



THE RIVER SERVICES

The first Travelling Post Office was a postal service on the River Niger which appears to have been opened early in 1903. The Northern Nigeria Protectorate Government maintained an enclave at Burutu, a few miles from Forcados on the Delta, where they were represented by a Marine Officer and operated a regular service to Lokoja, about three hundred miles up river. It was on one of the government vessels, G.S.W. Kampala, that Alan Workman travelled in May, 1910, and noted the postal arrangements:-

"The steamer had aboard a travelling African postmaster whose duty it was to dispose of mail matter intended for the small trading stations at which no Post Office existed. He also carried a stock of postage stamps." ("A Colonial Postmaster-General's Reminiscences")

The journey usually took about six days up river and rather less back to the coast. The steamers, which were stern-wheelers, did not proceed at night and often grounded on sand or mud-banks.

NIGERIAN T.P.Os. (continued)

In 1911/12 The Niger Company were advertising a weekly service of stern-wheel river steamers between Burutu (Forcados) on the delta and Baro (Kano railway terminus) calling at Assay, Aboh, Onitsha, Idah, and Lokoja, but T.P.O. facilities were probably restricted to the government vessels.

The Southern Nigerian Government Marine Department also maintained at that time the following river mail services:-

Between	Lagos and Sapele
"	Lagos and Porto Novo (Dahomey)
"	Forcados, Warri and Sapele
"	Bonny and Akassa

These were all operated weekly by launches and small paddle-steamers through the inland lagoons, creeks and channels. Although described as "mail" services it seems unlikely that they included full T.P.O. facilities.

POSTMARKS:

a) Cancellers for both ordinary and registered use inscribed 'NIGER TRAVELLING POST OFFICE' (Types 1 and 2) have been recorded from February, 1903 to January, 1908, and covers for abroad were generally backstamped FORCADOS RIVER. The stamps normally used were those of Southern Nigeria. Cancellations on the issues of Niger Coast and Lagos are also found but the use of Northern Nigerian stamps was surprisingly rare. The strikes, which are usually clear, sometimes show transposition and inversion of the control letters and date plugs, and occasionally manuscript insertions.

b.(i) In 1908 a new double circle type was introduced reading 'TRAVELLING POST OFFICE/SOUTHERN NIGERIA' with controls 'B' or 'C' (Type 3). Usually the Month precedes the Day; control plugs are found inverted or sideways, and occasional transpositions and inversions of control and date plugs arise as in the earlier types. Control 'B' is found with rounded or narrow lettering, and with Control 'C' the cancellation has been noted in blue (1909). A cover with this marked (Control 'B') dated JU 20/11 also has on the reverse the datestamp of IBADAN (on the Western Line) showing the same date which indicates use on the railway.

(ii) A similar canceller (Type 3a) with slightly smaller circles using Controls 'A', 'B' or 'D' is recorded from 1912, and I have seen a cover with this mark dated JU 10/16 and strikes of PATANI which is in the delta area, JU 8/16, and FORCADOS JU 11/16, which confirm river use.

(iii) A third canceller (Type 4) of the same form is more distinctive with taller lettering and less space between the ends of the upper and lower wording. The inner circle has a diameter of only 16mm, and this was in use from 1911 to 1918 with Controls 'B' or 'D'.

(iv) Also in 1908 a new oval canceller inscribed 'REGISTERED/TRAVELLING P.O. SOUTHERN NIGERIA' (Type 5) replaced Type 2. Normally the day is placed before the month but occasionally the latter is shown in figures, e.g. 29 4 10, and 13 5 13, and manuscript insertions have also been noted.

c. On 1st January, 1914, Southern and Northern Nigeria were combined under the name of Nigeria, which led to a new canceller being introduced, with double circles as before but with NIGERIA taking the place of 'SOUTHERN NIGERIA' (Type 6). This has been noted with Controls 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', and while the month usually preceded the day in 1915 and 1916

the reverse is normal for later years. The use of a separate oval datestamp for registered mail was discontinued, and Type 5 was not replaced.

d. The River T.P.O. was withdrawn in August, 1919, and during its closing years a circular datestamp had been used reading NIGER RIVER T.P.O. enclosing a two-line date over the direction 'DOWN' or 'UP' (Type 6a) Examples of this cancellation are rare, and it may be that the decreasing use of the river service arose from wartime conditions coupled with greater use of the railways.

