

Official Free Markings - Part 1

by Dennis Firth

This is the first attempt to list all the known Official Free markings use in Bechuanaland Protectorate and Botswana, which, as far as I know, have not been recorded elsewhere.

Official Free handstamps seem to have been introduced in Bechuanaland in the 1920/30s. The collecting of Official markings is not popular with many collectors and Bechuanaland Protectorate markings are not easy to come by.

It is the aim of this listing to record these marks for posterity. I do not intend to get involved with conditions of use or who is intended to use them. Some such information is shown on p.71, p.74 and p.75 of "The Postal History of Basutoland and Bechuanaland Protectorate" by E.B Proud (1996) published by Proud-Bailey Co Ltd. This information is in the Basutoland section, but will no doubt apply to Bechuanaland equally.

The listing will be in three parts:

- Bechuanaland Protectorate
- Botswana markings which show the office of use and the words "Official Free" or similar on the same handstamp
- Official Free handstamps (usually straight line) which are used in association with departmental cachets. The cachets will not be recorded, but the known offices of use will be shown against each type of Official Free marking.


I am indebted to Sir John Inglefield-Watson, John Schaerer, Gordon Smith and Bruce Warrender for sending me details of items they have in their collections. The Bechuanaland Protectorate items listed below are from the collections of John Ingelfield-Watson and myself. Botswana markings, which are far more numerous, will be shown in future issues of Runner Post.


Markings are listed in alphabetical order of the departmental inscription shown on the handstamps. The number to the right of the description is my reference number. For a future update I would be looking for some assistance in using the postmark typology to describe the markings.

Dates are in dd-mm-yyyy format

	
COMMISSIONER FOR REVENUE BECHUANALAND	20
Gaberones 09-11-1965	
Double Oval 57mm x 34mm	

	
CONTROLLER OF STORES BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	25
Mafeking 07-10-1957	
Double Oval 43mm x 27mm	

	
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	30
Mafeking 15-05-1935	
Triple Oval 43mm x 29mm	

	
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES B.P. GOVERNMENT	35
May be Gaberones circa 1964/5	
Double Oval 50mm x 32mm	



DISTRICT COMMISSIONER GABERONES	40
Ramoutsa Station 15-02-1950	
Triple Oval 43mm x 28mm	



DISTRICT COMMISSIONER KASANE [STRUCK IN VIOLET]	43
Kazungula 22-10-1965 to 22-09-1966	
Triple Oval 43mm x 20mm	



DISTRICT COMMISSIONER LOBATSI	46
Lobatsi 09-09-1966	
Triple Oval 43mm x 26mm	



DISTRICT COMMISSIONER SEROWE	49
Serowe 26-03-1946	
Triple Oval 41mm x 26mm	



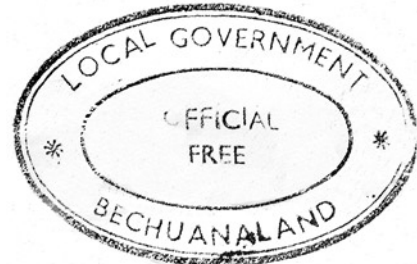
FINANCE DIVISION B.P. GOVERNMENT	55
Gaberones 12-09-1966	
Triple Oval 43mm x 28mm	




FOREST OFFICER KASANE	60
Kazangula 08-10-1964	
Triple Oval 51mm x 31mm	



GAME CONTROL BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE [STRUCK IN DARK BLUE]	65
Gaberones 18-05-1967 [used after Independence]	
Triple Oval 44mm x 31mm	




LOCAL GOVERNMENT BECHUANALAND	70
Gaberones 24-09-1966	
Triple Oval 52mm x 34mm	


	
Ministry of Works and Communications Bechuanaland Government	75
Gaberones 06-09-1966 to 30-09-1966 [used on first day of Independence]	
Double Oval 57mm x 34mm	


