

THE ROYAL NIGER COMPANY CHARTERED & LIMITED

By M.J. Burrows

In 1972 member Jack Brandt had an article published in the Perfins Club Bulletin entitled:

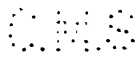
"AKASSA AND THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY PERFINS"

Hopefully that one day I might be lucky enough to come across an example of this unusual use of a fairly common G.B. perfin, I have very carefully checked all the copies that have come my way for the tell-tale postmark. This hope has, finally become a reality with the discovery of a Q.V. 2½d Jubilee used in Akassa.

As there were no supplies of stamps available in the Niger Territories, The Royal Niger Company purchased various quantities of the Q.V. 1881-87 issues, values ½d to 2/6d, and had them forwarded, in parcels of £500 value, to the main trading station Akassa. This was the chief post town, the post office opening at the end of 1887. The purchase of British stamps for use in the Territory was to overcome the annoying, and costly, double fee surcharge that was levied by the post office of a foreign country for handling an unstamped postal item.

At first, the transmission fee was 6d and before the Company purchased its own stamps, an arrangement with the British Post Office was made, whereby if a letter was rubber handstamped by The Royal Niger Company a fee of only 6d was collected upon delivery. Any unmarked mail without the handstamp could be subject to a 1/- surcharge. By 1892 the transmission rate had been reduced to 2½d per half ounce.

Internal letters between The Royal Niger Company's employees were carried without charge. Mail between missions, traders and strangers was carried by The Royal Niger Company's agents but at a special parcel handling fee. Any other concern having the need to use the external mail service soon saw that to avoid the heavy surcharge a supply of stamps was needed.



Die. 1



Die. 2



Die. 3

Two perfins are known on G.B. stamps originating from Akassa,

1. C.M.S. (Fig.1) Church Missionary Society
2. UN/Co (Figs. 2&3) A trading company operating within the Territory, identity unknown.

From the above information it will be apparent that G.B. stamps originating from the Territory may be cancelled on arrival at a British port, say Liverpool or Southampton (or even foreign post offices such as Portuguese) as well as the Akassa postmarks that can be found illustrated in Gibbons catalogues.

Details of all the known examples of perfins so far reported are:

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|----------|-----|---|
| 1. C.M.S | 2½d | (S.G. 201 : Scott 114)
Cancelled 466 at Liverpool with Akassa rubber stamp to the left dated 11 DEC 95 (S.G. Type 4). This item is illustrated in The Philatelist volume 25, being offered for auction by Robson Lowe, as part of the fwilliam 'C. Hinde' collection. 14th January 1959. |
| 1a C M.S | | Jack Brandt collection, Akassa 22 JUL 97 (S.G. Type 4). Another example with the same pin missing is known, date not clear. |
| 1b C.M S | 5d | (S.G, 207a : Scott 118)
Listed by Jack Brandt, cancelled Akassa 24 JUL 96 (S.G. Type 5). Note the different missing pin. |

In my own collection I have the following UN/Co dies cancelled at Southampton. From a map of that area it will be seen that the Oxford Street Branch Office was in the dock area. Other examples of these two perfins are known postmarked at London.

At present, however, the list that follows must be regarded as suspect.

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|--------------------|------|--|
| 2. UN/Co (Fig. 2) | 2½d | (S.G. 201 : Scott 114)
Cancelled OXFORD STREET B.O.
SOUTHAMPTON MAY 19 87 |
| 2a. UN/Co (Fig. 3) | 1d | (S.G. 172 ; Scott 89)
OXFORD ST. BO. SOUTHAMPTON date not clear. |
| | 2½d. | (S.G. 201 : Scott 114)
LISBON (Portugal) date not clear.
OXFORD ST. BO. SOUTHAMPTON 16 MY 98 |

To summarize,

G.B. used in the Niger Territories:

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1d (S.G. 172 : Scott 89) | 1 possible. |
| 2½d (S.G. 201 : Scott 118) | 3 examples plus 2 possibles. |
| 5d (S.G. 207a: Scott 118) | 1 example only. |

S.E.P.S.

R.N.C.2.