The double circle cancellers referred to under b. and c. above are all of a similar general description and the question arises whether they were used on the river T.P.O. or the rail T.P.O. - or both - and when in fact the use of the rail T.P.O. commenced? Unfortunately enquiries from the G.P.O. Lagos have proved fruitless in this respect as the old records have succumbed to the ravages of the climate and local insect life. Accordingly we can only rely on evidence available. A former Postmaster General, Mr. G. Ivor Righton, who was transferred from the Gold Coast to Nigeria in February 1917, recalled going into the question of T.P.Os and establishing the Lagos-Ibadan service, but this must have been running in some form before his arrival as the skeleton type canceller (Type 7) is recorded with 1916 dates and in addition to the strong indication of railway use of Type 3 referred to under b.(i) above I have a cover cancelled with Type 4, NO 10/11, and circular 'LATE FOR TO-DAY'S MAIL' mark, backstamped LAGOS NO 11/11, and Southampton 29th November, 1911. Lagos is getting on for two hundred miles from Forcados which would suggest unusually speedy transport if the T.P.O. cancellation had originated in the Delta area, and again the use of a railway T.P.O. is indicated. Elucidation must await further evidence.

THE RAILWAYS

The Lines with which we are concerned are:-

1. The Western Line

The Lagos Government Railway was running between Iddo (for Lagos) and Ibadan in 1901, and was extended to Oshogbo (1906) Jebba (1909) and Minna (1911) where it joined up with the Bero-Kano Railway to form the Western Line; 705 miles from Iddo to Kano. Trains were ferried across the Niger at Jebba until bridges were completed in 1916. At first it was a weekly service but by the 1930s three trains a week were running in each direction, and the journey took two days.

T.P.O. facilities were provided on two sections:-

- i. LAGOS (IDDO) - IBADAN. This was described on registered covers as "TPO South" in manuscript with the direction "UP" or "DOWN".
- ii. IBADAN - JEBBA. This was the "TPO NORTH".

The postal vans (railway carriages) attached to the trains had two compartments - one used for sorting and the other for the storage of closed mails, and the service provided limited postal facilities at stations where there were no Post Office or Postal Agencies. The following business was transacted as the train stopped at stations:-

NIGERIAN T.P.Os (continued)

Sale of stamps and postal orders
Payment of postal orders
Acceptance and delivery of ordinary and registered
letters
Acceptance and delivery of parcels.

As the trains stopped for only a few minutes at most of the stations along the route the amount of business transacted was small.

POSTMARKS:

- a. A skeleton type used for the T.P.O. North inscribed JEBRA IBADAN/DOWN/TPO or IBADAN JEBBA/UP/TPO (Types 7 and 7a). These were in use from 1916 to 1919. As there does not appear to have been a corresponding canceller for the T.P.O. South it is possible that Type 6 was used if a service was running at that time.
- b. Permanent cancellers for both sections (Types 8, 8a, 9 and 9a) used from 1919 to 1934. For the first few years it was usual to include the direction of travel, UP or DOWN, but this was later dropped. Registered covers show the service, North or South, in manuscript - sometimes using 'blank' registration labels.
- c. A skeleton type reading TPO IDDO IBADAN enclosing an unusual three-line date (Type 15). This must have had a very short life as only 1934 and 1935 dates have been noted. Registered covers bear the manuscript "TPO South" on the standard 'blank' labels as before.
- d. Permanent double circle cancellers for both sections. That for IBADAN - JEBBA (Type 17) was first used in 1934, and was followed by the new type (Type 16) inscribed IDDO - IBADAN in 1935 for the southern section.

