

COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

No. 1120.

GAMBIA.

REPORT FOR 1920.

(For Report for 1919 see No. 1053.)



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GAMBIA.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT, 1920.*

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

1. The principal event during the year was the departure in July of Sir Edward J. Cameron, K.C.M.G., on retirement, after he had administered the Government for over six years, which included the critical years of the Great War. The Governor Designate, Captain C. H. Armitage, C.M.G., D.S.O., who has been the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast for some years, had not arrived in the Colony at the close of the period under review; but his arrival was expected at an early date.

2. No public works of importance were completed during 1920. It was not found possible to make any progress in 1920 with the schemes for laying down lighted buoys, which should render the riverine approaches to Bathurst accessible to navigation by day or by night, or for building a Government wharf more adequate than the present structure, which is unsatisfactory in several respects, and not suited to the requirements of Bathurst and the Colony. Financial provision has, however, been made in the Estimates for 1921 which will permit of the laying down of the proposed lighted buoys, and also of preliminary investigations being undertaken in connection with the proposed new wharf in the course of 1921.

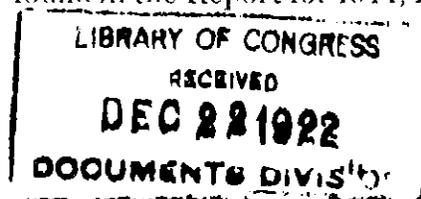
II. GOVERNMENT FINANCE.

3. The Revenue and Expenditure for the past three years have been as follows:—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Revenue.</i>	<i>Expenditure.</i>	<i>Excess of Assets over Liabilities.</i>
1918	£ 133,324	£ 88,703	£ 193,894
1919	180,585	143,451	231,028
1920	268,788	171,160	328,657

4. There is no public debt.

* A sketch map will be found in the Report for 1914, No. 861 [Cd. 7622-53].



Approximately, 75 per cent. of the revenue is derived from Customs Duties, the main sources in 1920 being £105,000 from *ad valorem* duties, £33,000 from the duty on Kola nuts, and £26,000 from the export duty on ground-nuts. The general *ad valorem* duty is 7½ per cent. Boots and shoes, jewellery and perfumery pay 10 per cent., and in November, 1920, cotton goods, which formerly had come under the general *ad valorem* duty, were brought within this category, and at the same time the 5 per cent. duty on foodstuffs was abolished, and the export duty on ground nuts, which has stood at 6s. 8d. a ton for many years, notwithstanding the great appreciation in the market value of ground-nuts, was raised to £1 a ton. The increased export duty on the ground-nuts did not, of course, affect the shipment of the 1919-1920 crop, which, in accordance with the usual custom, had practically all been shipped before the new rate of duty came into force. An export duty of £2 a ton for palm kernels has been imposed also. The duty on spirits was raised from 5s. 6d. to 15s. per imperial gallon in January, 1920.

5. Although the revenue raised in 1920 is easily the largest amount ever collected in any one year in this Colony, and though expenditure has not increased in the same ratio as revenue, the finances of the Colony are not in quite so flourishing a condition as would at first sight appear to be the case. While the restrictions necessarily imposed on expenditure during the years of the Great War have permitted the Colony's finances to be built up, they have at the same time left the Colony with a great deal of leeway to make up in the matter of developing its resources.

III. PROGRESS OF TRADE AND AGRICULTURE.

(a) TRADE.

6. *Trade.*—The remarkable progress which trade has made in recent years in this Colony has been much more than fully maintained in 1920. The figures, which speak for themselves, are as follows :—

	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
	£	£	£	£	£
Imports ..	884,553	991,626	1,458,014	1,250,321	2,711,877
Exports ..	705,546	1,046,503	1,100,216	1,553,524	2,466,144
Total ..	1,590,099	2,038,129	2,558,224	2,803,845	5,178,021

The following are the total trade returns, excluding specie, for the last five years :—

1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
£	£	£	£	£
1,021,646	1,649,957	1,802,316	2,409,565	4,839,780

During the above quinquennium, specie to the value of £845,747 has been imported into the Colony in excess of that which has been exported from it.

