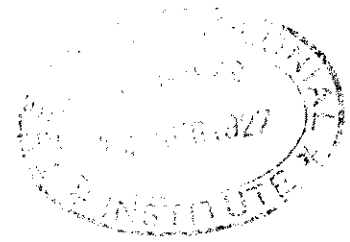


NIGERIA.



ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE

Posts and Telegraphs Department and
Post Office Savings Bank

FOR THE YEAR

1926.

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Annual Report of the Posts and Telegraphs Department for the year 1926.

GENERAL.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

Despite the coal strike in England with its consequent effect on the general trade of Nigeria the services of the Posts and Telegraphs Department during 1926 have not only been maintained but in some instances show increases over 1925. The net revenue is £6,832 greater than that of the previous year while the total expenditure shows an increase of £6,990.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

The Department sustained a very serious loss in the early months of the year by the enforced retirement, owing to family reasons, of Mr. H. M. Woolley, the Postmaster-General. Mr. Woolley came to Nigeria as the Assistant Postmaster-General, Northern Nigeria, in April 1905, became Postmaster-General of the Northern Protectorate in October 1910 and on the amalgamation of the Nigerias, accepted the post of Deputy Postmaster-General under Mr. Somerville. He was appointed Postmaster-General in November, 1920 and it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that the advance of the Department both in the scope of its services and in efficiency was largely due to Mr. Woolley's unique knowledge of the Colony and its needs, and to his intimate acquaintance with the general public and his brother officials.

Other changes in the European Staff during the year were as follows:— Mr. G. I. Righton, Deputy Postmaster-General, to be Postmaster-General (5.4.26); Mr. A. C. Parker, Surveyor, permanently invalided (27.12.26); Mr. S. E. Avery, Senior Accountant, transferred to Treasury (2.3.26); Mr. A. McCormick, Assistant Accountant, promoted to be Senior Accountant (2.3.26); Mr. W. J. Collison, seconded from the Comptroller and Accountant General's Department, General Post Office, London, to be an Assistant Accountant (3.11.26); Mr. D. Sanderson, Engineer Probationer, appointed Assistant Engineer (19.5.26); Mr. T. G. King, Engineer Probationer, appointed as Assistant Engineer, supernumerary to Establishment (10.11.26); Mr. A. E. Cheal, Foreman, was promoted to be an Inspector, Grade II (1.9.26) and Mr. W. Hawkes, Foreman, retired (3.7.26); Messrs. Perry and Christie were brought out, on agreement, as Telegraph Foremen, their appointments dating from the 29th September, 1926.

On the 31st December, 1926, vacancies existed for the posts of Deputy Postmaster-General, Assistant Surveyor (1), Postmaster-Surveyors (2), and an Assistant Accountant (1). As the last three posts are amongst those to which it is proposed to appoint Africans, it may be said that the European staff was only two officers short of normal Establishment.

ENGINEER PROBATIONERS.

The system of recruiting men in England as Engineer Probationers and giving them an intensive training under the General Post Office, the Consulting Engineers and at various engineering and railway workshops has proved an unqualified success.

EUROPEAN FOREMEN AND INSPECTORS.

Difficulty is still being experienced in filling appointments for these Grade "B" posts.

One officer, Mr. H. H. Loney, Inspector, has been seconded throughout the year as an Assistant Engineer in charge of Railway Telegraphs Construction.

The health of the European staff has, on the whole, been good but I have to record with regret the long and painful illness of Mr. G. P. Lewis, Divisional Surveyor, who was absent on sick leave from the 10th December, 1925, until the close of 1926; he has, I am glad to say, since resumed duty. The retirement of Mr. A. C. Parker, Surveyor, whose invaliding can be directly traced to serious wounds received in the Great War, is also to be regretted.

AFRICAN STAFF.

Two senior appointments only have been filled during the past year by the promotion of Mr. H. A. Paris, Chief Superintendent, to be a Postmaster-Surveyor (19.8.26) and Mr. H. C. Pearce, Pensioner, re-appointed as a Superintendent (13.12.26). Eight senior appointments await recommendations from the various Controlling Officers and it is hoped to fill the majority of these vacancies, in the superintending classes, during the early part of 1927.

The African staff position on the 31st December, 1926, was as follows:—

Clerical	...	...	...	...	...	92 (103)
Postmasters, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	475 (507)
Telephonists	...	...	...	...	...	53 (56)
Storekeepers...	...	...	...	...	...	16 (17)
Engineering (all grades)	...	...	...	...	...	577 (586)
Postmen and Messengers	...	...	...	...	...	177 (191)

Note:—The figures in brackets show the approved establishment for 1926-27.

The changes during the year were:—

Retired on pension	...	...	...	...	...	4
Resigned	...	...	...	...	...	35
Invalided	...	...	...	...	...	5
Died	...	...	...	...	...	19
Appointments terminated	...	...	...	...	...	50
Dismissed	...	...	...	...	...	17
Transferred	...	...	...	...	...	2
Convicted	...	...	...	...	...	3
Appointed from other Departments	...	...	...	...	...	2

Most of the deaths recorded are those of men employed in outdoor work, such as Assistant Linemen. Under "appointments terminated" are included thirty Telegraph and Clerical Probationers, who were unable to qualify for appointments. Over 50% of the resignations accepted were those of unestablished officers, such as Messengers, the majority of whom found the life of a Telegraph Delivery messenger not to their liking.

A study of the African staff figures brings home the fact that the Department is still far from full strength, and the position would be far worse were it not for the fact that some score or more Probationers, over and above the normal limits of such unestablished appointments, have been taken on to cover existing vacancies in the permanent establishment. Every effort is made both in the Telegraph School and by the Department generally to train and retain all recruits but the percentage of those who, after a short trial, prove themselves unfitted for permanent appointment is still very high. Not only is the standard of intelligence displayed lamentably low but the general education, elementary as it undoubtedly is, of such lads leaves much to be desired.

The training in the Telegraph School has, throughout the year, been in the hands of Mr. G. D. Rousseau, Telegraph Instructor, who has succeeded in turning out as competent telegraphists thirty-seven pupils to fill appointments in the permanent Establishment.

AFRICAN TELEGRAPH MAINTENANCE STAFF.

The general standard of recruits, even for such posts as those of Assistant Linemen, has been raised, with gratifying results.

BUILDINGS.

New post offices have been built at Umuahia, Zaria, and Ondo and permanent buildings are nearing completion at Apapa, Ife, Ibe and Imo River. New "bush" offices have been erected at Kumba, Bende, Abuja, Owo, Damaturu and Potiskum.

OFFICES.

New postal telegraph offices have been opened at Potiskum and Damaturu and postal agencies were opened at Nembe, Agbiam, Argungu, Shendam, Zuru and Challowa. The offices at Loko and Nafada and the agency at Gana-Gana were closed down.

MAILS.

A considerable speeding up in the delivery of mails has been effected by the use of motor transport between Oshogbo and Asaba on the Benin and Onitsha services, between Enugu and Abakaliki in the Ogoja Province and Northern Cameroons services, and between Jos and Bauchi on the Bauchi and Yola services. Mail despatches are now exchanged between Makurdi and Kaduna, and a travelling post office has been opened on the Baro-Minna-Zaria sections and serves all the small stations *en route*. Steamer connections are now available for a bi-monthly service between Lagos and Victoria, Cameroons.

Complaints have been received from the commercial communities at Calabar, Opobo and Port Harcourt on the lack of regular services connecting with the Homeward Express Mail Boats from Lagos. Every avenue by which mails can be accelerated has been explored but I am of opinion, that until a regular branch steamer service between the South Coast ports and Lagos is established, no improvement in present arrangements can be effected.

PARCELS.

The period of retention for delivery of parcels was extended from fourteen to twenty-one days and has so far not resulted in any serious congestion at the main delivery offices. The popularity of the heavy parcels traffic, i.e. of parcels between 11 and 22 lb., is shown in the figures of 11,000 received in the first nine months of the year or over 10% of the total number received from the United Kingdom. The "weight" increase has been extended to the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone.

The parcel mail United Kingdom-Warri, which left Liverpool on the 1st September was totally destroyed, owing to a fire on board S.S. *Shouga* and the consequent flooding of the ship at Sapele.

The "green label" system, by which small dutiable articles may be sent by letter post instead of the more expensive parcel post rate, has proved an immediate success and many hundreds of letter packets, thus labelled, are being received by every mail.

LOSS OF MAILS.

A mail despatched from Nafada to Bauchi on the 28th January and yet another mail on the 26th February, 1926, failed to arrive at their destination. The runner in each case was missing and no arrests were made. A parcel mail from Jos to Ibi on the 21st June, 1926, was rifled and one parcel was stolen. No arrests were made.

CHARLATANIC CORRESPONDENCE.

