



COPY

NOTES ON THE ISLANDS

OF THE

BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

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BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

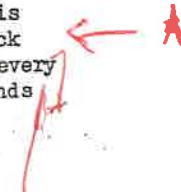
Introduction

The British Indian Ocean Territory was created on 8th November, 1965 and consists of the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches, which were formerly administered by Seychelles, and the islands of the Chagos archipelago, which were formerly administered by Mauritius. The Territory is administered by a Commissioner assisted by an Administrator, both of whose offices are situated at Victoria in Seychelles.

The laws of Seychelles continue to apply to the islands formerly administered by Seychelles and those of Mauritius to the islands formerly administered by Mauritius, with the exception of those laws which have been introduced since the creation of the Territory. The main laws which have been introduced concern the criminal law, land matters, income tax, postal administration and the protection of wild life. In each case a uniform system based mainly on Seychelles law has been introduced throughout the Territory.

The manager of each island is a Peace Officer and has powers to deal with minor criminal cases. More serious cases and appeals from Peace Officers' decisions are dealt with by the Administrator, who has the powers of a Magistrate, or are sent, after the holding of a Preliminary Inquiry, to the Supreme Court in Seychelles. Records of births, deaths and marriages are kept by the island managers and forwarded to Mahe.

Although the Territory is small in population and land area, it is spread over a considerable area of the Indian Ocean, stretching from Aldabra, 600 miles south-west of Mahe, to Chagos, 1,200 miles to the east of Mahe. Sea communications previously depended upon local schooners but have been improved by the purchase of a B.I.O.T. vessel, the Nordvaer, which is a 500 ton cargo ship, equipped to carry 12 cabin and 50 deck passengers. The islands are normally visited by a vessel every three months. Except for Desroches and Farquhar, the islands are now in wireless contact with Mahe through Mauritius. Postal agencies are maintained on all the islands and the Nordvaer acts as a travelling Post Office.



With the exception of Aldabra, which is run as a fishing station, the other islands are run as coconut plantations. They are manned by contract labourers engaged from Mauritius and Seychelles on eighteen month to two year contracts. Total copra production in 1967 was 1,494 tons.

The climate throughout the Territory is hot and humid with temperatures ranging throughout the year from about 75°F to 85°F. Rainfall varies from 40 inches in the southern islands to about 100 inches in Chagos. The climate is tempered by the south-east trade winds during the period May to October and by intermittent north-westerlies during the remainder of the year. Farquhar is in the cyclone belt and

/ Aldabra . . .

Aldabra suffers from occasional high winds associated with cyclones further to the west.

Details of the individual islands are given in this report and the table at appendix A summarises the main data for each island. Sketch maps of the main islands are at appendix B.

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THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

The Chagos archipelago consists of numerous islands and coral reefs lying between the parallels of $4^{\circ}44'$ south and $7^{\circ}41'$ south and the meridians of $70^{\circ}47'$ east and $72^{\circ}47'$ east, i.e. an area some 177 miles by 120 miles in extent. The islands' reefs and banks are generally of an atoll character.

The main atolls are Diego Garcia, Peros Banhos and Salomon, all of which are inhabited and Egmont or Six Islands which was formerly a coconut plantation but which is now abandoned. Eagle Island, Three Brothers and Danger Island were also formerly worked as coconut plantations. Nelson Island, the remaining island in the group, was never to have been exploited.

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DIEGO GARCIA

Diego Garcia is the southern-most and largest island in the Chagos group. The main island, which is roughly V shaped with the land approaching at the top of the V, is some 13 miles long with a maximum width of 7 miles. The land rim is, however, very narrow in some places and the total land area is some 8,700 acres. In addition to the main island, there are three small islands in the mouth of the V. The atoll reef is steep-to on the seaward side of the island. The large lagoon has extensive reefs but a deep channel exists allowing vessels drawing up to 30 feet to enter the lagoon and to proceed to within three miles of the southern end of the lagoon.

