

COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

No. 1121.

GAMBIA.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
From EDWARD A. FOLEY,
Agricultural Commissioner,
LONDON, ENGLAND.

REPORT FOR 1921.

(For Report for 1920 see No. 1120.)



LONDON :

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
To be purchased through any Bookseller or directly from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE
at the following addresses: Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, and
28 Abingdon Street, London, S.W.1; 37 Peter Street, Manchester;
1 St. Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff; and 23 Forth Street,
Edinburgh.

1922.

Price 6d. net.

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GAMBIA.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT, 1921.*

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The Gambia is the smallest but the oldest of the possessions of England in Africa. For centuries past it has been the resort of mariners, but it was not until Elizabethan days that our sea-power enabled us to plant outposts here.

The first book to arouse the interest of our nation in this part of the world was that entitled "The Discovery of the River Gambia and the Golden Trade of the Ethiopians. Also the commerce with a Great Black Merchant called Buckar Sano and his report of the Houses covered with Gold and other Strange Observations for the Good of our Country. Set down as they were collected in travelling part of the year 1620 and 1621 by Richard Jobson, gent." This book was the outcome of the Charter granted by King James I to the "Company of Adventurers of London trading into Africa" which established Fort James, our first settlement ashore on the Dark Continent. A century later the Royal African Company controlled the commerce of the Gambia, and made large profits on their cargoes of slaves and gold and ivory and beeswax.

Chartered company administration, however, was ruined by the Act of 1807, which abolished the slave trade, and although an annual subsidy of £23,000 was paid to the company, it was unable to make a profit, and its assets were taken over by the Crown. Since 1816 the seat of Government has been at Bathurst, which was founded by the English merchants who left Senegal and the Island of Goree when those territories were restored to France after the Napoleonic wars. It was named after the then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Sir Richard Burton, a visitor sixty years ago, compared its houses with those of Byculla, Bombay, and wrote of it as "a place selected for unhealthiness, for proximity to mud, mangrove, miasma and malaria." Much has been done to improve its condition since then, and its death-rate is now only 44·5 per 1000.

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

The principal event of the year 1921 was the arrival in January of the new Governor, Captain C. H. Armitage, C.M.G., D.S.O., formerly Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, whose long experience of West Africa made his appointment particularly acceptable to all sections of the community.

As no public works of importance were carried out in 1920, an ambitious programme was laid down for 1921, but it became apparent, as the year wore on, that pre-war conditions had not been restored, and the delay in obtaining materials from England hindered progress. The largest undertaking put in hand was the building of the new barracks for the West African Frontier Force at Cape St. Mary, which, when completed, will provide ample accommodation for the Gambia Company, with separate rooms for each soldier.

II. GOVERNMENT FINANCE.

The Revenue and Expenditure for the last five years have been :

Year.	Revenue.	Expenditure.	Excess of assets over liabilities.
	£	£	£
1917	117,977	94,519	149,374
1918	133,324	88,703	193,894
1919	180,585	143,451	231,028
1920	268,788	171,160	328,657
1921	183,201	225,461	286,396

There is no public debt.

Export duty on ground-nuts, the chief source of revenue, was first introduced in 1862, so that for sixty years this particular form of taxation has obtained in the Gambia.

Ad valorem duty is charged on the invoiced value of goods at the port of shipment exclusive of trade discounts, and the greatest decrease in revenue was under this head.

The receipt from the 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty on cotton piece-goods amounted to £10,834, as compared with £52,882 in 1920, when the duty was only 7½ per cent. *ad valorem* until November. The revenue derived from the import duty on kola-nuts was £24,545, and for the first time in the history of the Colony exceeded that derived from *ad valorem* duties. The duty on spirits was 15s. a gallon in 1920, and it produced £7,005. In 1921, in spite of the increase to 25s. a gallon and the prohibition of trade spirits, the revenue produced from this source was £7,408. The total expenditure, which exceeded the revenue by £42,260, included part payment of the cost of construction of the new barracks and the new Government steamer.