The traffic in the "easy money" business in providing charms, horoscopes, cure-all medicines, spirit trumpets and the like, is still on the increase and although the Department has stopped, by authority, several hundreds of letters addressed to various "quacks" throughout the world, in-coming mails bring many letters, complete with charms, etc., for the dupes of these "medicine men"; all such packages, if brought to notice, are stopped. In one division alone £164 10s. 11d. in money value was returned to senders, many of whom are holding positions of trust and responsibility.

Further powers are being taken with regard to this traffic by which it is hoped to put a period to such activities or, at least, to limit the widening circle of dupes.

BURGLARIES.

The office at Mamfe (Cameroons) was broken into on the night of the 6th March, 1926, the Keffi Office was entered on the night of the 3rd May, 1926 and the Oguta Office was also broken into after official hours on the 4th April, 1926. So far as is at present known no articles of value, other than Official "Bee" clocks in each case, or of postal correspondence were taken away from any of these places. No arrests were made. The Keffi, Oguta and Mamfe Offices are temporary "bush" buildings and it has to be pointed out that mud and plaster buildings afford little or no protection for the many articles of value committed to the charge of the Department.

PUBLIC BUSINESS.

An increase has, as usual, been recorded in the number and amount of postal orders paid. *viz* :—6,816 valued at £4,103.

The money order system is not popular and the total amounts issued and paid are beneath those recorded in the neighbouring Colonies of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. The reasons adduced for this unpopularity are the excessive commission charged and, within the Department, the fact of the advantages of such a system being kept in the background by officers who prefer to sell postal orders to the public rather than to have to issue a money order, a slightly more complicated process. Both objections are, however, easily remedied.

Private boxes and bags.—This service is becoming increasingly popular and all new offices are now fitted with nests of boxes, while existing offices are being fitted with extra boxes or new fixtures as the necessity arises and opportunity offers.

Poste Restante.—This service is the only medium by which the delivery of letters is effected at Provincial Offices and the average number of ordinary letters returned as undelivered during the past four years is 51,670 of which an average of 31,980 had to be destroyed as unreturnable, this being due in the majority of cases to the illiteracy of the senders.

Registered Letters.—The estimated numbers of registered letters received and despatched are 160,940 and 96,200 respectively. The average African, very wisely, prefers to get a "book" or receipt for any letter, etc., containing value or which may, in his eyes, have value.

Express letter service and Reply paid coupons.—Both of these services are in being, the former between Great Britain and this Colony and the latter world-wide but up to the present the public have not taken advantage of either of the systems.

Philately.—The amount of £1,810 2s. 1d. was paid during the year by stamp collectors for current issues of Nigerian postage stamps. No new designs have been introduced since 1914, but certain of the watermarks have been altered and the serial numbers changed with fresh issues.

TELEGRAPHS.

Duplex working was brought into force between Aba and Onitsha, and the new line Ijebu-Ode-Epe-Ibadan was opened for traffic on the 5th July, 1926. Interruptions were few and far between, except on the Cameroons section, and the principal breakdowns recorded for the year were at the aerial crossing at Obubra on two occasions, a failure on the Port Harcourt-Bonny cable, and a line failure between Keffi and Jemaa.

SPECIAL WORKS (TELEGRAPHS AND MAINTENANCE).

Eastern Railway Telegraph Construction, including the Bukuru Branch line, with the exception of the wiring of three permanent stations in course of erection, has been completed.

Ijebu-Ode-Ibadan and Jos-Bauchi-Maiduguri telegraph lines are completed and the overhauling and repair of various other lines has been undertaken.

The general maintenance of lines has been good and delays of twenty-four hours, or over, except on the Cameroons telegraph line, are of rare occurrence.

WIRELESS

Towards the end of the year two wireless receiving sets capable of receiving Rugby news were purchased by the Department, one at a cost of £280 and the other with a more limited wave band £188, one of which has been erected at Lagos and has given up to the present good results. The other set is intended for Kaduna, and it is anticipated that the results obtainable on the Highlands at Kaduna will be considerably more effective and stable than those at Lagos. Prior to the arrival of these sets the Department used for some time a wireless set belonging to Dr. H. H. Stewart, to whom the thanks of the Department are due, and at a

later date a set built and operated, as in the case of Dr. Stewart's set, by Mr. G. D. Rousseau, Telegraph Instructor. The traffic received was that of the Rugby Wireless Station working on 18,740 metres and an examination of the log kept for six months by Mr. Rousseau, to whom all credit is due, shows that, although he was taking off news from a Station of over 500 K.W. power, there were many occasions when even a man of his operating ability could not distinguish, or in many cases, hear signals.

TELEPHONES.

New exchanges were opened during the year at Zaria and at Idu, and additional accommodation has been given at the Exchanges at Calabar and Apapa. The sub-exchanges at Bota and Iddo have been closed. The standard of operation at the exchanges has improved.

A question of considerable importance and one that has caused grave anxiety has arisen with reference to the discovery of active corrosion in the lead sheathing of the underground telephone cables laid in the Lagos area. Analyses have been made, samples of the cables and of various soils have been sent to England where the assistance and experience of the big cable firms is being sought with a view to finding a solution to the difficulty.

APPRECIATION.

I have to thank all the Staff, European and African, for their services which, almost without exception, have been ungrudgingly given, and to whom the present efficient state of the Department is due.

ACCOUNTS AND STORES.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ACCOUNTANT.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

Mr. Avery, Senior Accountant, after nearly twelve years service in the Branch, having reached the maximum of his grade, £800, was transferred to the Treasury as from 2nd March, 1926. The Senior Accountant vacancy, £600-£800, was filled by Mr. A. McCormick, Assistant Accountant.

During the year, Mr. R. Temple, the next senior of the Assistant Accountants was recommended for transfer to the Treasury on the long grade.

During the year, Mr. Whittaker, Assistant Storekeeper, was transferred to the Arts and Crafts Branch of the Northern Provinces Education Department with effect from 16th February, 1927.

It is hoped to fill Mr. Whittaker's vacancy with an officer from the Stores Department of the Imperial Post Office.

An experienced African Superintendent of the Department after nine months special training has been recommended for promotion to the post of Assistant Accountant on a scale of £300, £315, £330, £350-25-£575 as from 1st October, 1926.

During the year, the Assistant Accountant's vacancy consequent on Mr. McCormick's promotion to Senior Accountant was filled by the appointment of Mr. W. J. Collison from the Comptroller and Accountant General's Department of the Imperial Post Office.

INCREASE IN EUROPEAN STAFF.

Within the next few years, it will probably be necessary to open an Unallocated Stores at Enugu under the control of a European Storekeeper, and to post an Assistant Accountant at Ebute Metta (or Apapa) and one at Enugu, thus involving an increase in the European staff.

AFRICAN STAFF.

The four vacancies in the Higher Division Clerical Establishment were filled during the year from the list of successful candidates in the Higher Division Examination of November, 1925. Two were Lower Division clerical officers already serving in the Accounts Branch, the others came from other Departments. Another Lower Division Grade II clerk already serving in the Accounts Branch was successful in the November, 1926 Senior Clerical Examination (being bracketed 2nd on the list) and under the new scheme remains in the Branch receiving five special increments.

Wastage in the Lower Division Staff was, as usual, very heavy during the year. Four officers resigned, one was dismissed and three gained transfers to other Departments.

A further year's experience has shown the unwisdom of appointing clerical probationers who have not already passed the Junior Clerical Examination. The proportion of such probationers who succeed in passing the Examination, and avoiding the automatic determination of their appointments after three years' service, is about one in eight.

There was abnormal sickness amongst the African staff in March, 1926. Sickness is usually heaviest during the rains.

OFFICE HOURS.

In this connection the experiment inaugurated in June, 1925, of continuous office hours, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., for the majority of the Accounts and Stores Staff was continued during 1926 and again proved popular and successful.

BUILDINGS.

The recent alterations in the interior arrangement of the Accounts Branch have made for the greater comfort and efficiency of the staff; but the Telegraph and Telephone Clearing House Staff numbering nine are still badly housed in the old Jones Hotel building adjoining the General Post Office, Lagos, which is ill adapted for the purpose.

INSPECTIONS.

During October, 1926, the Chief Accountant was able to make a brief visit of inspection to the principal post offices and the stores of the Western, Central and Eastern Provinces and to confer with Engineering and Surveying officers.

SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTS—AUDITOR'S APPROVAL.

It was gratifying during the year to receive from Government a favourable comment from the Auditor's report on the system, and operation of the system, of accounts in this Department.

EXTENSION OF HEAD POST OFFICE SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTS.

It will be necessary in the near future to convert important sub-offices into head offices for accounting purposes, the sub-office imprest system not being suitable for busy offices. This will entail a slight increase of staff at Headquarters.

STAFF RECORDS.

The re-writing of the Staff Records of the Department (which are kept in this Branch) in larger loose leaf books, with information tabulated in a conciser and more convenient form, was completed during the year.

SAVINGS BANK.