The main island is covered with heavy vegetation, mainly coconuts but there are also a considerable number of large trees and bushes. The main trees are Bois blanc and Takamaka but there are also a large variety of other trees growing on the island. The grass and weed cover on the island is exceptionally heavy for a coral island and adds to the difficulty of maintaining the plantations.

There are a large number of rats on the island and also of land crabs including the coconut crab. There are 12 horses on the island and a small number of donkeys. A pond turtle also occurs on the island.

The main birds found on the island are Tropic Bird, Frigate Bird, the Mynah, Fairy Tern, Madagascar Turtle Dove, and the Madagascar Fody.

The Mynah, which seems to have been introduced towards the end of the 1950's, has increased rapidly.

A Meteorological station run by the Mauritius Government is situated on the island. The rainfall averages 99 inches a year and temperatures vary from 77°F to 85°F. The south-east trade winds blow from May to October. During the remainder of the year north-westerly winds alternate with periods of calm. The only record of cyclone damage is in September 1944, (outside the normal season) when a cyclone passing to the south of the island caused considerable damage. The ten year figures from 1951 - 1960 show an average of only six days a year on which the wind speed exceeded 30 knots.

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2. ADMINISTRATION

Diego Garcia was formerly owned by Chagos Agalega Company Limited. In 1967 it was acquired by the Crown, together with the other Chagos islands (excluding Nelson Island) for £660,000. From May 1967 to the end of the year the island was leased to Chagos Agalega Company. Since then it has been managed by Moulinie & Company on behalf of B.I.O.T. for a management fee based on 8% of the f.o.b. value of the produce of the island.

/ The . . .

The manager acts as Peace Officer for the island. Fifty cases were heard in 1967, the majority being for drunkenness and associated misconduct. Most of the cases were dealt with by small fines but periods of imprisonment varying from one to seven days were imposed in 14 cases and one accused was imprisoned for 14 days. There has been one case of murder, two of arson and one of indecent assault since the creation of B.I.O.T.

The manager acts as Civil Status Officer. The following table shows the number of births, deaths and marriages in 1966 and 1967.

	BIRTHS						DEATHS		
	Male	Fe-male	Total	Legitimate	Natural	Still births	Male	Fe-male	Total
1966	10	7	17	5	12	1	3	1	4
1967	7	5	12	4	8	-	3	-	3

MARRIAGES

1966 - 2
1967 - 0

A postal agency was set up on the island in March 1968.

3. POPULATION

The entire population consists of employees of Moulinie & Company and the families of the employees. In addition to Seychellois and Mauritians, there are a number of persons employed who were born in Chagos and whose parents and in some cases whose grandparents were also born in the islands. This particular class is known locally as Creoles des Iles or Ilois. Although many of them have been long resident in the islands their continuation in the islands has always been contingent on their being employed on the plantations. The great majority have links with Mauritius and have been accustomed to take leave there between contracts. The following table gives comparative population figures for Chagos. In the case of the figures for March 1968 those shown as Ilois were so classified after obtaining details of their place of birth and that of their parents. Ilois were then defined as those born in Chagos or in Mauritius whose father, or in the case of illegitimate children, whose mother, was born in Chagos. In the other cases, those shown as Ilois are those who declared themselves to be so.

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11 $\times 360$
= 3960

Rs 5549.65
- to the non-PA
Salary
+ Rs 5810 extras
6000

Rs. 11,359.58
total salary for
non staff
= 8.37% total
earnings

$\therefore \text{sl. A}^{\text{m}} \text{ sales} = \text{Rs } 2705$
 $\text{Avg.} = \text{Rs } 246.$

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In addition to their wages, employees are housed free and provided with free firewood and rations. The rations are based on the Mauritius scales. These entitle every person employed (including women) to 10½ lbs. of rice, 125 grams of salt, 500 grams of coconut oil per week and fish to the value of Rs. 2 per month. In practice the fish issue exceeds this considerably. Vegetables are issued when available and occasionally fresh pork. The value of one man's rations is approximately Rs. 40 per month.