The excess of assets over liabilities shows a decrease of £42,260 compared with 1920. The assets include the debt owed by the Protectorate to the Government for rice and seed-nuts lavishly supplied in the previous year.

The market value of the Government investments at the beginning of the year was nearly £30,000 less than their cost price, but a distinct improvement is shown when compared with 1920, when the depreciation was nearly £44,000.

III. TRADE AND AGRICULTURE.

The year 1921 was one of the worst in the annals of the Colony, and the total foreign trade showed a decline of £3,500,000 as compared with 1920. As elsewhere, this was due to the heavy fall in the price of produce and of goods. Large stocks of merchandise which had been bought at high rates during the boom had to be liquidated at much below actual cost, and the enormous credits given out by the traders in the Protectorate could not be collected.

The quantity of cotton piece-goods imported was the smallest for many years, the only considerable article which showed an increase compared with pre-war times being kola-nuts.

Whilst less spirits were imported than ever before, and no trade spirits at all, a large consumption of palm-wine has taken place, on which much profit is made by the native retailers.

The prosperity of the Colony is entirely dependent on agriculture. The ground-nut is the staple product. A small business is done in palm kernels, but the figures for the last five years show that it is diminishing.

	1917.	1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.
Ground-nuts, in tons ..	74,300	56,490	71,677	85,190	59,175
Palm kernels, in tons ..	532	644	671	468	302

The grower received little for his ground-nut crop, nuts ranging from 3s. to 1s. 3d. a bushel. Prices f.o.b. were declared at an average of £12 10s. a ton, the Liverpool market ranging from £14 10s. in January to £21 10s. in December.

The nuts are grown entirely by native proprietors, whose numbers are nearly doubled each year by the "Strange farmers" who come over from Senegal at the beginning and leave at the end of the season. The influx of so many strangers is not without its disadvantages, but the custom is of long-standing, and the visitors add to the volume of up-river trade. An improvement of the quality of the harvest is expected from an Ordinance against adulteration of produce which came into force towards the end of the year.

A judicious selection of seed-nuts and the application of scientific methods of planting and ploughing are needed.

An experimental station—no new proposal in the Gambia—has been recommended by the agricultural expert sent out by the Colonial Office to advise the Government during the year, and a further proposal to establish a Department of Agriculture is under consideration.

On account of the large debts due to the Government from last season, the policy of supplying seed-nuts on credit to the farmers has been discontinued.

Rice, guinea-corn, millet and maize are at present only grown for local food supplies. Three thousand tons of rice, only a third of the import of 1920, was brought in this year, but all this and more could be grown in the Protectorate if the people were to irrigate their land.

Much damage to food crops is caused by monkeys, wart-hogs and hippopotami.

The elephant, which figures in the Gambia badge, is seen no more, and lions are rarely encountered. The Commissioner of the North Bank Province writes: "The killing of a lion here is worth recording, for although one or two come into the Gambia every year—and they are frequently heard—I do not think more than three have been killed during the last twenty years." The full-grown male shot in Jokadu on 1st May was about three years old and absolutely maneless.

Herds are rapidly recovering from the effects of the 1917 scourge, which carried off about 80 per cent. of the Senegal and Gambia cattle.

In the Upper River Province there was a heavy mortality amongst donkeys, which are extensively used in transport work.

IV. LAND AND CLIMATE.

All land not in actual occupation when the Protectorate was established is regarded as public, and is leased by Government in small parcels for a period not exceeding 21 years.

At wharf towns the value of frontage plots depends partly on whether ocean-going craft can go alongside to take in cargo, or whether loading has to be done by lighter or canoe. Conditions are imposed against sub-letting without permission. The erection of permanent buildings and of boundary pillars and the cleaning of roads are covenants of the leases, and tenants of river-side land are required to reserve for public use a path not less than ten yards wide on each bank.