A separate report on the Post Office Savings Bank is submitted. The recent legislation (regarding the balances of dormant Savings Bank accounts hitherto credited to Revenue, remaining indefinitely the property of depositors) was at first thought to be retrospective and accordingly caused extra work as the old system had been in vogue since the taking over of the Savings Bank from the Treasury in 1907. In practice, the old system of publishing in poster and pamphlet form for three successive years particulars of dormant balances and distributing these widely, was in the interest of the depositors; and no bona-fide application for a refundment after the balance of an account had been carried to Revenue was ever refused.

IMPERIAL REPLY COUPONS.

The scheme by which Imperial Reply Coupons will be sold at 2½d. throughout the post offices of the Empire and exchanged for a local 2d. stamp (thus allowing reply postage to be prepaid throughout the Empire) was accepted by this Administration during the year; but owing to delay on the part of the Imperial Post Office in sending out supplies of the approved pattern of coupon, these will not be on sale in Nigeria until some time in 1927.

HEAVY PARCELS.

The system of "heavy parcels" (over 11 lb. and not exceeding 22 lb.) inaugurated between the United Kingdom and Nigeria, each way, in November, 1925, proved successful. 18,000 (17,958 net) heavy parcels were received from the United Kingdom, fortytwo from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, and 933 were despatched. The postage is 7/6d. as compared with 5/- for a parcel over seven and not exceeding 11 lb. The system is being extended to the British West African Colonies as from 1st February, 1927, the rate being 7/- as compared with 6/- for a parcel not exceeding 11 lb. A few were received and sent irregularly as shown above.

DIRECT PARCEL AND MONEY ORDER EXCHANGE WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

At the instance of the Washington Authorities and the Postmasters-General of Sierra Leone and Accra the question of a direct Parcel and Money Order Exchange with the United States was considered by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Imperial Post Office late in 1925. So far as Nigeria is at present

concerned the parcel traffic with United States of America (via United Kingdom) is very small, and a direct service is not justified. An analysis of the Parcel Bills to and from the principal Nigeria Parcel Offices of Exchange for the six months June–November, 1926 revealed the following:—

Parcel traffic between United States of America and Nigeria six months June–November, 1926, inclusive.

TO U. S. A.		FROM U. S. A.
	Lagos & Area	151 Lagos 146 Lagos Forward
58	Ibadan	13
	Zaria	30
5	Jos	66
5	Kano	15
2	Onitsha	11
12	Port Harcourt	102
1	Warri	7
Sent 83	Total for 6 months	541 Received.

The eighty-three parcels sent included parcels originally from United States of America—sent through banks—not taken up by addressees and returned to senders.

COST OF CARRIAGE OF OVERSEAS MAILS.

The final financial result of the international mail statistics taken in October–November, 1924 with effect from 1st January, 1926, was communicated to this Administration during the year. The previous statistics were taken in May 1921 and the next statistics will be taken in May 1929. Nigeria's share of the fixed Imperial subsidy to Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co. has been increased from £1,815 to £2,095 while the carriage of *a découvert* mails originating in Nigeria beyond the United Kingdom has risen from 3023.6 gold francs (£136 approximately) to 5445.05 gold francs (approximately £216).

FRENCH MAILS IN TRANSIT THROUGH NIGERIA.

The accounts against France and the French West African Colonies in respect of the carriage of mails (to and from the Territoire Militaire du Niger and of French Equatorial Africa), over the Nigerian Railway both ways between Lagos and Kano, are (by arrangement with the French Administrations) now submitted quarterly. They are now being settled in pounds sterling and with greater promptness. The amount outstanding on 31st December, 1926 in respect of accounts rendered up to 30th September, 1926 was £630 13s. 11d. (as compared with £961 15s. 8d. on 31st December, 1925) and £1,553 10s. 10d. was collected during the year, including arrears of 1924 accounts.

DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS FOR TELEGRAMS.

A system of cash deposits at the General Post Office, Lagos (from which the cost of forwarded telegrams are met) was inaugurated on the 2nd November, 1925 as an experiment. No charge is made for keeping the account but it is confined to those firms whose volume of outward telegraph traffic justifies the concession. During the year five firms applied for and were conceded a telegram deposit account, but one withdrew in February 1926. The statistics were as follows:—

Firm.	Date of adoption of system.	Amount of Deposit.	No. of Telegrams.	Average Monthly Value.			Remarks.
				£	s.	d.	
1. Messrs. The Nigerian Motors	3.11.25	5	89	7	0	0	
2. Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co.	10.11.25	20	303	33	0	0	
3. Messrs. G. B. Ollivant & Co.	24.11.25	10	163	10	0	0	
4. Messrs. Bull West African Shipping Line ...	24.11.25	5	20	1	10	0	
5. Messrs. African and Eastern Trade Corporation	29.3.26	5	30	3	0	0	

NEW ISSUES OF NIGERIAN POSTAGE STAMPS.

The following reprints and new issues of Nigerian postage stamps were received during the year:—

5s.	Plate	No. 11.
10s.	..	No. 11.
20s.	..	No. 17.

Also stamp booklets containing $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 1d. and 2d. stamps.

The old stocks of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d and 6d. issues (plate 8), and that of the old 5s. issue, (plate 8) were destroyed by a Board of Survey on 22nd February and on 17th November, 1926 respectively.

The sales of stamps to collectors and dealers during 1926 amounted in value to £1,840 2s. 1d. as compared with £776 14s. 9d. in the previous year. Of this amount £1,200 worth of new issues were distributed direct to dealers by the Crown Agents, the balance being despatched from the Accounts Branch.

The question of the poor adhesive qualities of certain denominations and of the liability of some issues to show colour stains was again taken up rigorously with the manufacturers through the Crown Agents, and elaborate bacteriological, physical and chemical examinations were made by experts with a view to remedying the defects.

Postage stamps received recently show an improvement in adhesive qualities and fastness of colouring. The retention in England by Crown Agents of half of the bulk supplies for periods of six to nine months has perhaps had some slight effect in this direction.

DISTRICT RESERVE STOCKS OF STAMPS AND POSTAL ORDERS.

The Treasury Assistant at Port Harcourt has been relieved of the work of holding the station reserve stock of stamps and postal orders—the work and responsibility having been handed over to the African Acting Postmaster-Surveyor. At the request of the Treasury also, emergency stocks of stamps at Kaduna and Jos (kept in case of breakdown in communication between Lagos and these stations) have been withdrawn.

ANALYSIS OF POSTAL ORDER BUSINESS.

In 1926, in conjunction with the Imperial Post Office authorities, an analysis was made of typical batches of postal orders issued in Nigeria. It was found that 34% of orders issued in Nigeria were paid in Nigeria and 66% were paid outside the Colony.

STATISTICS OF REVENUE, EXPENDITURE, DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS.

The Statistical Appendices are submitted separately with analytical notes thereon.

STORES—BOARDS OF SURVEY.

The Annual Boards of Survey appointed by Government on the Posts and Telegraphs Stores in January 1926, and January, 1927 reported very favourably on the efficient system of storage, issue and record of the stores of this Department.

MAINTENANCE STORES.

An Engineering Maintenance Store was opened at Benin City on June 1st, 1926, to serve the large area controlled by the Telegraph Engineer stationed there. It is much too small, and a new and more commodious building—built specially as a store for telegraph and telephone materials—is required. The present building could be conveniently handed over to another Department for use as a small stationery store.

The Posts and Telegraphs Maintenance Store at Enugu is also congested, and increased accommodation will be required in the near future. The postal, telegraph and telephone business in the Eastern Provinces is growing rapidly and this increase is promptly reflected in the work of the Stores Branch. It will be necessary in the near future to convert the Maintenance Store into an Unallocated Store.

The work of the central departmental Stationery and Postal Maintenance Store at Lagos continues to grow. As all our forms, telegraph pads, parcel delivery notices, etc, are printed by the Government Printer and are despatched from the General Post Office, Lagos, to catch the latest mails, it is desirable that the central Stationery Store of the Department should be in convenient proximity to the Government Printing and General Post Offices. A proposal during 1926 to locate this store at Ebute Metta was eventually abandoned.

The store at Minna continued to serve the Northern Provinces.

PRINTING OF FORMS.

The Government Printer once again satisfactorily supplied this Department during the year with all forms in use including telegrams and parcel forms of which very large quantities are used.

ECONOMY IN STATIONERY.

The European Storekeeper has again exercised control over requisitions of stationery. Economy has been effected, duly reflected in the expenditure under the Stationery and Printing Votes.

UNIFORMS.

The staff entitled to uniforms (Engineering Staff, Mail Boarding Officers, Travelling Post Office Clerks, Messengers and mail runners) were again regularly and punctually supplied during the year with their half-yearly issue. It is interesting to note that the subordinate grades are increasing in physique as it has been necessary once again to increase the girth of shorts and trousers—at an extra cost of a few pence per garment. Uniforms for the subordinate grades are obtained from contractors in England, the experiment tried in 1925 of local manufacture in bulk not having proved successful. The more senior grades are however permitted to have their uniforms tailored locally.

LETTER BOX LOCKS AND KEYS.