The general standard of the labourers' quarters is poor. With the exception of 15 quarters they are constructed in temporary materials and in some cases have earth floors. This is true not only of the quarters in the main lines but also of those in the eight camps in the plantation.

The island relies on rain catchment for its drinking water but well water is used for cooking and washing. The main water tank holds about 12,000 gallons and there are a number of smaller tanks attached to individual houses.

There is an electricity supply on the island providing power at 230 volts.

4. PRODUCTION

The total cultivatable area of Diego Garcia is about 8,000 acres of which some 6,000 is under coconuts. The various stands of coconuts vary considerably in quality and age but the main production areas are heavily overcrowded as nuts have been allowed to germinate and to grow into trees during the various periods during which the island has been neglected. The island is much more fertile than the average atoll and in consequence the growth of grass, small shrubs and weeds is vigorous. Keeping the plantation clean is one of the major problems on the island and when labour is short and areas have to be neglected they are soon overgrown to an extent which makes it impossible to collect the nuts. These nuts then germinate and the reopening of the area when labour becomes available is a major undertaking. As a consequence, a considerable part of the plantation is in an overgrown condition and extensive cleaning and thinning of palms is needed. Production in 1967 was 702 tons which shows a considerable increase on the average production of 586 tons a year for the period 1955-58. The production for the first 10 months of 1968 was, however, only 512 tons and with the reduced labour force the total for the year will be only about 600 tons.

The coconuts suffer from Rhinoceros beetle and there is also extensive damage by rats.

The copra is cured by a mixture of sun and hot air drying. This is done at the main settlement only and creates a heavy transport requirement to bring in nuts from the more distant parts of the plantation (e.g. one of the main producing areas north of Pt. Mariame is 20 miles by road from the settlement and there are no motor boats on the island to allow the nuts to be brought the three miles across the lagoon). The second grade copra is used to make oil for use on the island and for export to Mahe. A mechanical oil mill is used.

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The plantation buildings are in usable condition but require more maintenance if they are not to become increasingly unsatisfactory.

Pigs do well on the island. Their basic feed consists of taro and poonac, both of which occur on the island. A saddleback boar has been introduced to the island in an attempt to improve the breed and it is hoped to provide pork for the Seychelles' market. Twenty five head of cattle were also introduced to the island in September 1968.

Poultry normally does well but there was an outbreak of Newcastle disease early in 1967.

Citrus, mainly limes and rough lemon, grows well and some fruit is exported to Mahe.

Vegetables are grown for use on the island and there are a number of bread fruit trees.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

External communication is by sea and it is proposed that the Nordvaer should visit the island every two to three months.

There is a wharf 400 feet long at the settlement with a depth of 14 feet at the head. It is, however, in poor condition especially towards the head and this section will soon require replacement. Larger vessels can find good anchorages off the settlement at all times of year in depths from 6 to 8 fathoms.

Communication by boat within the lagoon is good at most times of year but there is at present no motor boat on the island. Sailing boats are used including small outrigger canoes. Whilst sailing vessels are satisfactory for fishing, they are uneconomic for transporting coconuts.

There are motorable earth tracks throughout the island. The following vehicles are used:-

2 tractors with 3 ton trailers, 1 landrover, 1 Toyota 10 cwt. pickup.

Wireless communication with the other Chagos islands and with Mauritius are maintained through the Meteorological Station. Radio Seychelles can generally be heard.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES

A 12 bed hospital with a labour ward is maintained on the island and is in good condition. A trained dresser and a trained midwife are resident on the island. The stock of drugs and dressings is adequate.

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The general health on the island is good though the Seychellois suffer from poor dental health.

Pit latrines are provided for all quarters and refuse is buried. The standard of hygiene is satisfactory.

A small school is run with an unqualified teacher. There is a good supply of text books but the general standard of the work is poor due to the lack of experience of the teacher. Attendance is voluntary and there are about 40 children regularly attending the school.

A creche is provided for the children of working mothers and free milk is distributed to the children each morning.