2. THE BARO - KANO RAILWAY

Baro is the limit of normal navigation on the Niger, and the railway was completed via Minna and Zaria to Kano in 1911. T.P.O. facilities were introduced on the twice-weekly service in 1926 and were discontinued in 1931 - the MINNA - ZARIA section may have been dropped before then.

POSTMARKS:

- a. Skeleton type reading BARO MINNA ZARIA (Type 12) noted in 1926 and 1927.
- b. Permanent double circle type with similar wording (Type 13) noted with dates from 1927 to 1929, and 'blank' registration label with "TPO" in manuscript.
- c. Similar type but inscribed MINNA - BARRO (Type 14). The only registration label noted has "TPO" in black and "BARO" in red ink.

3. THE EASTERN LINE

Commenced in 1914, this line reached from Port Harcourt to Enugu (151 miles) by 1916 which enabled the coal from the Enugu mines to be used by the railways and relieved the difficult situation which had been created by the war. It was later extended

northwards through Makurdi, where the Benue was bridged in 1932, to join the Western Line at Kaduna in 1926.

The T.P.O. van, which was introduced in 1921, did three services a week between Port Harcourt and Enugu and was withdrawn in 1930.

POSTMARKS:

- a. Skeleton type noted from 1921 (Type 10). The figure 1 appearing opposite the date line suggests that an additional service was contemplated.
- b. Permanent double circle type reading EASTERN T.P.O. (Type 11). Registered covers are usually marked "ETPO" and a number in manuscript.

POSTING BOXES

Before the installation of Travelling Post Offices on the trains, letters were handled by the railway staff with less formality. Following enquiries by R.B. Sanderson some time ago, the General Manager, Railway Department, Lagos, gave the following information obtained from a retired guard who had been stationed at Iddo:-

"It was usual for letters to be handed to the guards by postal clerks at stations. No signatures were given and letters were handed over to stationmasters at destination stations, who, in turn, handed them to local Posts and Telegraph Dept. staff. The guard had no recollection of ever having had a proper canceller, neither does he remember any such cancellers being issued to station masters, but it is thought that some station masters cancelled the stamps by using the railway telegraph office dating stamp, whilst others drew lines in ink across the stamps to cancel them".

This procedure may account for the postal use of THE AFRICAN DIRECT TELEGRAPH Co. Ltd. canceller (Type RyO 3) and others connected with the railway, including L.G.R./IDDO (Type RyO 1) ABEOKUTA STATION (Type RyO 2) and the straight-line marks of IDDO and IBADAN (Types RyO 4 and 5). These have all been recorded on the first three issues of Southern Nigeria, and of later date I have noted a variation of THE AFRICAN DIRECT TELEGRAPH Co. Ltd. mark in the 1920s which is similar to Type RyO 3 but has a 1-line date over the word STATION. Between the early 1920s and 1930s a number of railway office cancellers were in use on mail (Type RyO 6). I have noted AGEGE (in red); BUKURU; GERTI; GUDI; IDDO; JAGINDI; KAGORA (error for KAGORO?); KAGUM RIVER; KAFANCHAN; MADAKIA; MANCHOK and RAHAMA. Sub-types with smaller lettering were used at BUKURU and RAHAMA. Later marks of interest include KAUGAMA RAILWAY P A (Type RyO 7), IWO STATION P.A.; OLD UMUAHIA HALT, and various TELEGRAPHIS cancellations.

"POSTED ON TRAIN"

Following the withdrawal of the Travelling Post Offices (the service surviving on the Western Line was discontinued in 1939) Posting Boxes were attached to trains to give facilities at the small stations or halts where there was no Post Office or Postal Agency. There were emptied on the arrival of the train at its terminal but their contents did not receive any special identifying marks until 17th February, 1959. From that date such mail was marked with a rubber stamp reading

"POSTED ON TRAIN" to indicate that the place of posting was not that shown by the datestamp.

