INTRODUCTION

Nyasaland was a British Protectorate from 1891 to 1964, when it became independent as Malawi. The country was known as the British Central Africa Protectorate until 1907. It was administered by the Foreign Office until 1904. Between 1953 and 1963 it was part of the Central African Federation, together with Southern and Northern Rhodesia, and some departmental responsibilities, such as Customs and Excise, Defence, Power, non-African Education, Health and Civil Aviation, were taken over by the Federal Government. Relevant Federal reports are thus included here. This political link with the settler-dominated Rhodesias was bitterly unpopular in Nyasaland and did much to arouse nationalist sentiments which ultimately destroyed the Federation and brought about independence.

Nyasaland/Malawi is a tiny thin country of 45,725 square miles, about a quarter of it comprising Lake Nyasa/Malawi. It is never more than 100 miles wide from west to east and is almost enveloped on three sides by Mozambique, which in colonial times was Portuguese East Africa. The main reason why Nyasaland became a British, rather than a Portuguese, colonial possession was that David Livingstone had travelled extensively in the country and written extravagantly of its potential for Christianity and Commerce. His travels were followed up by a number of Scottish missionaries who, at the time of the Scramble for Africa, lobbied successfully for the creation of a British administration. In 1891 Harry Johnson, the first 'Commissioner and Consul-General', set about attacking the slave trade, smashing the authority of local chiefs and imposing British authority on the country. It was not until the end of the century that Alfred Sharpe, Johnston's deputy and successor, finally completed this task.

The colonial administration at first attempted a policy of direct rule, deliberately challenging and undermining chiefly authority. From the 1930s, however, it adopted the orthodoxy of indirect rule, and set about trying to reverse its earlier policy. In the south of the country, on the Shire Highlands, substantial tracts of land were alienated to white settlers, who established tea and tobacco plantations. Conflict between landlords and tenants were a perennial feature of life in southern Nyasaland, and colonial administrators spent much time trying to legislate and arbitrate between the two. Land grievances certainly fuelled nationalist sentiment, as did the unwise imposition of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953, despite clear evidence of overwhelming African opposition to it. The Federal Government was dominated by white settlers in Southern and Northern Rhodesia and was never accepted by Africans in Nyasaland. The return of Dr. Banda in 1958 marked the beginning of the end of the Federation and hastened the advent of independence on 6 July 1964.

Nyasaland was widely known as the 'Imperial slum'. The country's meagre finances were drained by heavy railway debts, incurred on its behalf by the British Government. Right up until the 1950s ludicrously little was spent on social services. With local employment opportunities limited and wages low, thousands of local people were obliged to seek work in neighbouring countries. The government was extremely lightly administered, compared to most British colonies and protectorates. For example, the Department of Education came into being in 1925, comprising only a director, an assistant director, two superintendents and three clerks. Before 1945 the development departments, such as those concerned with natural
resources, could do little more than experiment and administration was 'conducted on the absolute minimum of expenditure'.

A fire in the Secretariat in Zomba destroyed all government records in 1919; a few annual departmental reports which were sent to London have survived and are published here.

Because many annual departmental reports were not printed and published and hence are not available in libraries in Britain, a search was made in the National Archives of Malawi in Zomba, and some 114 reports totalling 2,300 pages were located in Secretariat and other files. They were copied in Zomba and are included in this collection. They are:

Agriculture (1920/3)  
Auditor (1918/9-1929)  
Civil Aviation (1953)  
Estimates (1920/1-1936)  
Forestry (1923)  
Judicial (1917/8-1936, 1942, 1944)  
Lands and Survey (1910/20-1937)  
Medical (1918)  
Police (1921-9, 1941-2)  
Posts and Telegraphs (1922/3-1927, 1962/3)  
Printing and Stationery (1917/9, 1923/4-1939)  
Prisons (1921-4, 1927-9)  
Public Works (1917/8-1927, 1929-30)  
Registrar of Motor Vehicles and Road Service Authority (1954)

The annual reports of 50 different departments reflecting Nyasaland's unusual history have been divided into 8 groups as follows:

**Group I: Administration**

Native Affairs/Administration, Native Welfare Committee, Departmental Activities, Public Service Commission

**Group II: Finance**

Financial Reports and Statements, Auditor, Estimates, Customs and Excise, Registrar of Insurance

**Group III: Judicial and Police**

Judicial, Registrar General, Police, Prisons, Defence
Group IV: Natural Resources


Group V: Social Services

Education, Non-African Education, Medical, Labour, Local Government, Co-operative Development, Domasi Community Development Scheme

Group VI: Transport and Public Works

Public Works, Registrar of Motor Vehicles and Road Service Authority, Civil Aviation

Group VII: Communications and Post Office Savings

Posts and Telegraphs, Post Office Savings Bank

Group VIII: Miscellaneous


More detailed explanatory comments on these groups follow:

Group I: Administration

The bulk of the reports in this group cover the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The most extensive are Native Administration.

Group II: Finance

The major reports here are the Financial Reports and Statements, which run right through from 1911/2 to 1964, and the Estimates (1920/1-1964). Customs and Excise and Registrar of Insurance are reports of the Federal Government (of Rhodesia and Nyasaland), with the exception of 1964.