7. CONCLUSION

Diego Garcia is potentially the most valuable of the B.I.O.T. islands. It consists of 8,000 acres of cultivatable land on which much of the work could be easily mechanised. In addition to coconuts, limes could probably be profitably grown and livestock for export could be raised. The island is also capable of producing valuable timber. The 6,000 acres at present under coconuts are, however, producing a little over one-tenth of a ton per acre. The production could be immediately increased by providing a larger labour force but to bring the plantation into full production a long term programme of thinning, replanting and manuring is needed. If this was undertaken there seems no reason why production should not be increased to at least $\frac{1}{4}$ ton per acre, as this is already achieved and passed on less fertile islands. If this were done, production could be increased to 1,500 tons a year without extending the existing plantations or to some 2,000 tons a year if the island were to be fully planted.

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EAGLE ISLANDS

Eagle Islands consist of two islands, Eagle and Sea Cow, situated on the western edge of the Great Chagos Bank some 90 miles north-west of Diego Garcia.

Eagle Island is some three miles wide and up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile in width. The land area is approximately 300 acres. The island is covered with coconut palms and was formerly worked as a coconut plantation with a settlement on the island. A number of donkeys exist on the island. Sea Cow Island, about two miles to the south of Eagle Island is an almost circular island $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in diameter. It is covered in trees.

Anchorage can be found on the western side or off the northern tip of Eagle Island. Landing can be made on the western side of the island during the south-east season but it is often difficult due to the rocky nature of the fore-shore. An alternative landing exists at the north end of the island. Sea Cow has no anchorages off the coast and is best approached by a small boat from Eagle Island.

The fishing around the two islands is said to be excellent and 244 sharks are reported to have been caught there in a period of nine hours. //

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EGMONT ATOLL

Egmont Atoll is situated some 60 miles north-east of Diego Garcia. The alternative name is Six Islands but as Rat Island, on the western side of the island, has been completely eroded away and as South-East Island and Takamaka Island have been joined by the piling up of sand, the name is no longer appropriate.

The atoll is 5 miles long by 2 miles wide with the island situated on the southern and western sides. The total land area is approximately 638 acres.

The only entrance to the lagoon is a broad, shallow channel on the northern side of the atoll with about 12 feet of water in the pass. The lagoon is cluttered with rocks and coral heads. An anchorage exists just outside the entrance to the lagoon.

The islands are all covered with coconut trees and were previously run as a copra plantation with a settlement on South-East Island.

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NELSON ISLAND

Nelson Island lies at about the centre of the northern edge of the Great Chagos Bank and is 95 miles north of Diego Garcia. The island is just over one mile long and has a maximum width of less than half a mile. It is low and covered with low scrub and a few coconut trees. A small amount of guano occurs on the island.

Anchorage may be found to the east of the island but landing is difficult at most times.

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PEROS BANHOS

The Peros Banhos atoll is situated some 120 miles north-north-east of Diego Garcia. The atoll is between 12 and 16 miles across with a deep lagoon. There are 32 islands on the atoll.

The islands are all low and with the exception of Coin du Mire, are covered with coconut palms. The other vegetation is varied and consists of large trees, mainly Takamaka and Casuarina as well as a large number of smaller trees and bushes. The grass cover is not so dense as in Diego Garcia but on several of the islands is much heavier than on most other Indian Ocean atolls.

The Brown Booby, Black Necked Tern, Sooty Tern, Noddys and the Fairy Tern are reported to breed on the atoll.

The climate is similar to that of Diego Garcia but with a slightly higher rainfall.

2. ADMINISTRATION

Until purchased by the Crown in 1967, Peros Banhos was owned by Chagos Agalega Company. The Company leased the atoll from May 1967 to the end of the year since when it has been managed on behalf of B.I.O.T. by Moulinie & Company for a management fee based on 8% of the f.o.b. value of the produce.

The island manager acts as Peace Officer. There is normally little crime on the island and in 1967 only 9 minor cases involving drunkenness were heard by the Peace Officer. Two cases of wounding (neither serious) were heard by the Magistrate's Court. The only serious offence since the creation of B.I.O.T. has been one of indecent assault.

