

THE GAMBIA, GOLD COAST & SIERRA LEONE STUDY CIRCLE.

The Travelling Post Offices of the Gold Coast by Colin McCaig.

The Gold Coast Post Office Handbook for 1950 stated that Travelling Post Offices were provided on the railways between Accra and Kumasi, Kumasi and Sekondi, and Hunivally and Oda. They enable the public at all stations to post their correspondence up to the time the train leaves on payment of an additional fee. Late Fee boxes are attached to the trains, and the T.P.O. staff consists of a Postal & Telegraph Officer and a Mail Guard Messenger. These officers accept ordinary and registered correspondence from the public and a large amount of sorting work is done by them on the train. There were daily services in each direction (except Sundays) and the Central Line trains in each direction were timed to connect with the Up and Down trains on the Western Line at Hunivally.

According to the 1928 Handbook T.P.O.'s. also ran to Kade (on the Central Line) and on the Tarkwa-Prestea Branch, but I have seen no T.P.O. cancellations which could be specifically attributed to the latter.

The Late Fees payable were 2d for delivery in the Gold Coast, 3d for abroad, and 6d on all registered articles. Understamped articles were charged with the Late Fee due and a rubber stamp was used for this purpose (Type E.F.I.) although covers have been seen with T.P.O. cancellations which appear to have avoided the extra charge. The Gold Coast appears to have been exceptional with regard to the Late Fees as I understand that the other West African Colonies made no extra charge for the use of the T.P.Os.

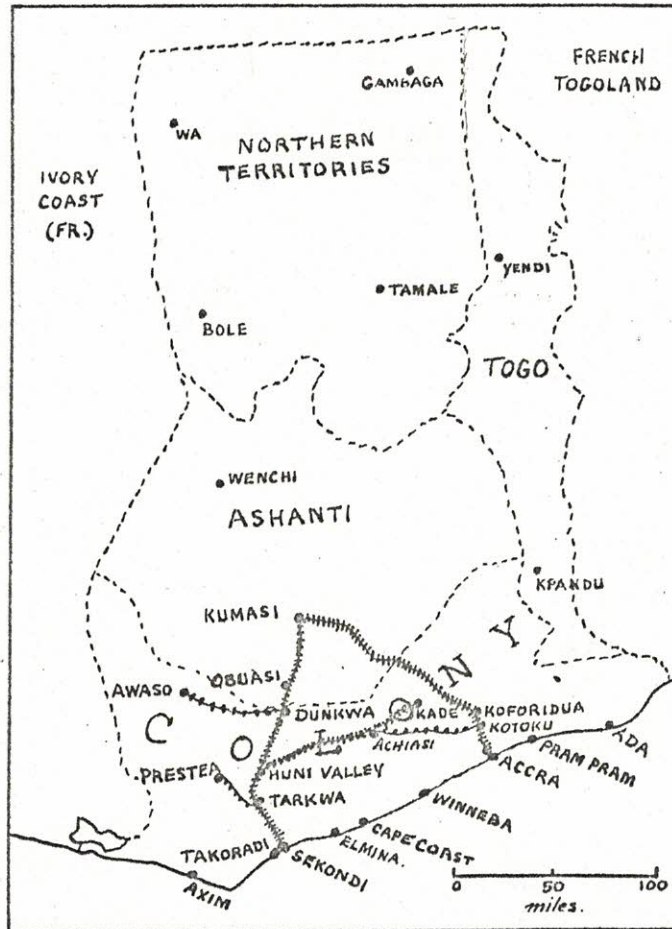
The Western Line.

The first railway to be built was commenced at Sekondi early in 1898. Although Accra was the Capital, Sekondi was the principal port and adjacent to the gold mines at Aboisso and Tarkwa which were the main consideration initiating the construction of the line: Progress was slow but Tarkwa, 39 miles, was reached in April, 1901, bringing the costs of transport down with a run from about £25 to about £2 per ton. With a financial guarantee from the Ashanti Goldfields Corp'n. the railway was extended to Obuasi, 124 miles, in 1902, and for political reasons not unconnected with the Ashanti disturbances it was completed to Kumasi, 168 miles, in October, 1903. Like the later railways the line was built to a 3'6" gauge.