	
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	80
Mafeking 15-06-1959	
Triple Oval 55mm x 31mm	


	
RESIDENT COMMISSIONER BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	85
Mafeking 01-11-1935 to 07-07-1936	
Triple Oval 50mm x 30mm	

	
RESIDENT COMMISSIONER BECH. PROT. GOVT.	88
Mafeking 1947 to 28-02-1950	
Double Oval 45mm x 28mm	


	
REVENUE OFFICER, TSHABONG ["OFFICIAL FREE" IS IN NEGATIVE LETTERING] [STRUCK IN VIOLET]	95
Tshabong 19-09-1966	
Single Oval 43mm x 30mm	

	
SECRETARIAT BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	100
Mafeking 12-09-1961	
Double Oval 43mm x 31mm	

	
TREASURER BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	105
Mafeking 28-05-1959 to 26-06-1964	
Double Oval 43mm x 28mm	

	
TREASURY BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	108
Mafeking 13-10-1937 1/4?	
Double Oval 49mm x 29mm	

	
TREASURY BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE	109
Mafeking 11-01-1965	
Triple Oval 44mm x 31mm	


	
ROYAL TOUR H.R.H. PRINCE GEORGE (AFRIKAANS EQUIVALENT at base) [STRUCK IN VIOLET]	115
Gaberones 20-03-1934	
Triple Oval 61mm x 36mm (ex crown)	

If any member has Bechuanaland Protectorate items in their collection which are not listed above, or are used outside any date range shown, or differ in place used or ink colour - please send me full details. In particular does any member know if Official Free markings are known for touring trains other than items ref:115 and ref:116?

Photocopies of unlisted items would be appreciated which show the date and place of use and the colour of marking if other than black.

Images, scans and e-mails can be sent via the Editor.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE OFFICER COMMANDING WAR TRAINS (AFRIKAANS EQUIVALENT at base) [STRUCK IN VIOLET]	116
Lobatsi 04-06-1941 (Return Journey)	
Double Oval 55mm x 37mm	

Sherwood Ranch Date Cancellor

by Peter Thy

The cover illustrated overleaf of a 1937 registration envelope (RE 42) was sent to me by John Schaerer. It was mailed from Sherwood Ranch in 1953.

The Postal Agency at Sherwood Ranch opened in 1945. Putzel in his postmark survey shows a 1947 postmark. From 1952, Sherwood Ranch was no longer listed in the South African postal office lists according to Putzel's Encyclopedia. A second office was opened in 1961. This is consistent with the observation of the Society Postmark Study that Sherwood Ranch cancellers are not known between September 1949 and August 1957.

The registration envelope shown here was clearly

mailed in December 1953 within the period where no cancellers are known. It thus appears that the office was open, but that cancellers may actually not have been available in Sherwood Ranch, neither registrations nor dated cancellers. On the positive note, the cover proves that Sherwood Ranch was open at least in 1953. The letter was forwarded via Potgietersrust confirming the observation of Putzel that this South African Post Office may have been the Head Office for Sherwood Ranch.

John asks if other members have similar covers that can help to narrow the period where Sherwood Ranch was without postal cancellers.

The **Runner Post**

Issue 63



Contents

List of Officers	1527
Membership News	1527
Diary of Events	1528
News	1528
Auction #15 results	1528
Kanye Stamp workshop	1529
Feedback	1530
Question & Answer	1531
Recent Botswana Issues	1532
Registration Barcode	1533
Official Free Markings - Part 1	1534
Sherwood Ranch Date Cancellor	1537
Overprinted South African Postal Order	1538
Curved foot to '2' - SG 23b and SG42b	1539
SG41b 1d Protectorate with wide space	1539
Botswana Booklets	1540
Identifying Genuine Stellaland Stamps	1540
Twenty years ago: Newsletter #3	1542
Botswana Postmarks (2nd Series) MAB to MAR	1544

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