7. The trading business of the Colony is now to a very great extent in the hands of agencies, the principals of which have their headquarters in either England or France. A list of the leading firms, with their addresses, appears in the appendix to this report.

8. The merchants have undoubtedly made large profits in recent years, and have also done so in the year under review; but whether it will be possible for such large profits to be made in the immediate future appears to be somewhat dubious in view of the extraordinary collapse in the ground-nut market. The difficulties in the way of opening new businesses are moreover considerable. Capital is essential, and there are only a very few available sites for further buildings and wharves in Bathurst.

9. *Imports*.—The total import trade in 1920, excluding specie, was valued at £2,376,069. The value is that given at the port of shipment. Cotton piece goods and articles of cotton manufacture account for no less than £798,255. The other principal imports were as follows:—Rice, £329,069; kola nuts which come from Sierra Leone, £285,374; sugar, £65,136; hardware, £56,420; tobacco, £45,755.

10. The quantity of rice imported nearly trebled that imported in 1919. This was due to the fact that the local crops of rice and corn failed. The quantity of kola nuts imported, which was the greatest on record, may be regarded as an indication of the financial position of the people.

11. During the last three years the percentage proportions of the import trade have been as follows:—

	1918	1919	1920
United Kingdom	58	57	60
British Possessions	15	14	13
France and French Possessions	8	8	13
United States of America ..	16	19	10
Other Countries	3	2	4

12. In recent years the United States of America has made a strong effort to secure a substantial share of the West African trade. The value of imports from the United States of America has been as follows during the last three years:—

1918	1919	1920
£141,873	£235,548	£229,029

It will thus be seen that the effort of the United States has not been maintained either actually or even relatively as compared with other countries. A curious feature with regard to this trade with the United States is that there are no exports from the Gambia to the former country. The principal imports from the United States are rice, leaf tobacco, sugar, flour, timber, fuel oils, hardware and perfumery.

13. In the matter of hardware, manufacturers in the United Kingdom are so far competing very successfully with those of the United States ; for while in 1919 the hardware trade, valued at £47,764, was almost solely restricted to, and nearly equally divided between, the manufacturers in the United Kingdom and those in the United States, yet in 1920 the hardware imports from the United Kingdom were valued at £41,389, and those from France at £8,291, taking the second place, and those from the United States at £3,799, taking only the third place.

14. *Exports.*—The value of the export trade for 1920 was £2,463,711, of which ground-nuts accounted for £2,322,032. Hides were exported to the value of £21,125 ; and palm kernels and calabashes to the value of £9,470 and £2,649 respectively. A few minor products and re-exported articles made up the balance of exports.

15. The exports of ground-nuts and palm kernels during the last three years have been as follows :—

	1918		1919		1920	
	<i>Tons</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Tons</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Tons</i>	<i>Value</i>
Ground-nuts . .	56,490	£800,319	70,270	£1,154,429	84,037	£2,322,032
Palm kernels	646	9,799	671	15,324	408	9,470

16. For many years down to 1916 the ground-nut trade was mainly in French hands although, in the years before the Great War, Germany was securing a greater share of it for herself every year. The restrictions imposed during the Great War diverted this trade to the United Kingdom, and, although the amount of this trade which the United Kingdom took in 1920 was not so great as in 1919, yet it was no less than 81 per cent. on the whole. France took nearly 13 per cent.

17. The price of ground-nuts was considerably higher than usual during the early months of 1920, and it reached at one time just over £50 a ton. The price, however, fell about the middle of the year to about £30, and this fall continued, notwithstanding a partial recovery of the price in September, until at the end of of the year under review the price was down to £22 15s. a ton, and there was even then no prospect of the end of the fall being in sight.

18. Piassava and wax have practically disappeared from the export trade ; and gum, ivory, and gold no longer form any part of that trade ; but the latter two commodities, however, did not originate in British Territory.

19. Importers of oil-seeds and manufacturers in the United Kingdom who wish to get into touch with the Gambia trade should apply either direct to the principals of the various firms or to

the Receiver General of the Colony, who is the Honorary Trade Correspondent of the Board of Trade. The local Chamber of Commerce is affiliated to the London Chamber of Commerce.

