



THE PERSIAN GULF

(1) Bahrain

By Major T. L. C. TOMKINS



5

BEFORE I start describing the individual ports of the Gulf and their Postal History, let me say that throughout I have tried to adopt the generally accepted spelling of the various names; this for the simple reason that, as I mentioned in a former article of mine (S.C., July 9th, 1949), the spelling of Arabic or Persian place names in English is apt to vary.

Thus, on the stamps of the various post offices, as well as in atlases and gazetteers, one can find a variety of different spelling, as shown below.

Place.	Variations.
Bahrain.	Bahreïn.
Bandar Abbas.	Bandarabas, Bunderabbas.
Bushire.	Bushier, Bashir.
Busrah.	Busreh, Bussorah, Busra, Basra, Basrah.
Dubai.	Dabai, Dibai.
Linga.	Lingar, Lingeh.
Mahommera.	Mohammera, Mohammerah.
Muscat.	Maskat.

BAHRAIN

Geography

A group of islands lying in the Gulf of Bahrain, which is formed by the peninsula of Qatar jutting northward from the Arabian mainland. The islands, of which Bahrain island is the largest, lie about 20 miles off the Arabian coast of Al Hasa. Bahrain itself is 27 miles long, and 10 miles wide at its widest point. The capital and chief port is Manama, near the north of the island. The population, chiefly Arab, but with some Persians and Indians (mostly traders), is about 120,000. (Census taking is unpopular in Arab countries, for as the Arabs say, "Allah knows our numbers").

History

Successively occupied by the Portuguese and the Persians, the islands were part of the Omani domains during the eighteenth century.

They were reoccupied by the Persians in 1753, who remained until driven out by the Utubi Arabs in 1779. The Sultan of Muscat conquered Bahrain in 1808, but was driven out the following year by the Utubi, assisted by the Wahhabis. British dealings with Bahrain commenced in 1820, the Sheikh of Bahrain being one of the signatories to the general treaty of peace. In 1847 Bahrain signed the treaty for the suppression of slaving, and in 1880, following Turkish attempts at expansion in the Gulf, an agreement was signed whereby the Sheikh guaranteed to abstain from making treaties or entering into negotiations with other governments without the sanction of the British Government. He also undertook to refuse permission to any, other than the British, to establish diplomatic or consular agencies in Bahrain. This was followed in 1892 by an agreement not to "cede, sell, mortgage or otherwise give for occupation any part of his territory save to the British Government". The Post Office was opened in 1884 at Manama, and, as the Indian Government were responsible for the maintenance of the treaty obligations, coupled with the fact that most of the trade was done

with India—there being a large number of Indian merchant houses in the port—it followed somewhat naturally that Indian stamps were used. In 1900 a British Assistant Political Agent was appointed, who was superseded in 1904, when the status of the position was raised, by a Political Agent. In 1911 the Sheikh of Bahrain signed an agreement not to allow any other nation than the British to establish any Post Office in the island, and in 1914 he gave an undertaking not to allow any prospecting for, or exploitation of, oil without the consent of the British Government.

In 1914, when it became apparent that Turkey was coming in against us, a small force was despatched to Bahrain to protect our interests there, and at Abadan. This force in its transports reached Bahrain on October 23rd, and on the declaration of war between Great Britain and Turkey on November 5th moved to Fao, at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, where they landed—thus starting the Mesopotamian campaign.

Khor Kaliya, near Manama, is an important station on the B.O.A.C. routes to India and Australia; it has a safe flying-boat anchorage and a landing ground.

Oil

Oil was discovered in Bahrain in 1932. This is refined by the Bahrain Petroleum Company, a British concern, and may possibly be a primary cause of the decision to issue definitive stamps to replace the ordinary Indian stamps without overprint, which took place in 1933. The stamps certainly leave no doubt as to who is protecting the place. And, of course, as soon as India became a Dominion Bahrain was transferred from the Indian Postal Agency, and became administered direct from U.K., the Indian stamps being replaced by those of G.B. overprinted Bahrain, from April 1st, 1948.

Postmarks (1).—Q.V. to K.E. VII

From 1884 until 1933 Bahrain used ordinary Indian stamps without overprint, and such stamps can only be identified by the obliteration.

The first type used was Type 5, a circle 20 mm. in diameter, with three bars at the corners (has a circle corners?), and is met with on 1882-1900 issues of Queen Victoria, the most common being the $\frac{1}{2}$ anna and the $2\frac{1}{2}$ annas. These early cancellations are not so frequently met with as those of other ports. This type was followed in the early 1900's by Type 7, which is the usual double circle with office name in the top half, and the date in one line across the centre. These are fairly common on the issues of King Edward VII.