The total rental received by Government from Crown lands in Bathurst in 1921 was £725, in the Protectorate £4,064.

The number of new grants made was 75, in addition to which licences for 12 wharves already erected or to be erected were issued.

It is impossible to estimate the amount of acreage under crops, as the Protectorate has not yet been fully surveyed.

The annual rainfall is diminishing, but the decrease does not appear to have a marked effect on the ground-nut crop, but without statistics of the area sown no calculation of the yield can be made, because a certain proportion of the harvest is eaten, and some seed-nuts are carried over for the next season. A fair average would be about 40 bushels, or half a ton, to the acre.

During 1921 the rainfall in Bathurst was 35·12 inches, and the mean average temperature 78·5.

V. EDUCATION.

An educational expert visited the colony at the invitation of the Government during the year. An Education Code was drafted by him, but its adoption will necessitate an expenditure which cannot be incurred at the moment. The present system of subsidizing the schools attached to the Christian and Mahomedan communities leaves much to be desired. There is no compulsory attendance ; 1,717 children are on the rolls of the denominational elementary schools, and the only secondary institution in the Colony, the Wesleyan High School, has 50 pupils. No candidate came forward for the new scholarships offered to Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone.

The difficulty of obtaining suitable teachers can only be overcome by the establishment of a Gambia Training College, with an adequate staff. The average standard of education is low, but the people are intelligent, and only need facilities to enable them to compete successfully with the other West African Colonies. A curriculum which would include industrial or technical training is badly needed. Many now enter the service of Government or the firms as clerks who would be better employed in following a trade.

In September a troop of Boy Scouts was formed, and it is hoped that the movement will take root and have a wide influence on the rising generation of the Gambia.

VI. CURRENCY AND BANKING.

Alloy coins, first issued by the West African Currency Board in November, 1920, are unpopular, but the pound and ten shilling notes were in great demand by persons wishing to exchange French money, and for this reason they were called in early in the year. The prevalence of the five-franc piece characterized the currency

of this Colony long before the Order-in-Council of the 10th June, 1843, fixed it at 3s. 10½d., at which figure it has remained ever since. In 1880, when it formed 85 per cent. of the total circulation of the Colony, the question of demonetization was raised, but rejected. The popularity of the five-franc piece, apart from its handsome appearance and intrinsic value and usefulness, is due to the fact that the dollar is the unit of price here, and is current at the convenient rate of 4s., except in payments to the Government.

In March the two banks trading in Bathurst, the Bank of British West Africa and the Colonial Bank, refused to accept five-franc pieces for transfers abroad except at the current rate of exchange.

In April the importation of these coins was prohibited, but their number increased, and the situation became embarrassing, although the Government restored public confidence by a guarantee.

After demonetization had been effected in Sierra Leone this Colony became the magnet which attracted five-franc pieces from all over West Africa.

By the end of the year the Government had over £70,000 in five-franc pieces at legal tender value, earning no interest and of no use for transfers.

The Bathurst Chamber of Commerce, which had strongly opposed demonetization in the early months of the year, pressed for it towards the close, when the accumulation of dollars gave cause for general alarm, and it was decided to demonetize the coin in January, 1922.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS.

A considerable increase in the proportion of foreign shipping to English has taken place this year, more than half the tonnage entered and cleared being foreign, as compared with one-third last year.

The first German steamer seen in the Gambia since June, 1914, arrived on the 7th May, 1921.

Four buoys lighted by acetylene have been laid down at the entrance to the river, so that Bathurst is now accessible for ships at any time of the day or night.

The Government yacht "Mansa Kila Ba," which is used for official purposes only, is shortly to be replaced by a larger vessel now building in England, which will be fitted with apparatus for lifting the buoys.

A river service is maintained by several of the firms during the season, and the Government runs a small steamer fortnightly throughout the year.

Preliminary investigations were carried out by an engineering expert in connection with the proposals for building a new wharf at Bathurst.