The opening of the railway to Kumasi enabled the journey to the coast, which had hitherto taken 10 to 14 days, to be completed in a day. The southern terminus was subsequently extended to Takoradi where the harbour was opened in 1928.

A branch from Tarkwa to serve the mines at Prestea and Broomassie, 20 miles, was commenced in April, 1908, and opened to traffic in January, 1911. A short branch of about 2 miles was completed in 1919 from Akyem to the manganese deposits at Insuta, and during the last war a branch was built from Dunkwa to Awaso, 1943/44.

THE GOLD COAST



- RAILWAYS -

WESTERN LINE - SEKONDI to KUMASI. Built 1898-1903.
(Extended from SEKONDI to TAKORADI, 1928)

EASTERN LINE - ACCRA to KUMASI. Built 1909-1923

CENTRAL LINE - HUNI VALLEY to KADE. Built 1923-1927

Note: The CENTRAL LINE was linked with the EASTERN LINE
by an extension from ACHIABI to KOTOKU, built 1953-6

Although the line must have carried mails from the beginning, it was 1st July, 1914, when the T.P.O. was put into service. The first two cancellers noted were Types W.1 and 1a. Cancellations of Type W.1 have only been seen in Red and this canceller is the only type so recorded. Type W.1a was struck in black and I assume that the "U" indicated UP, i.e. away from the coast. A canceller very similar to Type W.1 is recorded in 1918 and 1919 but the circles were slightly smaller and the letters T P O were more widely spaced (Type W.b).

During the early 1920s three rather larger cancellers were in use reading T P O 1, T P O 2, and T P O 4 (Types W.2, 2a, & 2b) and as Type W.1b has been noted on cover with a form of registration cachet in pencil reading "T.P.O. No.3 DN / R No.96" in two lines (28/11/18) it may be that no separate canceller existed for T.P.O.3. The first recorded example of Type W.2 (30/11/20) is a clear cancellation with fine lines but later copies of these strikes appear very thick and heavy suggesting that the cancellers wore badly. These were followed by a temporary type (W.3) reading "T P O WESERN 1" enclosing the word DOWN (or, presumably, UP) above the date. I have not seen the spelling WESTERN and assume that the wording was not corrected. It does not appear to have been in use for long.

The widely used Gold Coast type with date panel was then introduced for both No.1 and No.2 services (Types W.4 & 4a). That for No.2 was replaced in 1946 by a new canceller reading "T.P.O.W.DOWN" with "2" between the bars of the upper segment (Type W.6) but I have not seen this strike reading "T.P.O.W.UP". Meanwhile during the war a mark of the larger circle temporary type reading "T P O WESTERN" without a service number was used - I have seen this on cover where the adhesives were cancelled with Type W.4, but not used as a canceller. Finally, a small circular date stamp reading "T.P.O.1" has been noted on covers from, inter alia, Prestea, and also as a canceller.

The only Registration Label I have seen is the standard blue-printed type reading SEKONDI (T.P.O.UP) in two lines (1947). Apart from that mentioned above for T.P.O.No.3, a similar form of registration cachet in pencil reading "T.P.O.4 Dn / No.221" in two lines following a large "R" has been noted on a cover cancelled with Type W.2b (23/2/20).

The Eastern Line.

The line from Accra was commenced in January, 1909, and reached Nsawam by August, 1910. Thereafter progress was slow - Akwapim was reached in 1912; Mangoasi in 1913; Koforidua in 1915; and Tafo in 1917, and the first train did not run through to Kumasi until 1923. A branch from Achimota to the new port of Tema was opened in May, 1954.

A T.P.O. was introduced on 3rd September, 1923, and the first two cancellers were in the large double circle form reading "ACCRA TPO SOUTH" or "NORTH" (Types E.1 and 1a). These were soon followed by smaller marks of a standard British type with "ACCRA" at the top and "T.P.O.DOWN" or "UP" in the lower curve (Types E.2 & 2a). Temporary types (E.3 & E.4) were also in use during this period as transit marks.