Postmarks (2).—K.G. V

The early Georgian issues of India are usually cancelled with either Type 8 or 9 the first being the atrocious "Killer" in double circle, which does its obliterating work in a manner truly worthy of the Post Office of this country today—on the high values especially. Type 9 is a much more reasonable sort of obliterator—just a double circle, with date in centre, office name at top, and a little ornament at the foot. These two cancellations can be found on most of the Georgian values up to the

(Continued on page 563.)

7

Bahrain (Continued)

1 rupee, as owing to the introduction of the Air Mail service in the '20's stamps of denominations other than the $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2½ annas range were in greater demand. Incidentally, during this same period the Air Mail stamp (A.1) was impressed on letters to be sent by air. This was a normal Indian type, and its use was not restricted to Bahrain.

Covers emanating from Bahrain can also be found bearing the special "Overland Mail-Baghdad-Haifa" cachet, which was usually struck in blue or black. Such letters would be sent by sea to Busrah, and from thence to Baghdad, where they were transferred to the Special Coaches for the desert run to Haifa, via Damascus.



8



9

1933 Overprinted on India



10

With the issuing in 1933 of overprinted stamps for Bahrain, a new cancellation made its appearance (Type 10) with Bahrain in the top half of the circle and Persian Gulf in the lower half. The "Killer" was fortunately restricted to two small segments, one either side of the date. This seems to have been in use concurrently with Types 8 and 9, which, incidentally, are still in use. 10 was used mainly

for mail going by sea, as against 8 and 9 which are now usually found cancelling Air Mail letters. There is also a variety of Type 10 with "Bahrain Air" at the top.

Postmarks (4).—K.G. VI

A new cancellation was in use with the first George VI issues. This is Type 14 and consists of a single circle of 25 mm.



14

diameter with seven wavy lines running off to the right; at first sight it looks like a machine cancellation, but the various positions I have seen it in on envelopes rule that out right away. This is used on mail bearing more than one stamp, and is a very useful shot for the lockers of those who advocate the collection of covers (of whom I am one) in that unless a stamp off cover happens to be obliterated by the circular portion, containing the Office name, it might be just another stamp from anywhere.

Postmarks (5).—Registered

Finally, there is a special Registered Cancellation, as Type 9a, which is really Type 9 with the word "Reg" above the central bars. This is frequently used in conjunction with a single line BAHRAIN in sans serif caps which is impressed elsewhere on the envelope. I have only seen this latter marking on Registered covers.

Scarcity and Values

As for the Overprinted stamps themselves, there is little to say about them that is not in the catalogues. The earlier issues,

those of K.G. V, are still fairly easy to obtain mint, not quite so easy used, and fairly scarce on cover. The same applies to the K.G. VI issues, except that the 8 and 12 annas of the 1938-41 set are difficult to obtain either mint or used, and the Rupee values are worth picking up whilst they are still available. The Silver Weddings and the Olympic Games are easy enough mint, but, properly used on commercial covers, as opposed to "Philatelic" or "First Day Covers" they are very scarce—and even First Day covers are seldom on offer today.

(To be continued.)—Next Port: Bandar Abbas.



9a



A1

Stamp Societies

- August 22. Middlesbrough: Informal.
 ,, 24. Tunbridge Wells: Discussion.
 ,, 25. Coventry: Competition and Bourse.
 ,, 25. East Grinstead: Informal.
 ,, 25. Marlborough: "My favourite stamp", by members.

British Guiana New Perfs.

By HERBERT BAYLEY (Barbados)

The 1c. and 2c. values are on sale in the Colony in sheets, but no supplies of the 3c. have reached the Colony in that form as stocks of the old perforation are ample. However, there are booklets on sale in the Colony with two of the new perfs., and the make-up is four of each of the 1c., 2c. and 3c., sold at a price of 1s. per booklet. I measured the new 3c. received from the Colony and find that by the "Instanta" gauge it measures 12.7 × 13.7 against 12.5 × 13.4 for S.G. 290a. Specialists should have little difficulty in separating them therefore.

The Colonial stock is therefore as follows:—

- 1c. 12½ (Sheets and booklets);
 2c. 13 × 13½ (Sheets and booklets);
 3c. 12½ (Sheets) and 13 × 13½ (Booklets).