The manager acts as Civil Status Officer and the following table shows figures for births, deaths and marriages in 1966 and 1967.

	BIRTHS					DEATHS		
	Male	Fe-Male	Total	Legitimate	Natural	Male	Fe-Male	Total
1966	5	6	11	9	2	4	2	6
1967	5	9	14	6	8	3	8	11

Marriages

1966 - 2

1967 - 0

A postal agency was set up on the island in March 1968.

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3. POPULATION

The population consists entirely of employees of Moulinie & Company, and their families. It is composed of Seychellois, Mauritians and Ilois (see note on Ilois under Diego Garcia). Population figures are given in the following table.

	ADULTS			CHILDREN			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
JULY 1964							
Seychellois							30
Mauritians							261
Ilois							
Total	79	66	145	81	65	146	291
MAY 1967							
Seychellois	41	6	47			23	70
Mauritians		2	2				2
Ilois	36	41	77			104	181
Total	77	49	126			127	253
MARCH 1968							
Seychellois	31	8	39	15	11	26	65
Mauritians	5	4	9	2	-	2	11
Ilois	41	43	84	36	48	84	168
Total	77	55	132	53	59	112	244

In November 1968 the population was only 168 (58 men, 37 women and 73 children). The number of Seychellois adults had decreased to 35 and the number of Mauritians and Ilois adults to 60.

In September 1968 the population was employed as follows:-
1 manager, 1 accountant, 1 dresser/midwife, 1 senior overseer,
6 overseers, 6 artisans, 49 male labourers and 33 female labourers.

Basic wages and conditions of work are as described for Diego Garcia.

The following table shows earnings in October 1968.

Number employed	90
Total basic wages	Rs. 2,487
Total extras	2,282
Total earnings	Rs. 4,769

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The island shop is well stocked and supplies some simple luxury items in addition to the necessities of life. There is an increasing demand for wireless sets and guitars which are ordered specially and only if the employee has enough savings to his credit for their purchase.

The housing on the island is very poor and the general condition of the labour lines is unsatisfactory. The standard of personal and household hygiene on Peros Banhos is much lower than elsewhere in the group and can partly be attributed to the unsatisfactory living conditions.

The island uses mainly well water not only for cooking and washing but also for drinking. There is, however, one large rain water tank holding about 10,000 gallons and a number of small tanks.

There is an electricity supply on the island (230 volt 50 cycle).

4. PRODUCTION

All the islands, except for one islet (Coin du Mire) are covered with coconut trees and the area planted is estimated at 2,900 acres. Due to a shortage of labour and of suitable boats it is not possible to work properly all the islands. Four islands at the eastern end of the lagoon are now being worked from Salomon but it still remains impossible to work the remaining islands properly. Production in 1967 was 380 tons but is unlikely to exceed 320 tons in 1968. During the period 1955-58 the average production was 461 tons and even the 1967 figure is poor by comparison even when the fact that four islands are being worked from Salomon is taken into account.

The general condition of the plantations is better than in Diego Garcia but extensive thinning is required as well as manuring. Continued neglect of some of the islands will mean an expensive clearing of germinated nuts and young trees if they are to be put in order.

The copra is cured by a mixture of sun and hot air drying. Oil is produced from the second grade copra by means of a donkey driven pestle and mortar mill. The number of donkeys on the island is, however, very small and they are in poor condition. In consequence, it has been necessary to give up milling and to release the donkeys until they recover condition. The quantity of second grade copra is undesirably high due to the delays which occur in collecting the nuts due to the shortage of labour.

The plantation buildings are in a usable condition but require extensive maintenance.

Pigs do well on the island and it is hoped to build up the herd to the extent where it will be possible to produce meat for the Seychelles' market.

/Communications . .

4. COMMUNICATIONS

External communications are by sea and a vessel calls at the island every two to three months.