The number of private letter boxes now installed is growing rapidly and steps have been necessary to deal with the efficient indexing of spare locks and keys. If a key is lost, a duplicate is no longer issued at the office concerned. The old lock is now returned to the Lagos Store and there connected with its duplicate key or keys and issued out to another office in a different part of Nigeria. Until recently neither keys nor locks have borne a maker's number, and the task of connecting up locks and keys has been somewhat difficult.

UNALLOCATED STORE.

The principal African Storekeeper of the Department, Mr. T. E. Thomas, Higher Division, II, proceeded on leave in December, 1926, and will retire from the service at the completion of his leave, after twenty-five years very faithful and diligent service, nineteen years of this time having been spent in this Department. He is an officer of sterling character.

The African Departmental Transport Officer at Lagos has efficiently cleared and shipped all departmental stores during the year, and has cleared and shipped the baggage of outward and homeward officers of the Department. The work has increased considerably in recent years, and it will be necessary in the near future to give the European Storekeeper sole control of or first call on a departmental motor van. Private motor transport had to be hired in 1926 at various times to clear timber from the Public Works Department Saw Mill at Ijora and to clear large supplies of heavy telephone and telegraph material that was congesting the Customs sheds.

The natural lighting of Main Store No. 1 is not very good and steps are being taken in 1927 to improve matters by increasing the window area.

The petrol store erected some years ago in the early days of departmental motor transport is now much too small and its location in front of the main stores sheds interferes with the efficient marshalling of the vans for loading and unloading. A fresh and larger petrol store is necessary near the paints and varnishes store at the back of the compound.

An extension of the main stores buildings will be necessary in the near future, with offices for the Chief Storekeeper and Staff and for a Stores Accountant and Staff. A concrete two-storey building is advocated--the ground floor having a high ceiling so that steel mezzanine flooring can be installed, thus doubling the storage area over the same floor space. In the best modern practice the use of ladders is discouraged--stores presses and pigeon-holes being six feet high only and sufficiently low to be reached by hand. Stock out of reach is apt to escape checking and attention; and efficient supervision is rendered more difficult.

MAINTENANCE SECTION AND TELEPHONE BRANCH.

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

During the year, the changes in the European Establishment of this Branch were:—

Name.	Rank.	Appoint-ment.	Promo-tion.	Retire-ment.	Transfer.	Reversion.	Termina-tion.
D. Sanderson ...	Assistant Telegraph Engineer	19.5.26	...	...	...	...	...
T. G. King ...	do.	10.11.26	...	...	...	...	...
A. E. Cheal ...	Inspector Grade II	...	1.9.26	...	...	...	...
W. Hawkes ...	Foreman	...	...	3.7.26	...	...	...
E. F. Perry ...	do.	29.9.26	...	...	...	...	...
P. W. Christie ...	do.	29.9.26	...	...	...	...	...

The standard of work and conduct of the whole staff has been excellent.

ENGINEERS.

The two Assistant Engineers appointed during the year were specially trained in England under the scheme approved by the Secretary of State subsequent to the difficulty in obtaining men with the necessary technical and personal qualifications. There are now eight of these officers on the staff and it can be stated that the scheme has proved a definite success. Its scope has been extended to include Engineers for the Gold Coast.

FOREMEN AND INSPECTORS.

Difficulty is still experienced in obtaining men for these posts. It took five months to obtain the two men appointed in 1926 and seven months to obtain one appointed in January 1927.

AFRICAN STAFF.

The standard of work has been raised all round. The illiterate Linemen are disappearing through age and length of service and new entrants have to be able to read and write and speak English. For the higher appointments of Sub-Inspector and Inspector, special courses of training have been organised. These probationers must have had a secondary school education and are then given a thoroughly practical course in the workshops in telegraph, telephone and railway block signalling apparatus and in construction work. In spite of the varied and complicated nature of the duties, the results have been gratifying, and, it is of interest to record that the number of applicants for these non-clerical appointments is so large that careful selection is possible.

CONSTRUCTION.

Eastern Railway and Bukuru Branch. With the exception of the 'wiring' of three permanent stations in course of erection, this work is completed.

<i>Ijebu-Ode—Ibadan Line.</i>	... This has been completed.
<i>Jos—Bauchi—Maiduguri</i>	} The overhauling, shifting and partial reconstruction of these lines have been completed.
<i>Owerri—Degema.</i>	
<i>Owerri—Aba.</i>	
<i>Ibi—Yola</i>	
<i>Ebute Metta—Apapa</i>	

The extension of the telegraph to Ede-Ife and Ondo; the erection of the Lagos Ibadan trunk telephone; the reconstruction of the Lagos-Oshogbo line and the reconstruction of the Cameroons telephones could not be put in hand owing to the non-delivery of stores from England due to the coal strike. The reconstruction of the Sapele-Koko line has been abandoned.

CABLES UNDERGROUND.

Considerable anxiety has been caused by the discovery of active corrosion in the lead sheathing of the cables laid in the Lagos area. In some cases, the sheathing has been pierced and interruption has resulted. The trouble is general throughout the area and has affected nearly every type, some of which have only been in use a year. Analyses have been made by the Government Analyst: samples of the cables and of various soils have been sent to England and the Engineer-in-Chief is enquiring into the matter in London with the Consulting Engineers and the Metallurgist to the Crown Agents. The experience of representatives of the big cable firms has also been obtained. The matter is still under consideration. As there are 19½ miles of cable containing 1,060 miles of separate conductors in the area, the matter is one of importance.

TELEGRAPHS.

The enlarged Central Telegraph Office, Lagos, was opened in May. Secondary cells were installed and the whole of the circuits—including the School and the synchronised clocks—work from one battery, the prime energy being taken from the Public Works Electricity Supply.

New offices at Potiskum and Damaturu were opened and the offices at Nafada and Loko closed.

Duplex working has been installed between Kalamna—Enugu and Minna—Onitsha.

INTERRUPTIONS.

Except in the Cameroons, there have been no cases of serious delay to traffic. Interruptions, caused on the main Lagos—Oshogbo line by falling trees emphasise the necessity for a wider clearing. This will be undertaken in connection with the Lagos—Oshogbo reconstruction. The time taken in restoring communication has been commendably brief.

TELEPHONES.

New exchanges have been opened at Zaria and Itu. That at Jos is nearly completed. The exchanges at Apapa and Calabar have been enlarged and remodelled. The exchanges at Iddo and Bota have been closed.

There has been a steady increase in the services provided both private and official.

MAINTENANCE.

It has been possible to take special steps to improve the maintenance in the Lagos area. Unfortunately, sickness has delayed the completion of the work but there has been a marked improvement.

OPERATING.

This improvement is reflected in the operating, which has also had special supervision. One factor has undoubtedly been the provision of a larger, airier and cooler switch room.

RAILWAY ELECTRICAL SIGNALLING.

Telegraphs.—Increase in traffic has necessitated the duplexing of the Ebute Metta—Minna circuit. This is the first circuit on the Railway to be duplexed.

Progress has been delayed in the substitution of "common battery" working on the "station to station" circuit of the Western Railway by the non-arrival of apparatus but the work has been completed for the first 385 miles and is a success from both the efficiency and economical view-points.

Electric Train Block Signalling.—Special attention has been given to the maintenance of this apparatus of which 358 sets are in use and the number of failures has been reduced. An irregularity in operating the old type of instruments is under investigation.

Inspection Vans.—The work of supervision has been hampered by the delay in obtaining inspection vans.

Re-imbusement.—The amount payable by the Railway for the maintenance of the electrical signalling systems is estimated at £21,600 for the financial year 1926-27.

TELEGRAPHS, MAILS AND PUBLIC BUSINESS.

OFFICES OF THE DIVISIONAL SURVEYORS.

EASTERN DIVISION.

Generally speaking the year has been one of all round progress, the public having benefited in several ways, chiefly in the direction of mail accelerations.

The staff as a whole has worked loyally and diligently.

ADMINISTRATION.

All post offices and agencies have been surveyed as frequently as staff conditions permitted; only Arochuku, Oturkpo and Nsukka Political Agencies remaining unvisited during the year.

On the whole the results have been satisfactory revealing a fair measure of efficiency.

Complaints by the public have not been numerous and in some cases where these have been made investigation has shown the cause to be either beyond the control of the Department or due to circumstances which could not be foreseen or anticipated.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

For the first half year the full European establishment was maintained but during the second half the staff has been one short of the authorised number. Two Assistant Surveyors took local leave.

AFRICAN STAFF.

The position in this regard on the 31st December, 1926, was much the same as at the commencement of the year, the total shortage when all classes are considered being eight clerks.

There is a serious deficiency of staff in the Postmaster and Postal Clerk and Telegraphist I grades and the loss in this direction is by no means compensated by the surplus in the Postal Clerk and Telegraphist II grade. In fact it has been difficult to find men suitable to take charge of fairly busy sub-offices of late.

The granting of vacation leave, temporarily suspended for the period of Christmas pressure—is again proceeding.