These rubber stamps, which were identical, were held at the following nine offices, each of which was a terminal of a particular train service:-

Lagos	Kano	Minna
Ibadan	Jos	Enugu
Kaduna	Zaria	Port Harcourt

The contents of the Posting Boxes were dealt with at the post offices at these places where they were impressed with the rubber stamp, date-stamped, and put into the general mail circulation.

Examples of this cachet appear to be very scarce, and in the early 1960s rubber stamps using a slightly different type face are noted on covers cancelled at Lagos and Ibadan.

THE NIGERIAS
The Travelling Post Offices

<u>CHECK LIST</u>					<u>Dates</u>
<u>Type</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Size in mm.</u>	<u>Wording</u>		<u>Noted</u>
1	Circle	24½	NIGER TRAVELLING POST OFFICE with + at foot enclosing Control 'A' over 2-line date		21.1.03 to 13.1.08
2	Oval	30½ x 23	* REGISTERED +/NIGER TRAVELLING POST OFFICE enclosing Control 'A' over 1-line date		2.10.03 to 22.5.07
3	Dbl.Circles	27½ & 18	TRAVELLING POST OFFICE / SOUTHERN NIGERIA encl. Controls 'B' or 'C' over 2-line date		26.7.08 to 3.6.13
3a	Dbl.Circles	26 & 17	TRAVELLING POST OFFICE / SOUTHERN NIGERIA encl. Controls 'A', 'B' or 'D' over 2-line date		20.3.12 to 10.12.17
4	Dbl.Circles	25½ & 16	TRAVELLING POST OFFICE / SOUTHERN NIGERIA encl. Controls 'B' or 'D' over 2-line date		1.9.11 to 19.4.18
5	Oval	35 x 25	REGISTERED/TRAVELLING P.O. SOUTHERN NIGERIA encl. Control 'C' over 1-line date		31.10.08 to 13.5.13
6	Dbl.Circles	28½ & 20	TRAVELLING POST OFFICE / + NIGERIA + encl. Controls 'A', 'B', 'C' or 'D' over 2-line date		25.6.15 to 21.6.22
6A	Circle	27½	NIGER RIVER T.P.O. enclosing 2-line date over DOWN	&	7.7.18 29.6.19
7	Circle	28½	JEBBA IBADAN / T P O enclosing 1-line date over DOWN		13.3.16 to 21.5.19
7A	Circle	28½	IBADAN JEBBA / T P O enclosing 1-line date over UP		21.1.17 to 9.11.17

<u>Type</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Size in mm.</u>	<u>Wording</u>	<u>Dates Noted</u>
8	Circle	27½	LAGOS-IBADAN T.P.O. enclosing two-line date over UP or DOWN	20.11.19 to 13.10.21
8A	Circle	27½	LAGOS-IBADAN T.P.O. enclosing two-line date without direction	12.5.22 to 22.3.34
9	Circle	27½	IBADAN-JEBBA.T.P.O. enclosing two-line date over UP or DOWN	26.2.23 to 25.3.27
9A	Circle	27½	IBADAN-JEBBA.T.P.O. enclosing two-line date without direction	13.6.23 to 2.3.34
10	Circle	30	T P O 1 / EASTERN enclosing one-line date	24.6.21 to 5.2.24
11	Dbl. Circles	26½ & 16½	EASTERN.T.P.O./NIGERIA enclosing two-line date	19.3.24 to 11.10.29
12	Circle	30	T P O / BARO MINNA ZARRIA enclosing two-line date	1.11.27 to 23.5.29
13	Dbl. Circles	29 & 19	T.P.O./ BARO-MINNA-ZARIA enclosing two-line date	1.11.27 to 23.5.29
14	Dbl. Circles	29 & 19	T.P.O. / MINNA-BARRO enclosing two-line date	27.8.29 to 16.1.30
15	Circle	30	IDDO IBADAN T P O enclosing three-line date	22.10.34 to 6.8.35
16	Dbl. Circles	29 & 19	T.P.O. / IDDO-IBADAN enclosing two-line date	3.9.35 to 9.8.39
17	Dbl. Circles	29 & 19	T.P.O. / IBADAN-JEBBA enclosing two-line date	19.12.34 to 10.6.39