There are several entrances to the lagoon but the entrance normally used is that between Ile Fouquet and Ile Vache Marine to the south-east of the island. This leads to a good anchorage off the settlement on Ile du Coin. At the settlement there is a jetty about 575 feet long. This jetty does not extend to the edge of the fringing reef and can only be used for about two hours either side of high tide. There are two Decaville tracks along the jetty and small trolleys capable of carrying half a ton are used on it for loading.

Communication between the islands is by boat inside the lagoon. There is only one motor boat shared between Peros Banhos and Salomon and the nuts are transported by sailing boat.

There are earth tracks on Ile du Coin on which donkey carts are sometimes used. There are no roads on the other islands.

There is a wireless transmitter on Ile du Coin and it is used to maintain a link with Diego Garcia and Salomon. Radio Seychelles can usually be heard.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES

There is a trained dresser on the island who also acts as midwife. The eight bed hospital is well kept and an adequate supply of drugs is kept. The standard of hygiene on the island is low especially among the Ilois and enteritis is a common complaint. This led to a number of deaths of small children in 1967 and 1968 but since the arrival of a new dresser using more modern drugs the situation seems to have improved. The general health on the island is otherwise good.

A school is run on the island. It is quite well equipped and is well maintained by the unqualified teacher. The standard reached is higher than in the other island schools. There are about 30 regular pupils.

There is a well kept creche for the children of working mothers at which the children are given milk each morning.

7. CONCLUSION

The Peros Banhos plantations are not being properly worked due to the shortage of labour and in consequence production is falling. In addition the more distant islands are becoming overgrown and this will add to the cost of any eventual rehabilitation. An extensive programme of thinning and manuring is

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also needed if the yield is to be increased. If this is done /
the plantations should be capable of producing some 700 tons /
of copra.

The loading arrangements on the island also require
improvement so as to make them less dependent on the state
of the tide.

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SALOMON

Salomon is situated some 120 miles north of Diego Garcia. The atoll is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and up to $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide. There are eleven islands spaced around the rim of the atoll and at low tide eight of the islands are joined by sand spits or separated only by very shallow water. The entrance to the lagoon is through a pass on the north-western side of the atoll with a least depth of 19 feet. The entrance is, however, not usable in the north west monsoon. Within the lagoon there are numerous coral heads with deep water between them.

The islands are all flat and covered with coconut trees. In addition to the coconut trees, takamaka, gayac, banyan and casuarina trees are found as well as smaller shrubs and bushes. The grass cover is not so dense as on Diego Garcia but is comparable with that on Peros Banhos.

The climatic conditions are also similar to those on Peros Banhos.

The birds seen on Salomon are similar to those on Peros Banhos but the sea birds do not appear to breed on the atoll.

2. ADMINISTRATION

Salomon was formerly owned by Chagos Agalega Company Limited but was bought by the Crown in 1967. From May 1967 to the end of the year the Company leased the island but since the beginning of 1968 it has been managed by Moulinie & Company (Seychelles) Limited on behalf of B.I.O.T. for a management fee based on 8% of the f.o.b. value of the produce of the island.

The island manager acts as Peace Officer for the island. Only five minor cases were heard in 1967 and there was only one case (wounding) before the Magistrate's Court.

The manager also acts as Civil Status Officer and the following table shows births, deaths and marriages in 1966 and 1967.

	BIRTHS					DEATHS		
	Male	Female	Total	Legitimate	Natural	Male	Female	Total
1966	5	2	7	2	5	2	3	5
1967	5	5	10	3	7	1	3	4

MARRIAGES

1966 - 3

1967 - 0

A postal agency was set up on the island in March 1968.

3. POPULATION

The population consists entirely of the employees of Moulinie & Company (Seychelles) Limited, and their families. It is composed of Seychellois Mauritians and Ilois (see note on Ilois under Diego Garcia). Population figures are given in the following table.