A little difficulty is sometimes experienced in this connexion and some offices are slightly understaffed in consequence.

The staff changes have been as follows:

Clerks.	<i>Invalided</i>	One.
	<i>Dismissed</i>	Two.
	<i>Resigned</i>	Two.
Messengers.	<i>Dismissed</i>	Three.
	<i>Resigned</i>	One.

Broadly speaking, absence on account of sickness has not been excessive.

STAFF EDUCATION.

This has been continued, the duty chart allowing of the rotation of the staff in nearly every instance.

The non-telegraphists continue to be a source of embarrassment. In very few cases do they attempt to qualify in telegraphy in order to make themselves more useful to the Department. The practice of sending superfluous dots and dashes in figures is still widespread and it seems impossible to kill it.

It is surprising that more errors do not arise from this cause.

Members of the staff do not consult the rule books as frequently as they might do and it is evident in many cases that the correct procedure to be followed in various classes of work only becomes known through errors being made and reported.

Some members of the staff sat for the Higher and Lower Division Government Clerical Examinations but none were successful.

BUILDINGS.

Permanent.—The new office at Umuahia was occupied in September, some items of work still remaining to be done by the Public Works Department and outstanding furniture supplied. This question is being pressed.

A move from the bush office was imperative.

A new office at Imo River is nearing completion.

Temporary.—New temporary offices have been provided at Kumba and Bende, the former being of stone roofed with pan and being to all intents and purposes a permanent building.

EUROPEAN QUARTERS.

Permanent quarters were obtained for Assistant Surveyors at Port Harcourt and Aba.

Quarters for a Surveying Officer have been completed at Calabar.

AFRICAN QUARTERS.

This question is still acute at Enugu where four clerks are without permanent quarters.

The temporary accommodation available is very limited and indifferent. It has been asked that full provision be made during 1927-28.

MAIL SERVICES.

Seeing that there is no regular steamship service to the Eastern Division excepting the four-weekly one, the mail service to and from Lagos may be said to have been satisfactory, the incidence of mails having been at fairly regular intervals. There were a few instances of delay as regards the outward English mail due to a connecting boat not leaving immediately after the arrival of the Lagos Express steamer. In the reverse direction the service was not quite so good inasmuch as Eastern Division Homeward mails have sometimes had to be despatched from Port Harcourt on the Saturday, Sunday or Monday in order to reach Lagos thirty-six hours away in time to connect with the boat leaving on the following Friday.

Again, short notice of the departure of vessels is almost invariably given, this being attributed to the uncertainty of the coal position. This question of the short notice of the closing of mails is one which irritates the commercial community very considerably especially those at such stations as Degema, Opobo, Enugu and Calabar.

During the year complaint was made that correspondence between Great Britain and the British Cameroons was delayed and was frequently received *via* Duala. On investigation the delay was shown to rest with the senders who had failed to address letters fully.

The matter has received attention and the complaints have ceased.

A bi-weekly mail in either direction has been instituted between Makurdi and Kaduna in place of the former weekly one, and this has proved of great service both to the public and to the Administration.

It was also found possible to accelerate correspondence posted in Munshi Province and addressed to Great Britain and Lagos by circulating it *via* Kaduna.

THE OWERRI-OGUTA MAIL SERVICE.

The Owerri-Oguta mail service has been accelerated by the introduction of a cyclist mailman.

A new fortnightly motor service timed in connexion with Outward and Homeward overseas mails has been inaugurated between Oshogbo and Onitsha providing an acceleration of five days in the delivery of Outward mails and allowing of posting at Onitsha for the Homeward mail at least two days later than formerly. This new service is greatly appreciated.

A contract was arranged for the conveyance of mails between wharf, post office, and station at Port Harcourt and relieved the Department of a deal of trouble in addition to ensuring the mails being kept dry during the rains. The service also proved to be quicker and more reliable than carrier transport and certainly provided greater security.

At the request of the Chamber of Commerce a late fee posting box was provided at Port Harcourt Railway Station in connexion with up-line mails and a late fee service arranged at Port Harcourt Post Office for overseas mails. Neither service is very extensively used but may become more popular as time advances.

The question of a motor mail service between Oron and Opobo was explored but was not proceeded with on account of the difficulty of the Ndiya crossing where the pontoon can only be used with safety for a period of two hours at high tide. The matter of a motor mail service between Oron and Eket is, however, receiving attention.

Use is now made of canoes between Degema and Port Harcourt to supplement the launch service at times when the launch is not available. This is mostly in connexion with Homeward mails and the service rendered has so far proved satisfactory, the journey being performed in about seven hours and by night if necessary, which latter is an advantage over the launch which only runs during daylight as a rule.

It is worthy of note that the increase in the volume of mail matter from Buca northwards has necessitated the provision of additional funds for the payment of casual labour. The increase is said to be due to the influx of Plantation proprietors, missionaries, and the transfer of Political Officers from the Cameroons Coast to the interior.

The Southern Cameroons is now served by two regular mail steamers, Elders and the Woermann boats calling at Victoria monthly. The mail service is therefore a greatly improved one.

In June last the Eastern Railway Authorities consented to convey overseas mail by coal train when necessary. As Outward and Homeward Great Britain mails are usually dealt with at Port Harcourt during the week end and no passenger trains run on Sundays the concession has proved to be a valuable one resulting in the earlier delivery of mails at Calabar, Aba and Enugu. Some very complimentary remarks have been made by residents of the latter place when they have received their Home mails arriving at Port Harcourt on the Saturday, before breakfast on the Sunday.

On the transfer of Provincial Headquarters from Owerri to Port Harcourt a direct mail Port Harcourt-Ahoada was substituted for the Owerri-Ahoada service.

The circulation of Brass correspondence was changed from Lagos forward to Port Harcourt Town thus avoiding the delay at Lagos occasioned by the departure of the branch boat before Brass mails could be selected.

Arrangements were completed for a new motor mail service between Enugu and Abakaliki and this is now reported to be working satisfactorily. This new service forms an important link in the Ogoja Province and Cameroons services and will speed up the mails considerably.

Parcel and letter mails which had become redundant through the decline of certain places have been discontinued.

A few interruptions of the Port Harcourt-Enugu mail service, and Eastern Travelling Post Office service are recorded, due entirely to accidents or washouts on the Railway; but on no occasion was the delay very serious.

Owing to the flooding of the Oji River Bridge the Onitsha-Enugu motor mail service was interrupted for a few days.

The motor mail services contracted for by Messrs. Weeks were maintained satisfactorily.

Delays to local mails took place at Enugu Railway Station on four occasions and were due to failures on the part of the Station staff. Each failure was taken up with the Railway Authorities.

The time during which passenger trains stop at stations has been reduced during the year so that at some stations the Eastern Travelling Post Office is unable to cope with all the business offering. I refer to Agbiam and Uzuakoli at which places full Railway postal agencies have been established. Apart from this the Eastern Travelling Post Office continued to meet the requirements of the smaller settlements.

TELEGRAPHS.

No great changes have taken place under the above head but certain improvements have been effected.

Oguta has been placed in direct sounder communication with Owerri; this arrangement providing a much better service than the former one which consisted of a vibrator teed-in on the Onitsha-Aba line.

Duplex working between Onitsha and Aba has been introduced and has proved its usefulness.

Sunday and Public Holiday attendance for telegraph business has been arranged at Makurdi and Oguta.

Wheatstone has been made use of between Onitsha and Lagos whenever occasion arose and has served its purpose well. The Onitsha staff has become increasingly efficient in 'gumming up' and in sending from slip.

The service worked without any interruption meriting notice.

From enquiries received I am led to believe that the public is making greater use of the delayed letter telegram service and perhaps the deferred cablegram service also.

As regards telegraph mutilations, a return kept at this office shows that during a four week period in October last a total of seventy-six errors were made in cablegrams passing through the Bonny office. Of these errors the Cable Company was responsible for sixty-three; only thirteen being made by the Post Office staff. This I submit shows a very high standard of carefulness on the part of the Department in handling this important class of traffic.

A noteworthy feature of the year was the extensive use made of the X.L.T. Christmas greeting cablegram service, due perhaps to the greater publicity given to the matter and the extreme cheapness of the service.

With the exception of the Cameroons lines interruptions have not been frequent or lengthy. As regards the Cameroons lines the position has been much the same as in the past, traffic being subject to delay more or less throughout the year, more especially during the rains when such delay was heavy.

A particularly lengthy interruption was that which existed on the Tinto-Bamenda line in French territory from the 7th to the 15th December, 1926, inclusive. Telegrams were forwarded by special runner and post during the period communication was interrupted.

The Port Harcourt-Bonny Cable was interrupted for a short period at the commencement of the year.

At one time the Opobo line was subject to frequent interruption which was traced to farmers along the route felling trees.

The aerial crossing at Obubra parted on the 3rd May, and was restored on the 6th May, communication meanwhile having been maintained by means of a temporary vibrator office established on the opposite bank. In this instance valuable help in the restoration was given by the District Officer, Obubra.

