

C E A G O S

(Notes on a visit by the Administrator B.I.O.T.
31st August - 15th September, 1968)

Itinerary

31st August	15.00 hrs.	Departed Mahe
5th September	11.00 hrs.	Arrived Diego Garcia
8th September	06.00 hrs.	Departed Diego Garcia
	18.30 hrs.	Arrived Salomon
10th September	09.00 hrs.	Departed Salomon
	13.00 hrs.	Arrived Peros Banhos
11th September	15.00 hrs.	Departed Peros Banhos
15th September	10.30 hrs.	Arrived Mahe

Accompanying the Administrator were Mr. Marcel Moulinie representing Moulinie & Company (Seychelles) Limited who manage the islands on behalf of B.I.O.T. and Mr. R. Silberad, Agricultural Officer.

2. A detailed account of the islands was given in the report of a tour by the Administrator in May 1967 and these notes are supplementary to that account. Rather than deal with the islands individually, it is more convenient to set out these notes under subject headings dealing with the archipelago as a whole and this approach has been adopted.

3. Plantations. (For details of production see appendix I).

(a) Diego Garcia.

(i) The plantation was inspected by truck. It is generally in poor condition though the rhinoceros beetle damage seems less severe. There is still heavy rat infestation and a programme of control by poisoning is about to be undertaken. Much clearing remains to be done and extensive thinning and fertilizing is required if production is to be increased or even maintained at the present level. The number of labourers on the island has decreased as many of the Ilois have returned to Mauritius and it has not proved possible to replace them from Seychelles. This is the main reason for the drop in production for the first seven months of 1967 from 399 to 364 tons. The island has been suffering from drought for the last two months and this will adversely affect next year's production. The present manager works well within the limits of his capabilities but it seems that for the efficient organisation of the plantation a more qualified man is required.

(ii) There are a number of large white pigs on the island and a saddleback bore has been taken to the island. It is hoped that saddleback sows can be taken to the island by the next visit of the Nordvaer. The pork at present produced is of good quality but only sufficient for the island's needs. The large pig sty is in reasonable condition and it is hoped to build up the herd to produce a surplus for Mahe now that the Mahe cold store has been re-organised and the Nordvaer has cold storage facilities.

(iii) Twenty five head of cattle were taken to the island. There is a heavy cover of suitable grass and with mineral supplements it should be possible to fatten these animals for sale in Mahe and if time allows to build up a herd.

(iv) These various activities will require a qualified manager and it is intended to send Mr. Dryburgh, who has a diploma in agriculture to take over the management of the island in November.

/ (v) . . .

(v) Poultry is not kept by the management but an increasing number of hens and ducks are being kept by the labourers. There has been no recurrence of the outbreak of Newcastle disease which took place early in 1967.

(vi) The plantation buildings remain reasonably sound despite maintenance being reduced to the minimum necessary to keep them in a usable condition.

(b) Peros Banhos

(i) Four of the islands are now being worked from Salomon (Teye, Manuel, Petit Coquillage, Grand Coquillage) and this has enabled the Peros Banhos management to concentrate on proper cleaning and collection of nuts on the nearer islands. In consequence, production in the first seven months of 1968 was 202 tons compared to 177 tons for the same period in 1967 despite a decrease in the number of labourers on the islands. Production has also been improved by the appointment of a senior overseer responsible for the islands to the north west of the atoll and the establishment of temporary camps on these islands. As in Diego Garcia the employment of additional labour is still required if all the nuts falling are to be collected.

(ii) Some pigs (large white crosses) are kept on Ile du Coin. The pigs are on free range and appear to be doing well. As in Diego Garcia it is intended to increase the quality and quantity of the herd. There are a large number of pig sties but it will be necessary to re-roof them if they are to be used.

(iii) Some poultry is kept by the labourers and the island is free of disease.

(iv) Donkeys are used for milling copra to produce oil. They are, however, in very poor condition apparently due to overwork. Instructions were issued for them to be released and for milling to stop until the animals had recovered condition. A supply of oil sufficient for three months rations, which had been intended for export, was left on the island to make this possible.

(v) The buildings remain in a usable condition although additional maintenance is necessary.

(c) Salomon

(i) As has been stated in sub-paragraph b(i) above, Salomon has taken over responsibility for four of the Peros Banhos islands. The labour force has remained at the 1967 level but production has decreased from 177 tons in the first seven months of 1967 to 109 tons in the same period in 1968. Comparing these figures with those of Peros Banhos it seems that a better result can be obtained by concentrating on the areas which the labour force can maintain properly rather than attempting to increase the area of collection at the expense of cleaning.