20. Individuals who wish to apply for employment in the Gambia as mechanics, clerks, etc., should address themselves to the headquarters of the firms in England or in France.

(b) AGRICULTURE.

21. The prosperity of the Colony is entirely dependent on agriculture, and it follows therefore that too much attention cannot be paid to its needs in this direction. At the end of 1920 an Agricultural Expert, Mr. M. T. Dawe, was engaged to advise the Government in agricultural matters.

22. The soil of, and the climatic conditions obtaining in, the Protectorate make it singularly well suited for the cultivation of the ground-nut; and, while this continues to be a profitable industry, it is most improbable that the people will take the trouble to raise any other important crop.

23. The ground-nut industry continues to be conducted on the very simple, almost primitive, basis which has obtained for so many years. The nuts are grown solely by the native farmers with the assistance of those "strange farmers" who, to the number of as many as 20,000, come annually into British territory for what may be termed the ground-nut season. These "strange farmers," many of whom come very long distances, usually return to their homes when their crops have been harvested and sold. The Government in 1920, as in previous years, supplied seed to the extent of about 1,000 tons to supplement the seed taken from the previous year's crop. The seed is sown at the beginning of the rains in June or July and the crop is lifted in November when the rains are over.

24. A certain amount of cotton used to be grown in, and rubber also used to be exported from, the Gambia in bygone years; but very little cotton is grown now, and the experiments which were undertaken some years ago with a view to encouraging cotton-growing were a failure because of the unsuitability of the climate. The export of rubber from this Colony, which some twenty-five years ago was worth nearly £30,000, has now entirely ceased. The rubber was obtained from wild *Landolphia* vines, and was not cultivated. The vines were tapped all the year round, a most uneconomic method and one which has no doubt helped to kill them off.

25. The rainfall in 1920 was 34.29 in. The average rainfall is steadily decreasing year by year, but no satisfactory explanation of this rather curious fact has been discovered so far. The absence of rain during nearly two-thirds of the year is, of course, a very

serious difficulty in the way of growing other cereal crops on a commercial basis, and it is a difficulty which has not been overcome so far by a system of artificial irrigation, although it is considered possible that there are one or two fairly large areas in the Protectorate which would lend themselves to irrigation.

26. *Other cereal crops.*—The people's staple foods are maize, guinea-corn, and millet ; and on the river flats a not inconsiderable quantity of rice is grown. Beans, cassava and sweet potatoes are also grown. Mangoes, oranges and pawpaws flourish, but there are few other kinds of fruit trees.

27. All the attempts in the past to induce the people to use modern agricultural implements and methods have failed, and the land is still worked by hand in the most primitive manner. The fact that there is no Agricultural Department in the Colony is no doubt one reason why these attempts have always proved such consistent failures in the past.

28. *Timber.*—Rhum palms, mahogany and rosewood are all used locally in such industries as ship and wharf building ; but none of these trees is, however, found to any considerable extent, and no timber is exported. The quality of the mahogany and rosewood is not considered sufficiently good for the European market.

IV. LAND.

29. *Public Lands.*—All lands which were not actually occupied when the Protectorate was established are regarded as public lands, and, as such, are controlled and leased by the Government. The policy now in force is to grant no lease for a longer period than twenty-one years, and such leases are usually granted for suitable sites on the banks of the River Gambia and its creeks for the erection of trading stations. The maximum area for which leases are issued is 6,000 square yards, and the annual rent varies from £1 to £4 per 1,000 square yards according to the situation of the site leased, *e.g.*, whether it is located at a place which is accessible for ocean-going craft or is more remotely situated, and possibly even inland.

The total rental received by the Government in 1920 from the leases of land granted in the Protectorate was £2,352. The number of new leases of land issued in 1920 was sixteen, in addition to which seventy-nine licences were granted for wharves either already erected or to be erected.

V. EDUCATION

30. *Elementary.*—There are six schools providing elementary education in Bathurst and two in Georgetown, MacCarthy Island. There are no schools in the Protectorate, but in most of the Mohammedan towns the Almamis impart a certain amount of religious instruction to the children.