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The foregoing notes are based on an article I wrote some years ago which was published in "The London Philatelist" (January and February, 1963), and in addition to help from members of the British West Africa Study Circle I am greatly indebted to John Forrest (Robson Lowe Ltd.) and to Cyril Kidd for information and the loan of material.

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(Note: The following two pages of illustrations are paginated 1976/16 & 17)



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



6a.



7.



7a.



8.



8a.



9.



9a.



10.



11.



12.



13.



14.



15.



16.



17.



RyO. 3.



RyO. 1.



RyO. 2.



RyO. 6.

IDDO

RyO. 4.

IBADAN

RyO. 5.



RyO. 7.

"POSTED ON TRAIN"

RyO. 8.

THE NIGERIAS

*With Compliments.
Colin McCaig.*

The Travelling Post Offices

Since writing my notes I have had the chance of seeing a remarkable collection of Nigeria formed by H.G. Porter, which now forms part of the reference collection of John Holt & Co.Ltd, the West African merchants.

This collection contained an example of a river postmark corresponding to the railway cancellations of the early twenties, Types 8 and 9, which so far as I know has not been recorded before. The canceller is a 27½mm. circle reading NIGER-RIVER T.P.O. enclosing JY 7 / 18 over DOWN. Porter has made a note that the service was discontinued in August 1919.

There were also examples of NIGERIAN RAILWAY postmarks of Type Ry0 6 for:-

AGEGE - in red
BUKURU
GERTI
GUDI
IDDO
JAGINDI
KAGORA - error for KAGORO
KUGUM RIVER
KAFANCHAN
MADAKIA
MANCHOK

In a sub-type with smaller lettering were examples of:-

BUKURU and RAHAMA

February 1963.

Colin McCaig.



18.

Details of Nigerian Railway System.

1. Rail Tramway: BARIJUKO - WUSHISHI - ZUNGERU. Gauge 2' 6", 22 miles.
 Begun at Wushishi in 1901 & the 12 miles to Zungeru completed in Dec. 1901. Subsequently extended S. to Barijuko (10 miles from Wushishi) in 1902 to the point on R. Kaduna where navigable water ends. Finally closed in Jan 1911 when Lagos Government Railway extension reached Zungeru. There was a post office at Barijuko but not at Wushishi.
2. BARO - KANO Railway via MINNA and ZARIA, begun in 1907, completed to Minna in 1909 and to Kano in 1911.
3. LAGOS GOVERNMENT RAILWAY extended from Ibadan via Ilorin - Jebba, Zungeru reached Minna and linked with Baro - Kano Railway in 1911, thus completing the Western Railway, Lagos (Iddo) to Kano; 705 miles.

List of Stations on the Western Line:

APAPA	SANUSHI	OYUN RIVER	GWADA	
IDDO	OPEJI	JODOMO	GUNI	
EBUTE METTA	ASHIPA	LANWA	KUCHI	
E.B.JUNCTION	ERUWA ROAD	ELEBU	SERIKIN PAWA	
MUSHIN	OLOKOMEJI	BODE SADU	GODANI	
OSHODI	OGUNSHILEH	BERI BERI	GOGWADA	
IKEJA	ILUGUN	JEBBA (R.Niger)	BAKIN KASUA	
AGEGE	ADIO	TATABU	KAKAU	
IJU JUNCTION	IBADAN	MOKWA	KADUNA JUNCTION	
AGBADO	BODIJA	BOKANI	KADUNA NORTH	Extension
ITOKI	OLODO	WOABI	RIGACHIKUN	to
IJOKO	LALUPON	CHARATI	BIRNIN YERO	Nguru. M.
KAJOLA	ODO OBA	TABU	FARIN RUWA	JOGANNA 717
IFO JUNCTION	IWO	KUTI WENJI	BUMBI	ZACHARI 731
OLOMU	ILE IGBO	GIERKUN	ZARIA	DABI 737
AGBESI	ORIGO	AKERRI	LIKORO	RINGIM 750
ITORI	EDE	WUSHISHI	GIMIDABOSA	
WASIMI	OSHOGBO	KUTUNKU	ANCHAU	no further
OWOWO	DAGBOLU	ZUNGERU	DAN GORA	details
ISAWO	IKIRUN	GIDAN MATA	YAKO	to Nguru
ALAGADAXX	OKUKU	BEJI	MAIDOB	available
ARO	(N-S Boundary)	MAIKONKELI	KWANKWASO	
LAFENWA	OFFA	MINNA	CHALLOWA	
(for Abeokuta)	ILLA MARKET	SHAKWATA	KANO (705 m.)	
ARIKOLA	GAMA	SHE		
	LLORIN			

List of Stations Minna to Baro (B-K Rly.)

MINNA	KATEREGI	BADEGGI (for Bida)	KATCHA
LAFIAJI	EBBA	BAKOJI	BARO

List of Stations Zaria to Jos (now closed)

ZARIA	DUCHIN WAI	KAIYERDA	TERIA
AWAI	KARRE	RAHAMA	JOS
SOBA	KUDARU	JENGRE	

List of Stations Zaria - Kaura Namoda.

ZARIA	FUNTUWA	KUCHERI	GUSAU
GUGA	TAFOKI	CHAFE	NAFUCHE
DAN AMARIA	SHEMI	KARAZAU	KAURA NAMODA

Details of Nigerian Railway System.

List of Stations on Eastern Line - Port Harcourt to Kuduna Junction, 569 miles.

PORT HARCOURT	N'DEABOH	AGANA	JAGINDI
UMU KOROSHE	NOMEH	MAKURDI SOUTH	GERTI
IMO RIVER	AGBIAM	MAKURDI NORTH	KAFANCHAN
OGWE	AYO	ACHAKPA	MADAKIA
ABA	ENUGU (E.Capital)	MADAIKI	ZONKWA
OMOBA	EMENE	UDEI	KAMURU
N'BAWSI	OGBAHO	KADERKO	DUCHIN BAKO
UMUAHIA	EHA AMOFU	AGYARAGU	KURMIN BIKI
AMEKI	IGUMALE	LAFIA	IRI
UZUAKOLI	UTONKOH	BARAKIN ABDULLAHI	KUTURA
OVIM	OTOBI	MADA	KAJURU
OTAMPA	OTURKPO	LANGA LANGA	KANKOMI
AFIKPO ROAD	TARAKU	GUDI	KADUNA
ISIAGO	MOI IGBO	MOREA RIVER	JUNCTION
		KOGUN RIVER	

Kafanchan to Jos, 63 miles.

KAFANCHAN
KAGORA
MANCHOK
KWAKWI
HOSS
KURU
BUKURU
JOS.

All above from Nigeria Handbook, 1929.

LAUNCH SERVICE from LAGOS to SAPELE (from same Handbook)

IKORODU	XX 17 miles	OKITIPUPA	149 miles
EJINRIN	41 "	AGBABU	153 "
EPE	48 "	AROGO	147 "
ONI	61 "	SILUKO	171 "
IGBOGUN	73 "	OVENAMA	174 "
AKTIJERE	91 "	KOKO	206 "
ABOTO	110 "	SAPELE	227 "
GBEKABO	130 "		