581	549	481	446
Transmission of telegrams	628	356	330	372	358
Telephone rentals		20	44	36	274
Postage on parcels			40	102	129
Commission on POs & MOs	36	34	22	18	20
Expenditure in Cameroons	4402	3789	5224	8374	5864