31. The number of children in 1920 who were on the roll of the elementary schools was 1,345, including thirteen pupils at the Wesleyan Technical School. This was closed about the middle of the year owing to the departure of the Superintendent to Europe, and it is understood that there is no prospect of its being re-opened. 637 children are being educated in the Roman Catholic Schools, 595 by the Wesleyans, and 113 at the Anglican School. Government grants amounting to £1,094 were made in 1920 to the schools conducted by the above-mentioned religious bodies. The total expenditure was £2,553, the balance being raised by contributions from the managers of the schools and by school fees.

The Mohammedan School, which was attended in 1920 by seventy-five pupils, is maintained by Government at a cost, in that year, of £151.

32. The sum which was provided by Government in 1920 for education was £1,953.

33. *Secondary.*—There is only one secondary school in the Colony, and this, which is attended by about fifty pupils, is maintained by the Wesleyan Community.

34. *General.*—It has long been recognised that the provision which is made in the Colony and the Protectorate for education is very far from being what it should be, and measures are now being taken for improving the educational system, such as the provision of more adequate accommodation and of a more highly-skilled teaching staff, measures which have long been delayed owing to the Great War. Arrangements have been made for an Educational Expert from a neighbouring West African Colony to visit the Gambia early in 1921 in order that he may study and report on the present educational system, and advise Government as to the best lines on which the education system should be developed.

VI. CURRENCY AND BANKING.

35. British Western African silver, British sterling, alloy and nickel and bronze coins and West African Currency Notes for £5, £1, 10s., 2s. and 1s. are all legal tender. There are two banks which do business in Bathurst: the Bank of British West Africa and the Colonial Bank.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS.

36. *Communications.*—There are no railways or telegraph lines in the Colony. There is a small telephone installation in Bathurst. The African Direct Telegraph Company have a station in Bathurst, and commercial messages from shore to ship and vice versa are accepted for transmission by the Admiralty Wireless Telegraph Station which was erected near Bathurst in 1915.

37. Before the end of 1920 Wireless Telegraph and Telephone Stations were in the course of being erected at Bathurst and at MacCarthy Island, 176 miles distant, in accordance with the

arrangements made with the Marconi Company in the previous year. The service, which is intended for internal communication, was not, however, open to the general public by the end of the year.

38. The steamers of the African Steamship Company (Messrs. Elder Dempster and Company) furnish a service plying between Liverpool and Bathurst. Passengers can also not infrequently travel to Europe from Dakar, in French Senegal, which is only about ninety miles distant. There is also a direct line of steamers from America (the Bull Line) and also from Holland.

39. The total tonnage entering and clearing during 1920 at the port of Bathurst was 796,920, being an increase of over 82 per cent. on the tonnage that entered and cleared in 1919. Of the total tonnage no less than 591,646 tons were British, but the United States and Dutch tonnage increased considerably owing to the direct service of steamers from New York and Rotterdam.

VIII. SOCIAL

40. *Health and Vital Statistics*.—The death-rate in Bathurst in 1920 was 49·82 per mille. The total number of deaths registered was 414 as against 249 in 1919. No vital statistics are available for the Protectorate. Malaria, tuberculosis, amoebic dysentery and venereal disease are the most prevalent forms of disease.

41. The cost of living in the Gambia is comparatively high, and social unrest is increasing to some extent—at any rate in Bathurst, where Unions and Associations on the most modern lines have been formed. A strike occurred in October, 1920, among the native shipwrights and mariners, but it was terminated in consequence of an award made by an Arbitration Board appointed by Government to enquire into and make recommendations for removing the causes of the dispute and any grievances which were found to exist. The award was accepted by all the parties concerned. Wages for skilled labourers vary between 2s. 6d., 7s. and even 8s. a day. Carpenters, mechanics and shipwrights who are employed all the year round earn from 6s. to 10s. a day. Household servants are somewhat scarce, and the quality of their service is certainly not as a rule very good, notwithstanding that they receive wages varying from £2 to as much as £5 a month.

The following appendices are printed :—

1. List of principal firms trading in the Gambia.
2. List of Barristers, Solicitors and Patent Agents.

Recent Publications on the Gambia :—

“ The Gambia Colony.”—F. B. Archer (St. Bride's Press), 1905.