2 (A)



2 (B)

PERSIAN GULF

(2) Bandar Abbas

By Major T. L. C. TOMKINS



3



3 (1)

If you take the weekly intermediate B.I. boat from Bombay up the Gulf, there will come a morning when the ship will nose gently in between the rocky islands of Hormuz and Qism, in the narrowest part of Strait of Hormuz, and you will see a long, low, straggling town on a sandy plain, backed by high forbidding mountains, through which a single road leads to the interior of Persia. You will feel the ship drop its anchor whilst still about two miles off shore, and should you wish to go ashore, you will have to do so by launch, for whilst in the early days of John Company ships of several hundred tons could approach much nearer to the town, the water is too shallow for modern liners. This is Bandar Abbas, and if it happens to be summer you will, as like as not, wish you had stayed on board, for it is hot: so hot that most of the inhabitants—all that can get away—including the staff of the one remaining cotton spinning mill, will have left for the cool date groves of Minab, nearly 40 miles south, where there is some shade. The town was originally known as Gombrun, and was little better than a fishing village until the Portuguese landed and fortified the place in 1612. They did not stay long, however, for after a long siege by the Persians, they were evicted in 1615. Shah Abbas the First of Persia then had the notion to create a first-class port in Southern Persia, and settled on Gombrun. He changed the name to Bandar Abbasi, which, being interpreted, means "The Port of Abbas" and the East India Company being in favour with him just then, he granted them a Firman entitling them to open a factory at the new Port—no doubt from thoroughly selfish reasons. It became the chief trading centre of the Gulf for the Company until 1645, when during a spot of trouble between the Persians and the Dutch, it was decided for reasons of safety to move the store to Busrah. The Dutch competition was so strong that British trade declined, until it was necessary to cut losses and abandon Bandar Abbas as a trading centre in 1763. In 1798 a new agreement was made between the East India Company and the new ruler of the Port, a certain Sayyid Sultan of Muscat, who had taken the place by force some time previously.

I quote from the "Cowlmah" or written Engagement by the Imam of Muscat, relating to the re-establishment:—

"In the Port of Abassy (Goom Broom) whenever the English shall be disposed to establish a Factory, I have no objection to their fortifying the same and mounting guns thereon, as many as they list, and to forty or fifty English gentlemen residing there, with seven or eight hundred English Sepoys (*sic*), and for the rest, the rate of duties on goods on buying and selling will be on the same footing as at Bussora and Abushehr."

Ever since, Bandar Abbas has remained a trading station for Indian merchants, dealing with the Southern parts of Persia, although it does not compare in importance with either Bushire or Busrah.

Communications and mail are by a weekly service of the British India Steam Navigation Co. This is a "Slow Boat to India", as it calls at all the Gulf ports on its voyage. From covers I have seen it took 15 days for a letter to reach Bombay in the 1870's, and 10 days in the early 1900's. On the other hand, I have a letter which was posted in Bandar Abbas on October 28th, 1907, which reached India on November 2nd. Cancellations: Type 2. The left-hand portion of this type has been seen used as a hand-struck marking in the 1860's. On adhesives it is either found

singly or in duplex with 2(B); this type is spelt "Bunderabbas" in serif type, and came into use during the 1860's.

In 1872 Bandar Abbas was placed under the Karachi postal circle, and Type 3 was used, again either as a duplex with 3 (1) or separately; in the latter case the K-5/1 cancels the stamp and the C.D.S. is found elsewhere on the letter. Type 3 is spelt "Bunderabbas" but in sans-serif type. The "1" of K-5/1 stands for 1st Sub-Office under K-5, which was Bushire.

The left-hand half of Type 3a is also found in conjunction with Type 3(1) either singly or in duplex; the office name



B (3)



3 (a)



3 (A)

being spelt "Bandarabas" with an acute accent over the last "a". This marking can be found on covers without adhesives as well. In 1879, Bandar Abbas once again came under the Bombay Circle, and Type 3(A) was used singly, or in duplex with 3a. 3a was also used in conjunction with 3B, the "B" in this type being composed of a circle of horizontal bars.



4



7

Type 4 was introduced in the 1880's, and consists of a small circle 17 mm. in diameter, with four thin bars at each corner. This is found cancelling the later issues of Queen Victoria, and lasted until about 1903, when it was replaced by Type 7, the normal Indian type of 25 mm. diameter with the office name spelt "Bandar-Abas". This last cancellation is fairly common on the lower values of both K.E. VII and K.G. V, the normal postal rate for letters to India being 2½ annas. Various combinations of these low values can be found, apart from the single 2½ annas. Five ½ annas are the most common, followed by two 1 annas plus a single ½ anna. The 2 annas in pair with a ½ anna is, however, distinctly uncommon; probably there was not much call for this particular value there.

The latest date I have seen of a Bandar Abbas cancellation on India is 1922, the Indian Post Office there being closed in 1923, when Persian stamps replaced those of India.

(To be continued.)—Next Port: Bushire.