This same crossing was again broken in September by Messrs. Elder's launch when the interruption lasted for five days. The same means of traffic disposal mentioned above were resorted to in this instance.

Another interruption to normal communication occurred on the Onitsha-Port Harcourt line in July and lasted for four days. In this instance traffic suffered little delay as alternative routes were open.

Trouble in connexion with Duplex working was experienced at Port Harcourt on the Onitsha-Port Harcourt circuit and proved to be due to faulty instruments.

The position as regards "Up and Down" stations on the telegraph circuit has been regularised, the station nearest Lagos on any circuit being made an "Up" station. This has been found to facilitate the making up of special wires and to do away with the need for reversing line and earth in some cases.

NEW POST OFFICES, ETC.

Agencies were opened at Nembe and Agbiam and registered letter and postal order business was introduced at Uzuakoli.

Ogwashi-Uku Sub-Office was transferred to the control of the Divisional Surveyor, Lagos, consequent upon the re-arrangement of Divisions.

BURGLARIES, ROBBERIES AND DEFALCATIONS, ETC.

There were burglaries at Mamfe and Oguta, a "Bee" clock being stolen at each office. It is not thought that any mail matter was taken. I have previously drawn attention to the danger of bush offices in this respect and have advocated the building of more or less burglar-proof permanent offices at places where the mails stored overnight are considerable. I refer to Oron, Owerri, Oguta, Ahoada and Uyo.

No defalcations have been brought to light and this perhaps is worthy of special note.

There have been no cases in which members of the staff have been prosecuted for stealing postal matter. In most instances of non-receipt of letters containing postal orders reported to this office it has been found that the orders have not been cashed and duplicates have been issued in due course. The number of such cases has been normal and enquiry in many of them showed that the letters may never have reached the post.

The number of cases of missing ordinary letter packets containing articles of value has been small.

There was a case of Ekpe interfering with the Uyo mail service resulting in the culprit being sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour.

Serious thefts of mail matter took place at Onitsha where a member of the public obtained registered letter and parcel receipts addressed to persons in care of the C. M. S. Bookshop and, by representing himself as the addressee in each case, took delivery of the relative article.

Through the alertness of a counter clerk and the Postmaster, Onitsha, the thief was eventually discovered and received a heavy sentence of penal servitude—five years—together with twenty strokes of the cat.

A confederate concerned in one case was bound over on account of his youth.

A bag of mails was violated at Port Harcourt Railway Station while in charge of the Post Office and although nothing would seem to have been stolen certain letters, including registered articles, were interfered with.

The clerk responsible was convicted, fined £5 and dismissed the Service.

At Port Harcourt two factory messengers were prosecuted for using cancelled postage stamps in prepayment of telegrams tendered for transmission with intent to defraud Revenue. One was fined £5 or one month's imprisonment, the other £5 or fourteen days.

A mail runner at Alikpo was prosecuted and fined £1 and dismissed the Service for endangering the safety of a mail which he handed to a friend for conveyance to Alikpo Road instead of performing the duty himself.

CHARLATANIC LETTERS.

This business still has its dupes and it is surprising to note the station in life which some occupy.

The demand for charms and horoscopic readings to ensure success in examinations, business or love, continues, many of the letters bearing mission addresses and one applicant describing himself as a Pastor. The quack medicine business still thrives and one or two new impostors have started in the trade.

One with headquarters in India was found to be operating through an agent on the Ivory Coast.

These charlatans advertise extensively, mostly by means of printed circulars sent through the post.

The number of letters, etc., stopped during the year and returned to the senders is given below together with the value of remittances enclosed therein.

Year.	No.	Containing remittances valued at
1926.	181.	£164 10s. 11d.

These figures show a slight increase over those of 1925 which were:—

Year.	No.	Total amount of remittances returned to senders.
1925.	174.	£147 7s. 4½d.

PRIVATE LETTER BOXES.

During the year private letter boxes were installed at Victoria—eight large and twenty-four small. Of these, all the large ones have been rented together with eight of the small ones and I am informed the demand for small boxes will become greater during 1927.

PARCEL POST BUSINESS.

The heavy parcel service (22 lb.) is being used increasingly, chiefly by petty traders who retail the goods so received. Such parcels are invariably consigned to a bank.

DUTIABLE ARTICLES BY LETTER POST.

An increasing number of letter packets bearing green labels has been observed in the mails received from England during the latter part of the year. So far little use has been made of the facility from Nigeria to overseas; this however may be due to the fact that the system does not operate between Nigeria and Great Britain.

IMPERIAL REPLY PAID COUPONS.

No instance of a coupon having been presented has come to my notice.

MONEY ORDER BUSINESS.

In this class of business the competition of the Banks opened at Aba and Degema would appear to have affected issues, the number of transactions at Aba being forty-eight less than during 1925. The falling off in the number of money orders paid at Aba was nine.

At Degema the money orders issued fell from thirty-two in 1925 to thirteen in 1926.

A conspicuous feature is the big decline in the number of money orders issued at Obubra, the figures being one order at £18 as compared with twenty-four orders valued at £492 9s. 7d. in 1925. The cause of the loss of business in this case is not known at present but enquiry is being made.

The records show that, compared with last year there has been a falling off as regards the number and value of money orders issued but a slight increase in both the number and value of money orders paid.

SAVINGS BANK BUSINESS.

Business done during 1926 shows a slight advance over 1925 as regards 'Deposits' there being twenty-five more transactions this year with an additional sum of £240 deposited.

The 'Withdrawals' were six less than in 1925 but the total sum withdrawn was £195 greater.

A considerable increase is shown in the number and value of deposits at Port Harcourt but Aba and Degema show large decreases due no doubt to the competition of the Banks.

It may be however that the year has not been quite such a prosperous one for the smaller traders as 1925 and this may account to some extent for the lesser quantity of money in evidence as regards money order and savings bank business.

118 new savings bank accounts were opened during the year under review; that is a decrease of eight only as compared with 1925.

The grand total of other public business dealt with at Head Offices shows increases in the registered letter (both posted and delivered) and parcels (posted) classes. Decreases are shown in telegraphs, parcels (delivered), and postal order (both issued and paid) classes.

NORTHERN DIVISION.

The year has seen many changes consequent upon the Political re-organisation of the Northern Provinces. It has otherwise been marked by steady development and it is hoped that a measure of progress has been achieved.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

The Department's efforts to maintain continuity of control in the Division were frustrated by the unforeseen sickness of the Divisional Surveyor, Port Harcourt, and in March, Mr. Jessop took over the work of the Division from Mr. Hunt instead of from Mr. Harcourt as had been anticipated. Mr. Jessop has remained in charge throughout the remainder of the year.

Mr. Tull being invalided in May after a tour of seventeen months was relieved at Jos by Mr. Hunt whose departure from Kaduna synchronised with Mr. Bales' arrival on transfer from Lagos.

In April Mr. Hunt obtained a Second Class Certificate in the City and Guilds Institute's Technological Examination.

At the end of the year the European Survey staff was at full strength.

AFRICAN STAFF.

I regret being unable to report any improvement in the staff position from a numerical point of view, for the numbers are less now than a year ago.

The Correspondence Branch in the Office of the Surveyor-in-Charge is staffed by three clerks loaned from the Survey side of the Department. The need for efficient trustworthy clerks in this section is great and a request has been made that Government may be invited to transfer qualified men. It is quite impossible to recruit probationers in the north at £2 or £3 per month. All the promising and intelligent boys with any experience prefer to accept jobs with the Public Works Department and other Departments where high salaries (£6 to £10 a month) are paid from Special Votes.

Staff changes of note are as follows:—

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Grade.</i>	<i>Details.</i>
Wilson, G. M.	Postmaster I.	Convicted of perjury and sentenced to 3 months imprisonment with hard labour.
Johnson, W. S.	Postal Clerk and Telegraphist	Convicted of stealing postal orders in transit. 3 years imprisonment with hard labour.
Jawah, G. W.	do.	Convicted of stealing postal orders in transit. 15 months imprisonment with hard labour.
Kymbuh, J. C.	do.	Deceased.
Nimrod, E. F.	do.	Deceased.
Abraham, M. B.	Postmaster I.	Invalided.
Browne, R. C.	do.	Invalided.

Within the limits of their ability, and with the exception of a few well-known, habitual slackers, the staff have worked well.

The qualifications of the boys sent out from the School have been the subject of correspondence and a misunderstanding that existed has been threshed out and disposed of. Too much was expected of these youths. A better understanding now exists.

BUILDINGS.

The new post office at Zaria has been taken over. The sorting office is reported upon as being far too small. It is hoped to exchange the old post office at Zaria for a Railway building at Duchi-n-Wai, the latter to serve as a post office and clerks' quarters when a post and telegraph sub-office is opened.

At Jos completion of the extension to the office has been delayed for lack of materials. Although unfinished the sorting office extension was used for disposing of the Christmas mails.

A new temporary building, in a more convenient situation, is being erected at Abuja.