“ The Gambia.”—H. Reeve (Smith Elder), 1912.

Annual Trade Report of the Colony, 1900–1920, obtainable from the Crown Agents

APPENDIX I.

Principal Firms, etc.

The following are the principal firms carrying on a general import and export trade.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Address in Europe, if any.</i>
*African & Eastern Trade Corporation, Ltd.	Wellington Street	Royal Liver Building, Liverpool.
*Barthes & Lesieur .. ..	.. ..	8, Cours de Gourque, Bordeaux.
*Bathurst Trading Co., Ltd.	.. ..	34, Leadenhall St, London, E.C.
*Compagnie Francaise de L'Afrique Occidentale.	.. ..	32, Cours Pierre Puget, Marseilles.
*Etablissements Maurel and Prom.	.. ..	18, Rue Porte Dijeaux, Bordeaux.
*Gambia Trading Co., Ltd. ..	Buckle Street ..	23, Water Street, Liverpool.
*Maurel Freres	Wellington Street	6, Quai Louis XVIII, Bordeaux.
*Louis Vezia & Compagnie..	.. ..	83, Cours de Verdun, Bordeaux.
*Palmine, Ltd. .. ..	.. ..	Moorgate Hall, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.
Antoin Blain .. ..	.. ..	---
Jones, S. Horton	Russell Street ..	---

* Members of the Bathurst Chamber of Commerce.

APPENDIX II.

List of Barristers and Solicitors.

Barristers are entitled to practise as Solicitors and vice versa.

*S. J. Forster, M.A., B.C.L. (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law, Wellington Street.

*I. J. Roberts, 6, Buckle Street.

M. J. R. Pratt, M.A., B.C.L. (Durham), Barrister-at-Law, Allen Street.

†C. K. Roberts, 6, Buckle Street.

* Patent and Trade Mark Agent.

† Trade Mark Agent.

COLONIAL REPORTS, Etc.

The following recent reports, etc., relating to His Majesty's Colonial Possessions have been issued, and may be obtained from the sources indicated on the title page:—

ANNUAL.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Colony, etc.</i>	<i>Year.</i>
1085	Basutoland	1920-1921
1086	Ceylon	1920
1087	Barbados	1920-1921
1088	Gilbert and Ellice Islands	1919-1920
1089	East Africa Protectorate	"
1090	Sierra Leone	1920
1091	Zanzibar	"
1092	Cayman Islands	1918-1919
1093	Cyprus	1920
1094	St. Vincent	"
1095	Bahamas	1920-1921
1096	Nyasaland	1920
1097	Weihaiwei	"
1098	Nigeria	"
1099	New Hebrides	"
1100	Somaliland	"
1101	Straits Settlements	"
1102	Swaziland	1920-1921
1103	Trinidad and Tobago	1920
1104	Turks and Caicos Islands	"
1105	Northern Territories of the Gold Coast	"
1106	Seychelles	"
1107	Ashanti	"
1108	Hongkong	"
1109	British Guiana	"
1110	British Honduras	"
1111	Malta	1920-1921
1112	Uganda	1920
1113	Leeward Islands	1920-1921
1114	Nigeria	1921
1115	Mauritius	1920
1116	Jamaica	1921
1117	Cyprus	"
1118	Weihaiwei	"
1119	Gold Coast	1920

MISCELLANEOUS.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Colony, etc.</i>	<i>Subject.</i>
83	Southern Nigeria	Mineral Survey, 1910
84	West Indies	Preservation of Ancient Monuments, etc.
85	Southern Nigeria	Mineral Survey, 1911.
86	Southern Nigeria	Mineral Survey, 1912.
87	Ceylon	Mineral Survey.
8 ^a	Imperial Institute	Oil-seeds, Oils, etc.
89	Southern Nigeria	Mineral Survey, 1913.
90	St. Vincent	Roads and Land Settlement.
91	East Africa Protectorate	Geology and Geography of the northern part of the Protectorate.
92	Colonies—General	Fishes of the Colonies.
93	Pitcairn Island	Visit by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.