(ii) The position with livestock, including donkeys, is similar to that in Peros Banhos.

(iii) The plantation buildings remain sound but as in the other islands reduced maintenance is decreasing their value.

(d) General

(i) The plantations are all producing less than could be produced due to the uncertainty as to their future. The steps necessary to improve production fall into three categories.

(a) Short term

(i) An increase in the labour force would achieve an immediate increase in production as the nuts are already there awaiting collection. The extent to which

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the force can be increased depends upon the availability of labour and the availability of housing. Seychelles labour is not at present available in large numbers as the labourers are waiting for the airport construction to begin which they see as providing them with opportunities for plentiful, well paid work. Mauritius labour is available but with the arrival of the Nordvaer it is more economic to reduce the communications between the islands and Mauritius. It should, however, prove possible to increase the labour force to fill the available housing.

(ii) The general standard of housing is low (see para 4 (b) below) and unoccupied houses rapidly fall into disrepair. Unless additional labour is recruited soon the availability of houses of acceptable standard may therefore limit labour to the present level unless agreement can be obtained for the capital expenditure necessary to construct new houses.

(iii) In the case of Diego Garcia some immediate improvement could be shown by reorganising the existing labour force, whilst in Salomon concentration on selected islands should increase production.

(b) Middle term

(i) Anything done to improve the growing conditions of a coconut tree takes almost a year to show results and it is improvements of this type which are included under this heading. The trees in most cases are over-crowded and require thinning. They also require fertilisers, mainly potash and in a number of cases, especially with the younger trees, they are suffering from starvation which can only be remedied by breaking the hard pan. These tasks require additional labour and expenditure on fertilisers. In the case of thinning there would be an immediate drop in production for about one year. Some indication for the need to undertake such improvements is given by the generally small size of the nuts. The average number of nuts required to produce one ton of copra is 8,000 compared to 7,000 on the less fertile Seychelles outlying islands.

(ii) Increase in the numbers and quality of the livestock would also produce an increased revenue within the middle term. An attempt is being made to do this with cattle on Diego Garcia and pigs on the other islands. With an assured market in Mahe and cold storage transport facilities on the Nordvaer this is now possible with little financial risk even if the islands were abandoned at short notice.

(c) Long term

(i) Long term improvement depends on the planting of new areas and the replanting (including inter-planting) of those areas where the trees are nearing the end of their usefully productive life. The need for such improvements is especially marked on Diego Garcia. Any return for such improvements, however, will not be seen for at least five years.

(ii) Whilst the plantation buildings (excluding quarters) remain adequate they are suffering from lack of proper maintenance. This will be reflected in much higher repair costs in future years.

(iii) The proportion of second grade copra to first grade is higher than desirable and is due mainly to the nuts lying too long before being collected. This again is attributable to shortage of labour. The second grade copra is converted to oil. In Diego Garcia this is done by an engine driven mill and on the other two islands by pestle mills worked by donkeys. The number of donkeys is too small for this to continue efficiently or humanely and an engine driven mill is required on Peros Banhos to serve the needs of this group and of Salomon.

/ 4. Labour . .

4. Labour

(a) Labour relations appear to be good. The only complaints were in Peros Banhos where a bonus given to women engaged in Mauritius had not been granted to those from Seychelles. This had arisen due to a misunderstanding and it was agreed that the Seychelles wages should be adjusted. The fact that the women had waited patiently for an opportunity to discuss the matter with Mr. Moulinie indicates a desirable trust between the labour and management and is in contrast to the situation on Salomon described in the May 1967 report.

(b) The general standard of quarters in Chagos is poor and with the exception of the new type quarters on Diego Garcia is much lower than that on the average Seychelles outlying island. Most of the quarters have thatched roofs and walls with concrete floors. The roofs and walls have been patched to keep the houses weather-proof but many of the floors, which were made initially of poor quality cement and lime mixtures, are breaking up. In this condition they are usually worse than no floor at all and cannot be satisfactorily patched.

(c) The camps are generally clean and refuse disposal pits are available and are used. Pit latrines are now in use on Diego Garcia and Salomon but bucket latrines (emptied every two days) are used Salomon. These are now to be converted to pit latrines.

(d) There has been almost no rain on the islands for two months and the rain catchment water supply was running short on all islands. Fortunately the well water supply on Peros Banhos and Salomon is good and is usually used for all purposes in preference to water from the rain water tanks. On Diego Garcia the well water is slightly brackish but can be used if necessary for drinking.

