

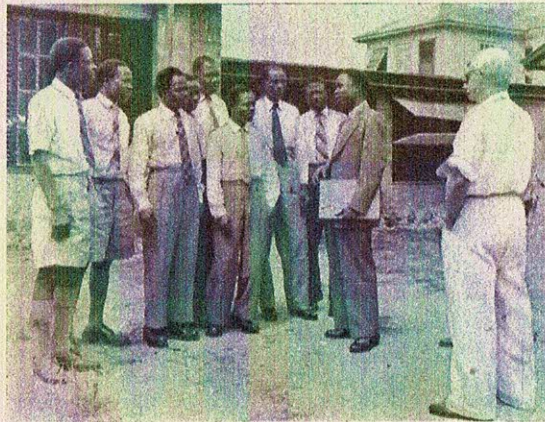
“What Sort of a Job is it in Nigeria?”

by

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At the counter in the post office at Kano Airport



*Parliamentary Secretary talking to trainee Assistant
Postal Controllers*



Postman on collection duties

“ I WONDER WHAT SORT OF A PLACE old so-and-so has gone to?” or, “ We’ve got a couple of Nigerians in training at our office; they seem to be very decent sort of chaps.” This kind of remark is likely to be heard more and more frequently in post offices up and down the country as a fair sprinkling of British Postal people are now working in Nigeria and for some time to come Nigerian Assistant Postal Controllers will be in training in various parts of the United Kingdom.

Well, what sort of place is it that “ old so-and-so ” has gone to ?

The first thing one must realise is that it is big; very big. For example, from Lagos, the capital and chief entry port, the air mile distance to Sokoto, on the edge of the Sahara, is 470, to Maiduguri near Lake Chad, 766, and to Calabar at the mouth of the historic Cross River, 362. The territory varies from forest at the coast with a warm humid climate, to dry open country in the north.

Its population of more than 34 millions is most densely located in the Western and Eastern Regions; Ibadan, capital of the Western Region, having 500,000. In the north, Kano has an international airport and is a very large trading centre where camel trains can still be seen coming in from the Sahara.

The problem of organising mail services in a country of this size and kind is somewhat different from ours at home. Whereas the railway system is still the backbone of mail distribution arrangements in the United Kingdom, railways serve only a fraction of Nigeria and reliance must chiefly be placed on air and road transport, supplemented by canoe in the extensive Delta area of the River Niger.

The aims of our postal people are the same as they are at home: speed and reliability. Nigerian Airways operate a daily service between Lagos and nine main centres of population and we use it extensively for carrying mail. Unfortunately,

as air transport is a most expensive way of distributing mail, the quantity carried by air has to be restricted. Consequently, all mail handled in Nigeria is divided into two classes. By this means the more important mail can be speeded between the main centres so that a letter posted in Lagos by 11 o'clock this evening will, if all goes well, be in Kano or Calabar by 1 o'clock to-morrow afternoon.

A very heavy proportion of mail naturally has to be conveyed by surface, and regular time-



Rural delivery in a district to which the road system does not extend

keeping is difficult, although by unremitting attention to the organisation of road transport, which is largely performed under contract, some considerable improvements have been made in transit times during the last two years and we confidently expect further improvement.

Unfortunately, the road system, while quite extensive, is none too good in quality. Many of the roads are of laterite, a form of crushed clay, and although they are admirable in the dry season, they tend to become spongy and impassable during the rains. There are of course many miles of tarmac road surface, rated as 'all weather' roads, but sometimes they, too, deteriorate during exceptionally heavy wet periods.

The Delta area of the Niger presents a very special and interesting problem as roads are few, communication being largely by canoe between the many small villages scattered about the reaches of the river. Officers on inspection work in this area usually travel by motor launch and are away for 10 days to three weeks on end.

The main postal centre is at Lagos and subsidiary centres are at Ibadan, Oshogbo, Kano, Jos, Enugu, Aba, Port Harcourt and Calabar. These offices act as distribution and general

forwarding offices and are linked with Lagos in a national pattern of mail circulation.

The largest post office is at Lagos. This is at present partially demolished, as a new post office is shortly to be built on the site, which is well situated on the Marina, facing the lagoon and the docks.

The new building will be most impressive, with six storeys and the public office will be 186 feet long. Three posting boxes fitted to the counter will be connected by band conveyor running, somewhat unusually, beneath the counter top. This conveyor will link with a main conveyor from the outside posting boxes which will carry all postings to the first floor sorting office. To reduce movement within the sorting office to a minimum, there will be a chain conveyor 645 feet long linking the letter sorting office with the loading platform and the delivery office on the ground floor. Light electric trucks will supplement this conveyor to carry mail bags between sections.

In other parts of the country, new specially designed post offices for most of the larger



Customers at a new style public office counter

towns are about to be built or are reaching the working drawing stage and the current building programme also includes 74 new "Type Design" offices. Three separate Type Designs suitable for small and medium sized towns have been evolved so that the drawing board stage of planning is cut out and offices can be built from standard working drawings in a much shorter time and with a minimum of supervision.

We have also gone a long way during the last two years in standardising the types of sorting fitting in use, and new fittings have been designed. For example, parcel handling entails a great deal

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of entry work as almost all parcels posted are registered. A fitting has therefore been devised which acts at once as a sorting selection fitting, a drop bag fitting and a table for entry work.