	ADULTS			CHILDREN			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
JULY 1964							
Seychellois							14
Mauritians							
Ilois							205
Total	58	54	112			107	219
MAY 1967							
Seychellois	17	3	20			1	21
Mauritians	4	2	6			1	7
Ilois	29	34	63			77	140
Total	50	39	89			79	168
MARCH 1968							
Seychellois	22	-	22				22
Mauritians	8	5	13	3	7	10	23
Ilois	37	28	65	43	30	73	138
Total	67	33	100	46	37	83	183

The population in November 1968 had decreased to 162 (49 men, 31 women and 82 children). The working population in September 1968 was employed as follows :- 1 manager, 1 accountant, 1 dresser, 1 nurse/midwife, 1 senior overseer, 7 overseers, 5 artisans, 40 male labourers and 34 female labourers.

Basic wages and conditions of work are as described for Diego Garcia. The following table shows earnings in October 1968.

Number employed	82
Total basic wages Rs.	2012
Total extras	1508
Total earnings Rs.	3520

The island shop is well stocked and supplies the necessities of life and some simple luxuries. As on the other Chagos islands, there is an increasing demand for wireless sets, guitars and sewing machines.

/ The . . .

The general standard of housing is poor but the labour lines are kept in better condition by the inhabitants and the standard of hygiene is higher than in Peros Banhos.

Well water is used for drinking as well as for cooking and washing and there are only a few small rainwater tanks.

There is an electricity supply on the island (220 volts D.C.).

4. PRODUCTION

All the islands of the atoll are covered with coconuts and in addition four of the Peros Banhos islands (Grande Coquillage, Petite Coquillage, Yeye and Manoel) are worked from Salomon. The labour force is, however, too small to work the islands properly and production is in consequence declining. Production in 1967 was 202 tons but is unlikely to exceed 190 tons in 1968. Annual production in the period 1955-58 averaged 264 tons without the four Peros Banhos islands.

The general condition of the plantations is quite good but extensive thinning and manuring is required. As in Peros Banhos, delay in collecting the nuts leads to a number germinating which reduces the quality of the copra and increases the difficulty of their eventual collection.

The copra is cured by a mixture of sun and hot air drying. Oil is produced from the second grade copra by means of a donkey driven pestle mill. The small number of donkeys on the island makes the continued use of this type of mill difficult.

The plantation buildings are usable but require additional maintenance.

As on the other Chagos islands pigs do well and an attempt is being made to build up an improved herd.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

External communications are by sea and a vessel calls at the island every two to three months.

The only entrance to the lagoon is through a pass to the north-west of the atoll (see para 1 above). Within the lagoon there are several good anchorages in depths of 10 to 12 fathoms and vessels drawing up to 12 feet can anchor about 4 cables off the settlement. There is a small wharf at the settlement with depths of 4 feet alongside. There are two Decaville tracks along the jetty and small trolleys capable of carrying half a ton are used on it for loading.

/ Communication . . .

Communication between the islands is by small boat. There are earth tracks on Boddam Island which are used by Ronkey carts.

There is a wireless transmitter on Boddam Island which is used to maintain a link with Peros Banhos and Diego Garcia. Radio Seychelles can usually be heard.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES

There is a trained dresser on Salomon and also a trained midwife. The eight bed hospital is well kept and has an adequate supply of drugs. The general health on the island is good. Pit latrines are provided for all quarters and refuse is buried. A school is run on the island with about 20 regular pupils. The teacher is untrained and the standard poor.

There is a well kept creche for the children of working mothers at which free milk is distributed.

7. CONCLUSION

The Salomon plantations are suffering from a shortage of labour as are the other Chagos plantations. In consequence production is falling. An extensive programme of thinning and manuring is required and if this is done the plantations should be capable of producing about 400 tons of copra a year.

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THREE BROTHERS

The Three Brothers lie near the western edge of the Great Chagos Bank about 85 miles north-north-eastward of Diego Garcia.

All three islands, North Brother, Middle Brother and South Brother, are covered with coconut palms. Reefs fringe all three islands and surf renders landing difficult except on the eastern coast of Middle Brother which is sheltered by the reef.

A large number of Sooty Terns and Roseate Terns are reported to breed on the islands.



ADMINISTRATOR
BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

10th January, 1969