(e) Ration supplies were sufficient but the shop stocks were low especially on Diego Garcia. In the past stocks for the shop were ordered on a six monthly basis and checked every three months. Since the beginning of the management agreement Moulinie & Company have preferred to order on a three monthly basis to reduce their capital outlay on which they no longer obtain a return. This is bound to lead to periodic shortages and a reorganisation of the system is under discussion. No satisfactory solution is likely to be found, however, until the management agreement is finalised with the Ministry of Defence.

(f) Details of persons employed are given in appendix II. The basic wage rates remain as set out in the May report. Details of earnings are given in appendices III. The table at appendix IV shows extras on Diego Garcia as a much lower percentage of basic salaries than on the other islands. It is also lower than normally found on other islands and suggests lack of opportunity rather than unwillingness to do extra work.

(g) Whilst the physical conditions for the labourers are acceptable in that they are given housing which protects them from the weather and they are well fed, no provision is made for their social welfare apart from occasional visits by priests. There are no community centres or playing fields and the management's interest in the labourers ceases when they finish work. This is reflected in low moral and social standards especially among the Ilcois and it would be an interesting experiment under present conditions to send a voluntary social worker to the islands for a year to attempt to improve conditions. If the islands are to be developed as plantations some such scheme is most desirable.

5. Medical

(a) The medical services appear to be adequate and the hospitals are in reasonably good condition. The number of deaths on Peros

/ Banhos...

Banhos is, however, very much higher than on the other two groups and it is desirable to have a visit by a medical officer to see whether steps can be taken to improve the position. The Seychelles medical department has been asked whether a doctor can be made available to visit the islands in November.

6. Education

(a) Schools are run on all three islands. The teachers (one manager's wife, one manager's daughter and one senior overseer's wife) are all untrained. The supply of text books is adequate as is the school furniture. There is, however, a shortage of exercise books. Attendance is usually irregular and with the lack of trained supervision it is doubtful whether the children derive much benefit.

(b) Creches are provided on all the islands and these are well kept and well patronised. The children are given a small mid-morning meal including milk.

7. Communications

(a) Land communications on Diego Garcia are fair although one tractor is under repair, awaiting the delivery of spare parts. Additional tractors are also needed if full use is to be made of the tractor when they are all in working order. The landrover is also under repair and has been replaced by a small Toyota truck. This has given good service so far and though not so strongly built as a landrover is is easy to maintain and normal repairs are within the abilities of the local mechanics.

(b) There is only one motor boat in working order in Chagos and this is shared between Peros Banhos and Salomon. Other sea transport has to be carried out by sailing boat or pirogue. This is not proving satisfactory and delays are occurring on all the islands including Diego Garcia where long overland journeys have to be made to collect many of the nuts. Boats are available but two new engines are required to bring communications to an efficient level.

(c) The radio network between the islands was working well. The meteorological station on Diego Garcia continues to operate the inter-island link on behalf of that island and to send external messages via Mauritius.

8. Peace Officers

(a) The Peace Officers records were well kept and there were no appeals against any judgements or sentences. Figures of cases heard and of their disposal are given at appendix V.

(b) Eight cases were heard during the visit. Details are given in appendix VI.

(c) Two alleged cases of attempted rape were reported. In neither case was it possible to bring the accused and witnesses to Mabe. A full police investigation will be carried out on the next visit in November.

9. Civil Status

(a) The Civil Status records were neatly kept in all cases but instances have occurred of insufficient details being shown on some certificates. This is due to the change-over from the Mauritius to the Seychelles system. Examples of correctly filled certificates were supplied and should enable the Civil Status officers to avoid errors in the future.

(b) Details of births, deaths and marriages are given at appendix VII. Whilst with a small and changing population it is

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necessary to be very cautious in interpreting birth rates, etc.. it is worthwhile comparing the figures with those for Seychelles. The comparative figures for 1967 are :

	<u>Chagos</u>	<u>Seychelles</u>
Birth rate / thousand	40	37.5
Death rate / thousand	20	11
% legitimate births	36.1	55.3

The death rate is very much higher and this is particularly marked in the age group over one year to five years in which six children died in Chagos compared to 104 in Seychelles where the total population is fifty times greater.

The percentage of illegitimate births is also much higher and reflects a high degree of mobility between families which will add to the problems of resettlement if this becomes necessary.