Another distinctive feature is the private box system. For a small annual fee people may rent a delivery box and personally clear it at any hour of the day or night, as the nests of boxes are built into the outer wall of the Post Office. A considerable amount of correspondence is delivered



New design of post office—Totoro B.O., Abeokuta

in this way and this means that the primary sorting fittings are cleared much more frequently than at home.

To avoid distracting the sorters, a sorting fitting has been made which enables the letters to be cleared easily from the back, but prevents them going straight through as they are sorted. These fittings are also equipped with bag hooks so that they can be used at small offices for both sorting and despatching, so economising in space.

Special counter units have also been designed and are now in workshop production. Incidentally, we have our own workshop which makes all our furniture, sorting equipment, assembles telecommunications equipment and builds our own motor vehicle bodies. These units are made in sections each 4 foot 6 inches long, of plywood on a dexion framework faced with formica and edged with hard wood. They are very neat to look at and can easily be kept clean.

The banking positions are equipped with a special fitment comprising a lockable cupboard for money order advices, space for notices and stop

payment lists and shelves for the smaller type of form most commonly in use. At the larger offices a roll top wall fitment is used for money order advices.



Conveyor, Apapa Wharf Parcel Office



Postman on delivery

Officers of the Home Postal Service in Nigeria work chiefly on improving the organisation to meet modern conditions, and training Nigerians in the most up-to-date methods. The country is developing at an enormous rate; for example, postal traffic over the past five years has increased between 10 and 11 per cent each year. This

demands considerable effort and foresight not only to keep the services operating but also to ensure that they will be able to continue to operate in five or 10 years' time, assuming that this rate of increase will persist, which seems likely.

We have, therefore, on loan, Assistant Postal Controllers in charge of the organisation at Headquarters and in the field, and supervising officers on field work and in charge of comprehensive training schemes for all grades of Nigerian in the Postal Service. In addition, there are former British Post Office people who transferred to the Colonial Service after the last war and are now occupying key positions in the organisation.

Nineteen-sixty is likely to be the year of Nigeria's independence and so the accent is on "Nigerianisation" of the service. This involves many problems, since the organisation's "new look" is indeed new to the country and the mass of the staff have not hitherto been trained to it.

"Old so-and-so" has plainly got a full time job on his hands and it is fair to say that he is thoroughly enjoying it. There are many setbacks and many frustrations but there is an exceptional field for initiative and for taking decisions which can be far-reaching in their effects. Above all, a great deal of satisfaction can be gained in adding one's efforts to those of a country and a people emerging into a modern state.

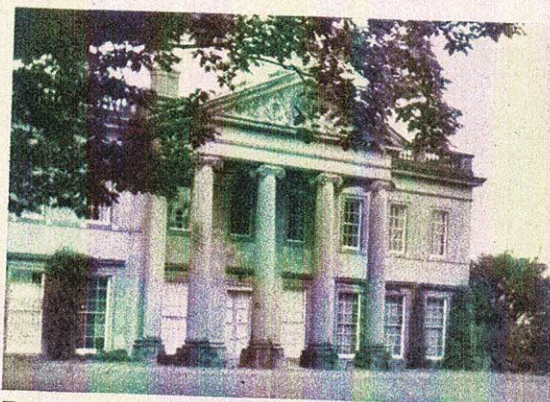
The Nigerian himself is a very pleasant person to work with and responds enthusiastically to training. Naturally there are disappointments; that is to be expected, but in the main, the results of patient effort and example are well worthwhile.

From time to time there will be advertisements in the *Post Office Circular* for postal people to occupy various appointments in Nigeria on approved employment terms. Anyone fully qualified in his job, who would like to gain experience in a new field for two or three years, need have no qualms about coming to Nigeria. He must not expect to make a fortune nor must he think that after a few hours work he will be able to relax in a wicker chair with plenty of suitable refreshment at his elbow.

In point of fact, he will probably find himself working harder than he has worked before, but at the same time he will have comfortable quarters, a good standard of living and a pleasant social life, and above all he will gain considerable useful experience in his own job which he could not get at home and which will stand him in very good stead when he returns to the Home Service.

(Mr. Guenier is on loan from the Home Service—GPO North, Western Region)

Here and There



BROGYNTYN HALL, OSWESTRY, the stately home of David Ormsby-Gore, M.P., pictured here, goes by the more mundane name of "LMP 7" since the Engineering Department has rented it as office accommodation for part of Lines Branch.



GEORGE SHAW, a Technical Officer at Leith automatic exchange, is an international boxing referee and judge and has appeared many times on television as a referee. In his younger days he boxed in 13 internationals for Scotland.

His proudest day however, was when, having been selected by the Scottish Amateur Boxing Association to be Manager of the Scottish boxing team at the British Empire and Commonwealth Games this year at Cardiff, he took his place in the wonderful opening parade.

Training, first at Inverclyde House, Largs, and later at Cardiff, was a hard grind for the team, but he says, such was the wonderful spirit that everyone thoroughly enjoyed it and his job of manager was made a very easy one. His chief worry was that the lavish hospitality of the Welsh hosts would cause all his boxers to be