The standard Gold Coast 'date panel' type appeared in 1928 reading "T.P.O. EASTERN 1" or "2" (Types E.5 & 5a) and during the 1940s the wording was amended to "T.P.O. EASTERN" and the name of the Colony was replaced by a space-bar (Type E.6). This canceller was still being used in 1957. Another strike in this form read "T.P.O." at the top and included the letter "R" between the bars in the upper segment (Type E.7). This appears to have been a registration mark and although the copy shown to me was on a cover from Nsawam, north of Accra, it is possible that a similar canceller was in use on the Western Line. A temporary type (E.8) reading "T P O EASTERN B" has been noted as a transit mark on a cover from Nsawam in 1951 and it may be that other varieties exist. Two other cancellers have been noted within the last ten years; double circles in the small standard type (Type E.9), and a small circular date stamp (Type E.10). I have not seen the first of these complete and the spacing suggests further particulars such as 1, 2, or UP at the right hand side.

Registration Labels noted are in the standard blank printed form completed in pencil with T P O UP or DOWN.

The Central Line.

This line was built between 1923 and 1927 to open up the cocoa and mahogany areas of the Central Province. It runs from Hunivally to Kade and the daily service connects at the former with trains on the Western Line for Kumasi or Sekondi (now Takoradi). A branch from Achiasi joining the Eastern Line at Kotoku was opened in 1956.

The T.P.O. was opened on the 12th April, 1926 and the 'date panel' form of canceller was used. Exceptionally, the lettering of "No.1" was in small capitals on two lines (Type C.1), as distinct from "No.2" which followed the normal pattern (Type C.2). The Central Line is also noteworthy for having an oval registered mark of the usual Gold Coast type (C.3)

It is probable that the check list is incomplete, and in particular the wordings suggest the following:-

Type	W.3a	reading	T P O WES(T)ERN 2
"	W.6a	"	T.P.O.W.UP
"	W.7a	"	T.P.O.2
"	E.3a	"	ACCRA T P O DOWN
"	C3a	"	CENTRAL T.P.O.No.1

Although unlikely to be of T.P.O. significance, the circular date stamp inscribed "G.C.G.R. / ABOSSO" is of interest. The letters appear to indicate Gold Coast Government Railway and it may have been used by a postal agency at the Aboisso depot. It calls to mind a double circle canceller reading "L.G.R. / IDDO" used in Nigeria during the first few years of this century. Iddo was the terminus of what was at that time called the Lagos Government Railway.

Although the Gold Coast Railways carry as much traffic as the very much larger Nigerian system, it is difficult to make anything like a comprehensive collection of the T.P.O. marks. Poor impressions are all too frequent and many of the strikes are more often found on cover as transit marks than as cancellations on the stamps.

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Apart from Members of the Study Circle, I am greatly indebted to John Forrest (Robson Lowe Ltd.) and Cyril Kidd (T.P.O. & Seapost Soc.) for information and the loan of material, and to the latter for his kind permission to make use of his article in the Philatelic Adviser of December, 1947.