10. Meteorological Station

(a) The Mauritius government continues to run a meteorological station on Diego Garcia. There has often been friction between the station staff and the management in the past and it was, therefore, pleasing to find excellent relations existing at the time of this visit.

11. Nordvaer.

(a) As this was the first commercial trip to the islands it is worth recording her performance on this occasion. The voyage to Diego Garcia against the equatorial current and with the south-east trades blowing strongly took almost five days at an average speed of 9½ knots. The return journey took just under four days at an average speed of 10½ knots. On the voyage to Chagos a call of 30 minutes was made at Frigate to collect vegetables, fruit and meat.

The ship carried:

<u>To Chagos</u>	<u>From Chagos</u>
100 tons cargo	230 tons cargo
15 cabin passengers	10 cabin passengers
50 deck passengers	57 deck passengers
25 head of cattle	
3 pigs	

The copra stowage was approximately 100 cu.ft. per ton.

(b) The whole journey took 15 days but with reorganisation of the loading on the islands it should be possible to reduce this to 14 days. Moulinie & Company have expressed their satisfaction with the vessel which they consider more economic than any other available transport for their Chagos requirements. With only a short period on which to base annual running costs it is impossible to give an accurate figure for the profit made on the voyage but a rough estimate gives a figure of about £800.

12. Conclusion

(a) The islands are suffering from the uncertainty as to their future and whilst this uncertainty lasts there is little that can be done to increase production except in the case of Diego Garcia where the present labour force could be more economically used. So long as this uncertainty continues we shall have to accept gradually decreasing returns and if it continues for long substantial expenditure on building repairs and replacements if a decision is eventually taken to put the islands into full production.

/ (b) The . . .

(b) The social services are poor and whatever the future of the islands a visit by a medical officer with experience of rural health problems is urgently required. If the islands are to be fully developed, consideration will have to be given to the improvement of education and the provision of social facilities such as community centres and playing fields. These improvements need not be elaborate but some interest in the workers outside their working hours is essential if we are to raise the general standards on the islands.

(c) Much of this report seems depressing but in general the condition of the islands is as good as can be expected with the present limitation on exploitation and Moulinie & Company have ~~run~~ then well, with/ their existing terms of reference.

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ANNEX II

CIVIL STATUS RECORDS - 1966

<u>Island</u>	<u>Births</u>		<u>Natural</u>	<u>Deaths</u>		<u>Marriages</u>	<u>Still Births</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Legitimate</u>	<u>Male</u>			<u>Female</u>
DIEGO GARCIA	14	7	5	14	5	1	2	1
PERCS BARRCS	5	6	9	2	4	2	2	-
SALANCE	5	2	2	5	2	3	3	-
TOTAL	20	15	14	21	9	6	7	1

CIVIL STATUS RECORDS - 1ST QUARTER 1967

DIEGO GARCIA	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
PERCS BARRCS	-	3	1	2	-	-	-	-
SALANCE	1	2	-	3	-	1	-	-
TOTAL	1	5	1	5	2	3	-	-

MAURITIUS

After departure of M.V. "Mauritius"

<u>Island</u>		<u>Ilois</u>	<u>Seychellois</u>	<u>Mauritian</u>	<u>Total</u>
DIEGO GARCIA	Men	35	172	7	214
	Women	38	55	3	94
	Children	95	102	-	195
	Total	166	327	10	503
PEROS BANECS	Men	36	41	-	77
	Women	41	6	2	49
	Children	104	23	-	127
	Total	181	70	2	253
SALAMON	Men	29	17	4	50
	Women	34	3	2	39
	Children	77	1	1	79
	Total	140	21	7	168
TOTAL CHAGGS	Men	100	230	11	341
	Women	113	62	7	182
	Children	274	126	1	401
	Total	487	418	19	924

Notes: 1. Children aged 0-12 years.

2. Ilois classified on basis of their own assessment and includes Mauritian who have worked on the islands for long periods and who wish to continue this employment.

COPRA PRODUCTION

Jan-July 1967

Jan-July 1966

	1st Grade	2nd Grade	Total	1st Grade	2nd Grade	Total
Diego Garcia	385	14	399	345	19	364
Peros Banhos	167	10	177	190	12	202
Salomon	109	8	117	103	6	109
Total Chagos	661	32	693	638	37	675

Note: 2nd Grade copra is used for oil.
The oil is used to supply ration requirements and any excess is exported to Mahe for sale.