Temporary buildings have been provided at Damaturu and Potiskum for the offices and clerks' quarters.

At Yola and Lau the provision of new permanent buildings has, for the time being, been allowed to stand over.

MAIL SERVICES.

Generally speaking the mail services have been well maintained, the Kano-Maiduguri Service excepted. This service has always been a source of trouble, particularly in the Kano sector of the route. That part of the service (Kano-Potiskum) has been cut out and Bornu mails now circulate *via* Jos. From Jos to Bauchi and between Potiskum and Maiduguri they are taken by motor. The Bauchi-Potiskum sector is maintained by relay carriers. Endeavours to provide a motor service throughout the journey, Jos-Maiduguri, are being made.

By sending the Yola mails from Jos to Bauchi by motor a day has been saved and Kaduna is now within eight days of Yola; a mail leaving Jos on Monday reaches Yola on the following Saturday.

It has been possible to abolish the Ibi-Lau service and to re-route Lau *via* Numan. The new route is much quicker.

Political considerations necessitated the abolition of the Kano-Azare service. All mails for the Katagum Division of Bauchi now circulate *via* Jos and Kukagadu. For the same reason the Keffi-Abuja route has been abandoned and a new service, Minna-Abuja, established.

The Kontagora-Zuru mail service has been established whilst the closing of Loko Sub-Office enabled us to discontinue the service between that station and Keffi.

Although trains are now running more or less regularly on the Eastern Railway full use has not been made of the services because the Construction authorities refuse to accept responsibility for the mail bags. A convoyman accompanies an unrestricted service once weekly in either directions between Kaduna and Makurdi and a mail, confined to unregistered official correspondence, is exchanged, also weekly.

Direct vouching between Kaduna and the Colonies of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast has been discontinued, correspondence circulating *via* Lagos.

MAILS: OVERCARRIAGE OF.

The overcarriage and misdelivery of mail bags became so frequent that steps were being taken to represent the matter to the Traffic Manager. As, however, the heavy Christmas traffic was handled without mishap no further action has been taken.

Attention had to be called to the re-introduction of the system whereby parcel mails were not forwarded by the Boat Express. No delay is being experienced now.

MONEY ORDER AND SAVINGS BANK BUSINESS.

I have made many enquiries in connexion with the almost stagnant position at which the above classes of business seem to have arrived. I find that the advantages of the money order system are rarely if ever explained and that almost without exception a counter clerk would much rather issue twenty one-pound postal orders than one money order for £20. Many Senior Clerks performing counter duties know nothing of money order business and I believe that Postmasters, who in some cases retain the money order pad and issue the orders, encourage Counter Clerks to sell postal orders so that they (the Postmasters) are not troubled with a money order transaction.

It is my opinion that the money order service would become popular if telegraph money orders were introduced.

Depositors who have closed their Savings Bank Accounts stated when questioned that they did so because the Post Office humbugged them too much. They tell me that when they want their money there is always a palaver about the signature and they have to wait too long before they can get their "very own money." The "signature palaver" is, of course, due to the fact that many of these semi-literate people hardly ever write their names twice alike. It follows therefore that the signature on the withdrawal notice rarely resembles that on the depositor's declaration: hence an Accounts Branch query.

CHARLATANIC CORRESPONDENCE.

The number of letters containing money intercepted during the year was thirty-four. This is a decrease. No record of applications for catalogues is kept. The requirements of the foolish people sending money to these merchants fall under one of two headings (a) they wish to be in possession of charms and "brain powder" that will enable them to pass the "Clerical Entrance," presumably without the effort of studying for it; (b) those of more mature years who wish to enlist the "Professor's" aid in connexion with domestic events of a curiously intimate nature.

PARCELS.

Judging by the number of parcels over 11 lb. in weight received from overseas it is evident that the concession is appreciated.

EXPRESS DELIVERY.

It is too early to report upon the above described service.

LOST OF MAILS AND POSTAL MATTER.

In January and again in February a mail bag was lost between Bauchi and Nafada. In each instance the bag contained nothing but letter and parcel bills.

Other cases of violation were to the mail between Jos and Ibi where one parcel was stolen, and to a Maiduguri-Kano despatch where the contents of one parcel were removed and another entirely disappeared.

In no case could any trace of the missing parcel or the culprits be discovered.

BURGLARIES.

In May Keffi Office was broken into at night. Nothing was missed.

In June an attempt was made in Kaduna by three individuals to break into the office of the Surveyor-in-Charge. A messenger raised the alarm and the would-be thieves made off before entry could be effected.

OPENING AND CLOSING OFFICES.

The postal agency at Potiskum was converted into a Posts and Telegraphs sub-office in May and during the year all arrangements were completed so that Damaturu could be opened as a Posts and Telegraphs sub-office on the 1st of January, 1927.

Postal agencies were established at Argungu, Shendam and Zuru and a Railway agency at Challowa.

The inauguration of the Baro-Minna-Zaria Travelling Post Office has satisfied a real need and an ever increasing volume of business is being transacted.

The sub-offices at Loko and Nafada were closed down and Agenebode has been transferred to the Western Division.

TOURS OF INSPECTION BY SURVEYING OFFICERS.

The only offices unvisited were those on the Zungeru-Sokoto road. As a Political Officer is resident in each station and the accounts are checked regularly no uneasiness is felt in respect of these places. They will be visited, however, at the first opportunity.

TELEGRAPHS.

The completion of the Bauchi Maiduguri deviation is the principal event under this heading. Interruptions were frequent during re-building and sometimes rather prolonged but the position was realised by all concerned and no complaint was received. Faults on this lines are now almost non-existent. It is an excellent circuit.

The two lines Minna-Lokoja are often in contact but communication can generally be established by disconnecting one. I believe the Telegraph Engineer, Minna, is shortly re-regulating his section of the route.

For eight days from 29th March, 1926 to 6th April, 1926 the Keffi-Jamaa circuit was interrupted.

In March it was stated that the Enugu-Kaduna lines would be handed over on the 1st of April. These lines are not yet ready for traffic.

The number of mutilations is still too high but an improvement has been effected and operators, generally speaking, are taking more care. Indolence and carelessness have been responsible for more mutilations than inability to interpret the morse signals.

TELEPHONES.

Many serious complaints were made in connexion with the service in Kaduna. The complaints were carefully investigated and were found to be justified. In some instances the faults were traced to the operators, in others to the apparatus. The position is now satisfactory.

A complaint from the Kano Chamber of Commerce was investigated and the matter put right.

The Zaria system is now working but at Jos that stage has not yet been reached.

So far the Kaduna Junction Exchange has not justified itself.

Private installations have been erected at Bauchi and Maiduguri.

COMING EVENTS.

New offices and telephone exchanges at Bukuru and Barikin Ladi.

Postal agencies at Funtua, Gusau, Kafanchan and Gudi.

The transfer of Makurdi, Igumali, and Oturkpo from the Eastern to the Northern Division.

The opening of the Eastern Railway to ordinary traffic.

A new post office at Kaduna Capital in 1927-28.

WESTERN DIVISION.

EUROPEAN STAFF.

Up to June this year the European Staff in this Division consisted of the Divisional Surveyor, two Assistant Surveyors and one Telegraph Instructor. One Assistant Surveyor was in charge of the Central Province and one remained at Headquarters to assist the Divisional Surveyor and inspect the offices in the Western Province.

On the 18th June Mr. E. S. Moore, Assistant Surveyor, proceeded on leave and the Western Province was without an Inspecting Officer. As it was impossible for the Divisional Surveyor to leave Headquarters, the offices in the Western Provinces could not be inspected until an officer was available.

Mr. E. S. Moore and Mr. E. Tull, Assistant Surveyors, returned from leave during November last, but as Mr. Adams proceeds on leave on 28th January, and Mr. E. S. Moore will relieve him and Mr. Tull relieves Mr. Rousseau who proceeds on leave and eventually retires from the Service, the unsatisfactory situation in the Western Province remains.

AFRICAN STAFF.

At the commencement of the year the position of the African staff was as follows:—

CLERICAL.

	Ch. Supt.	Supt.	H.D. 3	L.D. 1	L.D. 2	Total	Deficit.
Authorised	—	—	3	3	1	7	—
Actual	—	—	2	2	1	5	2

SURVEYING.

	Ch. Supt.	Supt.	H.D. 3	L.D. 1	L.D. 2	Total	Deficit.
Authorised	—	6	44	62	68	180	—
Actual	...	6	35	83	51	175	5

With the commencement of the new financial year 1926-27 the authorised staff was increased on the Surveying side by

Ch. Supt.	Supt.	H.D. 3	L.D. 1	L.D. 2	Total.
1	—	3	12	3	19

During the year the actual staff was always below that of the authorised, being as much as sixteen below at a certain period. At the present moment there is still a deficit of seven.

As the School has been the only source of supply for the whole of Nigeria, and as the wastage throughout the country has been great, the School has been unable to produce sufficient numbers of efficient telegraphists to meet the demands of this Division.