The Travelling Post Offices of the Gold Coast

CHECK LIST

<u>The Western Line.</u>			<u>Wording</u>	<u>Dates noted</u>
<u>Type</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Size in mm.</u>		
W.1	Dbl.circles	29½ & 19½	(In RED) TPO / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	19.12.14
W.1a	Dbl.circles	29½ & 19½	TPO U / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	11. 7.14
W.1b	Dbl.circles	29 & 19	Similar to Type W.1 but wider spacing of the letters "TPO"	28.11.18 & 19.2.19
W.2	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	TPO 1 / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	30.11.20 to 7.9.26
W.2a	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	TPO 2 / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date (Variety - 3-line date)	4. 3.22 to 12.6.26
W.2b	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	TPO 4 / GOLD COAST enclosing time over 2-line date	29. 1.20 & 23.2.20
W.3	Dbl.circles	33½ & 23½	TPO WESTERN 1 / GOLD COAST enclosing DOWN or UP over 2-line date	5.10.27 & 2.2.28
W.4	Dbl.circles & date panel	28	T.P.O.WESTERN 1 / GOLD COAST date & DOWN or UP in panel	8. 2.28 to 23.5.47
W.4a	Dbl.circles & date panel	28	T.P.O. WESTERN 2 / GOLD COAST date & DOWN or UP in panel	30. 8.29 to 11.3.46
W.5	Dbl.circles	33½ & 23½	TPO WESTERN / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	10. 8.42 to 27.9.54
W.6	Dbl.circles & date panel	29	T.P.O.W.DOWN / GOLD COAST 2 within upper segment & date in panel	5. 1.46 to 27.3.57
W.7	Single circle	24	T.P.O.1 / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	10. 2.50 to 18.8.52
<u>The Eastern Line</u>				
E.1	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	ACCRA TPO SOUTH enclosing 2-line date	30.10.23 & 19.12.23
E.1a	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	ACCRA TPO NORTH enclosing 2-line date	18. 9.23
E.2	Dbl.circles	26 & 16	ACCRA / T.P.O.DOWN enclosing time over 2-line date	25. 8.25 to 12.6.26
E.2a	Dbl.circles	26 & 16	ACCRA / T.P.O.UP enclosing time over 2-line date	10. 3.24 to 25.8.27

The Eastern Line (continued)

<u>Type</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Size in mm.</u>	<u>Wording</u>	<u>Dates noted</u>
E.3	Dbl.circles	33½ & 23½	ACCRA TPO UP / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	9. 6.27
E.4	Dbl.circles	33½ & 23½	EASTERN TPO2 / GOLD COAST enclosing DOWN or UP over 2-line date	9. 3.28
E.5	Dbl.circles & date panel	29	T.P.O. EASTERN 1 / GOLD COAST date & DOWN or UP in panel	11. 6.28 to 23.8.33
E.5a	Dbl.circles & date panel	29	T.P.O.EASTERN 2 / GOLD COAST date & DOWN or UP in panel	24. 8.28 to 22.2.37
E.6	Dbl.circles & date panel	29	T.P.O. EASTERN / curved bar date & DOWN or UP in panel	1. 3.40 to 19.4.57
E.7	Dbl.circles & date panel	29	T.P.O. / GOLD COAST R within upper segment 6 within lower segment & date & time in panel	31. 1.50
E.8	Dbl.circles	32 & 21	TPO EASTERN B / GOLD COAST enclosing DOWN or UP over 2-line date	6. 4.51
E.9	Dbl.circles	27 & 16	T.P.O. EASTERN - / GOLD COAST enclosing A over 2-line date	19. 5.51 to 13.9.51
E.10	Single circle	24	T.P.O.EASTERN(DIV)R.3 / GOLD COAST enclosing 2-line date	27. 8.55 & 9.7.57

The Central Line.

C.1	Dbl.circles & date panel	28	CENTRAL T.P.O. / GOLD COAST No. 1	26. 9.32 to 1.5.57
C.2	Dbl.circles	28	CENTRAL T.P.O.No.2 / GOLD COAST date & time in panel	23. 4.27 to 17.6.47
C.3	Dbl.ovals	33½ x 25	REGISTERED / CENTRAL T.P.O. No.2 GOLD COAST enclosing 1-line date	8. 9.28 to 8.10.36

Extra Fee Cachet.

E.F.1	Rectangle	59 x 21	POSTED ON TRAIN / WITHOUT EXTRA FEE / ...d. TO PAY	22. 2.37 & 19.5.51
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W. 1



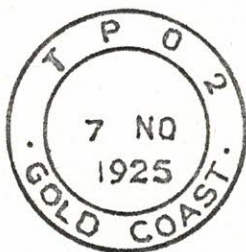
W. 1a



W. 1b



W. 2



W. 2a



W. 2a



W. 2b



W. 3



W. 4



W. 5



W. 6



W. 7

POSTED ON TRAIN
WITHOUT EXTRA FEE
3 D. TO PAY

E. F. I





E. 1



E. 1a



E. 2a



E. 3



E. 4



E. 5a



E. 6



E. 7



E. 8



E. 9



E. 10



C. 1



C. 2



C. 3