Group III: Judicial and Police

Most reports in this Group are relatively brief, with the exception of Police (1921-1964), which document the relative lightness of colonial administration in Nyasaland and illustrate some of the country's social history. Defence are Federal reports.
Group IV: Natural Resources

The large number of reports which are grouped here rather belie the scarcity and poverty of Nyasaland's natural resources. The most extensive are: Agriculture (1909/10-1964), Veterinary (1929-1964), Forestry (1923-1962/3) and Geological Survey (1923-1964). From 1944 onwards the Agriculture reports are divided in two, with Part II generally being devoted to Experimental Work. The early Agriculture reports also include some coverage of Veterinary and Forestry, which later became separate reports. Power and Federal Power Board are Federal reports.

Group V: Social Services

The social services provided by the colonial administration in Nyasaland were skeletal and rudimentary, as many writers have testified. Education and Medical/Health, for example, were very much in the hands of the various missions. In 1954 the responsibility for non-African Education and higher education was assumed by the Federal Government. Hence non-African Education are Federal reports. The Medical/Health reports are extensive; those from 1954-1963 are Federal reports on Public Health. The Labour reports are principally concerned with the export of Nyasa workers to countries such as South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia, and the money that the colonial government hoped to obtain from this export of labour.

Group VI: Transport and Public Works

The most extensive reports are those of the Public Works Department (1909/10-1964). Civil Aviation from 1954/5 to 1960/1 are Federal reports.

Group VII: Communications and Post Office Savings

Posts and Telegraphs from 1954/5 to 1962/3 and Post Office Savings Bank (1954-1962) are Federal reports.

Group VIII: Miscellaneous

INDEX TO THE MICROFILM

Group I: Administration

Reel 1  Native Affairs/Administration 1931-1949

Reel 2  Native Affairs/Administration 1950-1959
        Native Welfare Committee 1936-1940
        Departmental Activities 1949, 1954/55-1957/58
        Public Service Commission 1961-1963

Group II: Finance

Reel 3  Financial Reports & Statements 1911/12-1926/27

Reel 4  Financial Reports & Statements 1927-1940

Reel 5  Financial Reports & Statements 1941-1952

Reel 6  Financial Reports & Statements 1953/54-1962/63

Reel 7  Financial Reports & Statements 1963-1964
        Auditor 1918/19-1956/57

Reel 8  Estimates 1920/21-1935

Reel 9  Estimates 1936-1943

Reel 10  Estimates 1944-1951

Reel 11  Estimates 1952-1957/58

Reel 12  Estimates 1958/59-1960/61

Reel 13  Estimates 1961/62-1963

Reel 14  Estimates 1963/64-1964
        Customs & Excise 1954-1964
        Registrar of Insurance 1959-1963

Group III: Judicial and Police

Reel 15  Judicial 1917/18-1964

Reel 16  Registrar General 1942-1964
        Police 1921-1932

Reel 17  Police 1933-1964

Reel 18  Prisons 1921-1953
        Defence 1954-1962
Group IV Natural Resources

Reel 19  Provincial Natural Resources Boards 1950-1952
Agriculture 1909/10-1935

Reel 20  Agriculture 1936-1955/56

Reel 21  Agriculture 1956-1959

Reel 22  Agriculture 1959/60-1962/63

Reel 23  Agriculture 1963-1964
Agricultural Production and Marketing Board 1956-1964
Veterinary 1929-1955

Reel 24  Veterinary 1956-1964
Animal Husbandry Research 1963-1964

Reel 25  Game, Fish and Tsetse Control 1949-1962
Fisheries Research 1963-1964
Tea Research Station 1952/53-1964/65

Reel 26  Lands and Survey 1919/20-1962
Forestry 1923, 1926-1933

Reel 27  Forestry 1934-1962/63

Reel 28  Geological Survey 1923-1964

Reel 29  Geological Survey-Water Supply Investigation 1931-1940
Water Development 1954-1962
Electrical Services 1950-1955/56
Electricity Supply Commission 1956/7-1964

Reel 30  Power 1955/57-1959/60
Federal Power Board 1955/56-1962/63

Group V: Social Services

Reel 31  Education 1926/27-1955

Reel 32  Education 1956-1964
Non-African Education 1954-1963

Reel 33  Medical 1907/8-1927

Reel 34  Medical 1928-1951

Reel 35  Medical 1952-1964
Labour 1938-1954
Reel 36  Labour 1955-1963/7
Local Government 1962

Reel 37  Co-operative Development 1947-1961
Domasi Community Development Scheme 1950-1961

**Group VI Transport and Public Works**

Reel 38  Public Works 1909/10-1930
Reel 39  Public Works 1931-1959
Reel 40  Public Works 1960-1964
  Registrar of Motor Vehicles and Road Service Authority 1932-1963/64
  Civil Aviation 1950-1964

**Group VII Communications & Post Office Savings**

Reel 41  Posts and Telegraphs 1922/23-1962/63
Reel 42  Post Office Savings Bank 1912-1964

**Group VIII Miscellaneous**

Reel 43  Printing & Stationery 1917/19-1961/62
  Public Relations/Information 1950-1961
Reel 44  Rhodesia-Nyasaland Tourist Board 1958/59-1962/63
  Publications Bureau of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland 1949-1961
  Statistical Handbook 1949-1952
  Central African Archives 1935-1962
https://microform.digital - International Digital Scanning & Archiving Services