OFFICES.

No new post and telegraph offices have been opened but it is anticipated that offices will be opened at Apapa, Ife and Ede ere the expiration of this financial year. An office is contemplated at Ashaka but owing to lack of accommodation it is extremely doubtful if the office will materialise for a few months.

The sub-offices of Agenebode and Ogwashi Uku were transferred on October last from the control of the Northern and Eastern Divisions respectively to the control of this Division.

Ondo was converted from a postal agency to a departmental sub-office on 30th May, 1926.

AGENCIES.

No new postal agency has been opened but one has been sanctioned at Ifo Railway Station and the question of one at Agbesi has been raised.

So soon as the sanction of the Supervising Agent of one of the firms at Ashaka has been obtained, an agency will be opened at that place.

Gana-Gana Postal Agency was closed down on 31st October, 1926.

EXTENSION OF BUSINESS.

Postal order business has been extended to Ogbomosho, and the matter of extending such business to Ilaro is under consideration.

BUILDINGS.

Post Office buildings have been erected at Apapa, Ife and Ede and a new office is in the state of erection at Ibara, Abeokuta.

The erection of the new buildings at Oshogbo and Ondo sanctioned in the 1926-27 Estimates—has not yet commenced. The office for Oshogbo is being held up for want of certain material from Great Britain. The delay in delivery of the material is due to the recent coal strike.

The question of obtaining the ground floor of the Customs House at Burutu has now been settled, and it is hoped that the office will be transferred shortly.

The new building at Owo was completed during April and the transfer from the old to the new took place on 22nd of that month.

The buildings at Warri, Sapele and Benin are totally inadequate, and new buildings at those places are imperative.

The buildings at Ifon and Akure are not burglar proof, and I have arranged to have the windows protected by expanded metal.

QUARTERS.

Quarters for an Assistant Surveyor have been sanctioned at Oshogbo but it is doubtful if the building will be erected within the present financial year.

The quarters for the Sub-Postmaster at Ubiaja are falling down and at present the Sub-Postmaster is housed in one of the Native Administration houses. The question of erection of new quarters has been gone into and the District Officer has promised to advise the Assistant Surveyor as to the cost.

MAIL SERVICES.

The extension of the Oshogbo-Akure motor service to Asaba on alternative weeks was brought into operation last July, and although at the commencement it did not prove a success, it has done so since.

The service operates in connexion with the Up and Down Boat Train.

The extension has caused an acceleration of several days in the delivery of the Home mails, at Benin, Asaba, Agbor and Onitsha and gives the addressees enough time to reply by the steamer on its return trip to Europe. For instance, the mails for Onitsha formerly circulated *via* Minna, Baro and Lokoja, and reached their destination one week after arrival in Lagos but now they leave Lagos on Thursday evening and reach Onitsha on Saturday afternoon, five days earlier than formerly.

Besides benefiting the places on the direct route it has been advantageous to places fed by that route such as Ondo, Ado-Ekiti, Ubiaja, Auchi, Agenebode and Ogwashi-Uku.

Previously Agenebode had only a fortnightly service *via* Lokoja but it now has an accelerated weekly service *via* Agbor.

The service to Ogwashi-Uku has been revised and the runner now meets the motor on its outward and inward journeys at a point on the route eight miles from Ogwashi-Uku instead of as formerly having to go into Agbor a distance of twenty-eight miles.

A mail service between Auchi and Agenebode was instituted 1st November, 1926.

There has been no other change but the question of motor services to Ijebu-Ode and Epe via Ibadan, and to Ubiaja-Auchi-Agenebode from Agbor are under consideration.

PARCEL MAILS.

The delay in the arrival of the parcel mail for Sapele, Benin, Agbor, Ubiaja and Ogwashi-Uku is still a sore point. At present such mails are conveyed to Forcados by the sea route and thence to Sapele by launch. As connection between Lagos and Forcados is very irregular, a delay of three weeks or more is of frequent occurrence, for owing to the bulky nature of the mails, it is not possible to put them on the Lagos-Sapele launch.

TELEGRAPHS.

There has been considerable improvement in the disposal of the telegraph traffic. The delay which used to be so apparent has, except for isolated cases, practically disappeared. I attribute this to improvement in the lines and to the appointment of a better class of Africans.

The new line to Ijebu-Ode and Epe from Ibadan was opened on 5th July, and the work on the new Ondo line has commenced.

The community at Ashaka and at Ase have asked for a line to be erected to those places but owing to the lack of funds, the request cannot be complied with.

The Resident, Abeokuta, has again brought up the question of the extension of the telegraph to Ilaro but nothing can be done at present.

TELEGRAPH SCHOOL.

There has been no difficulty so far as numbers are concerned in procuring boys for training, but there has been difficulty in securing boys capable of becoming efficient telegraphists. It has been found that boys over sixteen years of age are not suitable, and applications from such are not now being entertained.

I cannot pass the subject of the School by without stating that great credit is due to Mr. Rousseau in the way the School has been carried on.

GENERAL.

Complaints from the public have considerably diminished which I venture to say prove that the service has been steadily improving throughout this Division.

An English parcel mail for Warri whilst being conveyed to Sapele by the s. s. "*Shonga*" was very badly damaged by smoke and sea water through the boat catching fire. In order to prevent the total destruction of the boat, it was submerged with the result that the parcel mail was under water for several days. When the boat was raised and the parcel mail extracted, the majority of the parcels were found to be so badly damaged that delivery was out of the question. The matter of liability and compensation has not yet been decided.

A bag of parcels was lost between Warri and Sapele whilst being conveyed by Bakare's motor to Sapele. The contractor has agreed to paying compensation.

The following returns of undisposable postal packets, parcels, etc., for 1923—1926 may be of interest :—

1923

January—December.

	Letters and Post Cards.	Papers and Packets.	Parcels.	Total.	Value.		
					£	s.	d.
Number dealt with	48,027	19,128	408	67,563	1,669	14	9½
Returned to Senders	22,337	4,311	287	26,935	1,559	18	5½
Unreturnable ...	25,690	14,817	121	40,628	109	16	4

Revenue from sale of Undisposable Parcels £30 14s. 2d.

1924

January—December.

	Letters and Post Cards.	Papers and Packets.	Parcels.	Total.	Value		
					£	s.	d.
Number dealt with	50,550	18,768	363	69,681	1,051	17	1
Returned to Senders	23,462	4,770	237	28,469	966	16	2
Unreturnable ...	27,088	13,998	126	41,212	85	0	11

Revenue from sale of Undisposable Parcels £15 9s. 1d.

1925

January—December.

	Letters and Post Cards.	Papers and Packets.	Parcels.	Total.	Value.		
					£	s.	d.
Number dealt with	51,797	16,260	356	68,413	2,076	5	0
Returned to Senders	17,331	6,152	283	23,766	1,518	0	7
Unreturnable ...	34,466	10,108	73	44,647	558	4	5

Revenue from sale of Undisposable Parcels £12 12s. 0d.

1926

January—December.

	Letters and Post Cards.	Papers and Packets.	Parcels.	Total.	Value.		
					£	s.	d.
Number dealt with	52,662	19,672	361	72,695	2,940	19	11
Returned to Senders	18,259	5,792	271	24,322	2,840	12	5
Unreturnable ...	34,403	13,880	90	48,373	100	7	6

Revenue from sale of Undisposable Parcels £11 13s. 10d.

NOTES ON STATISTICAL APPENDICES I-VII.

APPENDIX I.

- (a) Grand total receipts show an increase of £21,076 or 10·6%. The actual increase in revenue from cash transactions is £7,101.
- (c) Expenditure shows a net increase of £6,990.
- (d) Increase of three postal agencies, one Railway agency and one travelling post office. The sub-office at Nafada was closed down.
- (e) Increase due to the issue of new series of 5/- and 2/6 postage stamps.

APPENDIX II.

- (a) The decrease of 8,286 postal packages is largely accounted for by the lack of newspapers, 368,732 less than last year having been received, during the general strike and, with regard to parcels, a slump in trade due to the same reason.
- (b) A decrease of 271,852 or 5·9% in postal correspondence is due to the causes shown above.
- (c) The decrease in the number of parcels of 4,619 is due in part to the general strike and to the introduction of the heavy parcels tariff. There is an increase of £54,009 in the value of parcels received and £1,640 is the increase of Customs duties collected.
- (f) An increase of 1,024 is shown in the number of parcels despatched.

APPENDIX III.

- (a) (b) A decline in money order business is set off by the increase in postal order transactions.

APPENDIX IV.

An increase in the number of postal order transactions issued and paid, is recorded.

APPENDIX V.

The revenue from telegrams shows an increase of £1,642 or 4·8%.

APPENDIX VI.

An increase of £442 from public telephone subscribers, is recorded, being an increase of 5·9%.

APPENDIX VII.

Increases of 236 pole miles, 1,996 wire miles and of 89 sets of apparatus are recorded.

G. I. RIGHTON,
Postmaster-General.