Trial borings, current gauging and soundings were made. As the undertaking would benefit chiefly the mail steamers, it is hoped that an improved service with Liverpool and London will be put on to justify the estimated expenditure of over £70,000. Loading steamers use private wharves in Bathurst and up the river.

With such a superb waterway as the Gambia little attention has been paid to road-making, but during this year there has been progress, and with more motor traffic it will be necessary to link up the existing roads with bridges at points where tributary streams run into the main river.

A small wireless set between Bathurst and Georgetown was opened in March and operated by the Marconi Company. The Naval Wireless Station erected during the War at Cape Saint Mary was closed down this year in conformity with the Admiralty's policy of retrenchment.

Cable communication with Europe is maintained by the African Direct Telegraph Company, through whom Reuter's news messages are received.

VIII. PROTECTORATE.

In the Protectorate, where nine-tenths of the population live, the great expectations of a prosperous trading season were not fulfilled. From a farmer's point of view it was the worst on record: 1915 was a bad year, for the price of nuts was even lower than in the year under review, but the people were not then overwhelmed with debt as the result of the injurious practice adopted by the native agents of the firms of supplying the natives with goods on credit.

The Government has made the strongest representations to the Bathurst Chamber of Commerce with a view to putting an end to that practice.

One result of the fall in prices was the cheapness of labour. In the wharf towns, where a large floating population collects, a shilling a day and rations, or even rations alone, were paid, whereas in 1920 it was difficult to get men to work at six shillings a day.

The wharf towns are a grave problem, and it will be necessary to take steps to improve their condition in the near future. There are only three Police posts in the Protectorate, and the Travelling Commissioners are only able to spend a part of their time in the larger centres.

Indirect government is carried on by the Chiefs and Headmen in each of the five Provinces. Many of them show a marked talent for administration.

“ The District which is given to me,” said one, “ was torn like a robe, and I must take needle and thread and piece it together before I can rest.”

Mahomedanism is the prevailing religion, and the Mandingoes are the most numerous tribe in the Protectorate. Next to them come the Jolloffs, Fulahs and Jolahs.

IX. SOCIAL.

The Census was taken in the month of April, and showed a total of 210,530, as compared with 138,401 in 1911. Bathurst, during the last ten years, has grown from 7,700 to 9,227, amongst whom were numbered 265 Europeans, including 130 British and 42 French. Like all ports, it contained a large variety of nationalities, and during the War many undesirables from up and down the coast collected here and still remain. Next to the Jolloffs the most numerous race in Bathurst are the Akus, or descendants of the liberated Africans, amongst whom are included the majority of the educated class.

There are 2,225 houses in Bathurst, and rentals are very high. Goods still cost more than before the War, and wages, though reduced, are much above the 1913 rates. In spite of being the nearest to England of her African Colonies, the Gambia is in a backwater, and, with the uncertain outlook in Europe, the Colonial Government is deterred from entering on the large schemes which are necessary for its development.

C. R. M. WORKMAN,

31 *May*, 1922.

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, 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 :—

Name.	Address.	Address in Europe (if any).
*African & Eastern Trade Corporation, Ltd.	Wellington Street	Royal Liver Building, Liverpool.
*Barthes & Lesieur ..	.. ..	8, Cours de Gourque, Bordeaux.
*Bathurst Trading Co., Ltd.	.. ..	34, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.
*Compagnie Française 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 Frères	Wellington Street	6, Quai Louis XVIII, Bordeaux.
*Louis Vezia & Compagnie.	.. ..	83, Cours de Verdun, Bordeaux.
*Palmine, Ltd. .. ..	.. ..	Moorgate Hall, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.
Anton Blain .. ..	.. ..	—

* 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.

†G. 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

No.	Colony, etc.	Year.
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
1120	Gambia	"

MISCELLANEOUS

No.	Colony, etc.	Subject.
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.
88	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.