EMPLOYMENT

	Diego Garcia			Peros Banhos			Salomon			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Manager	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	3
Accountant	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	3
Dresser	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	3
Nurse / Midwife	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	3
Clerical Staff	4	1	5	-	1	1	-	-	-	4	2	6
Teacher	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Senior Overseer	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	3
Overseer	6	-	6	6	-	6	7	-	7	24	-	24
Artisans	13	-	13	6	-	6	5	-	5	19	-	19
Labourers	128	53	181	49	33	82	32	28	60	209	114	323
Boys	20	-	20	-	-	-	8	6	14	28	6	34
Total	175	57	232	65	34	99	56	35	91	296	126	422

EARNINGS

(June for Diego Garcia, August for others)

	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon
Total basic Salaries	Rs. 6,789	Rs. 1,978	Rs. 1,701
Total extras	3,465	2,025	1,605
Total earnings	Rs. 10,254	Rs. 4,001	Rs. 3,306
Extras as percentage of basic salary	51%	102%	94%

Appendix IV

DETAILS OF EXTRAS

	Peros Banhos	Salomon
Clearing	180	179
Collecting & husking	927	552
Transporting nuts	58	110
Breaking nuts	-	176
Bagging copra	-	7
Calorifer	105	-
Total extras on copra production	1,270	1,024
Maintenance of boats	39	122
Maintenance of quarters	152	85
Maintenance of other buildings	331	277
Total extras on maintenance	522	482
Other extras	224	100
Total extras	2,016	1,600

Note: Variation in total extras due to rounding to nearest rupee

PEACE OFFICERS' RECORDS

1967

Persons Charged

Charge	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
Assault	11	-	1	12
Affray	4	-	-	4
Drunkenness	6	5	1	12
Obscene language	2	3	1	6
Liabile to cause breach of peace	6*	-	2	8
Theft	7	-	-	7
Injuring animals	-	1	-	1
Total	36	9	5	50

Disposal of Offences

	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
<u>Fines</u>				
Rs. 1 - 10	19*	4	3	26
Rs. 11 - 20	8	-	-	8
<u>Imprisonment</u>				
1 - 7 days	9	4	1	14
8 - 14 days	-	1	-	1
Not guilty	-	-	1	1
Total	36	9	5	50

* Appeal heard against conviction and sentence in one case. Appeal allowed and conviction and sentence quashed.

January - August 1965Persons Charged

Charge	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
assault	15	5	3	23
Theft	5	-	-	5
Conduct liable to cause breach of the peace	2	-	1	3
Obscene language	9	1	-	10
Drunkenness	-	6	-	6
Damaging property	-	1	-	1
Total	31	13	4	48

Disposal of cases

	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
<u>Fines</u>				
Rs. 1 - 10	10	7	1	18
Rs. 11 - 20	-	-	1	1
<u>Imprisonment</u>				
1 - 7 days	16	6	2	24
8 - 14 days	5	-	-	5
Not Guilty				
Total	31	13	4	48

MAGISTRATE'S COURT RECORDS1st January - 30th September, 1968Persons Charged

Charge	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
Tapping Toddy	4	-	-	4
Assault	5	-	-	5
Wounding	-	2	1	3
Total	7	2	1	10

Disposal of Cases

Fines	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
Rs. 1-20	6	1	-	7
21-50	-	-	1	1
Not guilty	1	1	-	2
Total	7	2	1	10

CIVIL STATUS RECORDS

1967

BIRTHS

Island	Male	Female	Total	Legitimate	Natural
Diego Garcia	7	5	12	4	8
Peros Banhos	5	9	14	6	8
Salomon	5	5	10	3	7
Total Chagos	17	19	36	13	23

DEATHS

Island	Male	Female	Total	Under 1 yr.	1-10	10 yrs.+
Diego Garcia	3	-	3	1	2	-
Peros Banhos	3	8	11	3	6	2
Salomon	1	3	4	1	1	2
Total Chagos	7	11	18	5	9	4

nil

MARRIAGESJanuary - August 1968BIRTHS

Island	Male	Female	Total	Legitimate	Natural
Diego Garcia	10	3	13*	9	4
Peros Banhos	4	5	9	3	6
Salomon	3	4	7	4	3
Total Chagos	17	12	29	16	13

* 1 still birth not included

DEATHS

Island	Male	Female	Total	Under 1 yr.	1-10	10 yrs.+
Diego Garcia	1	-	1	1	-	-
Peros Banhos	1	4	5	1	2	2
Salomon	1	-	-	1	-	-
Total Chagos	3	4	7	3	2	2

MARRIAGES

Peros Banhos 1
 Other Islands nil
Total 1