

CHAPTER XII.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

Roads.
Old roads. THE first map showing roads in the tract of country of which this district forms part is that of Valentyn, which was based on data collected by the Dutch Governor Van den Broecke (1658-64). Two roads are entered on his map—one, a Pādīshāhī or royal road, extending through Burdwan to Midnapore, and the other, a smaller road, which starting from Burdwan, passed through Salimābād and Dhaniākhāli to Hooghly. The former was an important military route, being used by troops in the rebellion of 1696, in the march of Shujā-ud-din to Murshidābād and in the wars of Alī Vardī Khān. With these two exceptions, the district, when ceded to the British in 1765, had no road worthy of the name, but only fair-weather tracks hardly passable in the rains. Bridges were few and far between, and those that existed owed their origin to the generosity and public spirit of some wealthy individual rather than to the Mughal Government. During the next twenty years these tracks were repaired and widened, though roughly and irregularly. From Rennell's Atlas, plate VII (1779), it appears that the most important roads were those connecting Sālkhiā (Howrah) with various places in the interior. One, running northwards along the west bank of the Hooghly to Ambā near Kālnā, passed through bally, Alinagar, Serampore, Ghiretti, Chandernagore, Chinsura, Hooghly, Bāndel, Bānberā, Treboni, Nayaasrāi, Dirga and Inchurā. A second road passed north-west through Chanditalā and Dhaniākhāli, to Salimābād in the Burdwan district: while a third went west and then north-west through Kristonagar and Kājbalhāt to Drwāngauj. Between these main roads lay numerous cross-roads connecting the more important villages, more than a dozen such cross-roads being entered in plates VII and XIX. None of the roads appear to have been metalled.

In May 1830 the following were reported as the principal roads in the district (1) Bāli to Kālnā via Inchurā, (2) the Grand Trunk Road from Hooghly to the north of India via Burdwan (3), the Old Benares road, (4) Ghiretti to Dwārhātā, (5) Burdwan to

Midnapore via Koerganj, (6) Ellipur via Singur to Hooghly, and (7) Hooghly to Bhāstārā via Polbā. The Magistrate reported that these roads were constructed by Government many years before for commercial and military purposes. It is clear that, having made the roads, the Government of the day paid little attention to their maintenance, in spite of numerous complaints. In 1796, for example, the Court of Circuit called the attention of the Governor-General to their wretched state and to the encroachments of amindārs and cultivators on the road-way. In 1815 a similar representation was made to Government by the Superintendent of Police, L. P.; and in February 1830, after an extensive tour through the district, the Magistrate of Hooghly reported that with the exception of the old Benares and Grand Trunk roads, he "encountered nothing deserving the name of a road. Thoroughfares are even frequently entirely obliterated, and I have made my way in succession to several villages over no better path than a ridge through intervening paddy fields." The military authorities were loud in their complaints, the justice of which was admitted by the Magistrate, who in 1837 wrote that he could do nothing without funds. "I am sorry to say that, with the exception of the great lines of communication which are kept up by Government, and which, by the way, are frequently in a wretched state, no provision whatever exists for making or repairing roads or bridges in the interior of the district. There is not a single road in the district which a European vehicle could traverse, while the number passable for hackeries in the rains are lamentably few."

Of the roads mentioned in the list of 1836, the Bāli-Inchurā road was the old Murshidābād road, and the Burdwan-Midnapore road was the old Pādīshāhī road, both shown in Rennell's Atlas. The Old Benares Road was a later addition, being constructed by Government as the most direct route to the Upper Provinces. The work was under the charge of Captain Rankin, who had to face a number of difficulties, e.g., we find him complaining in 1782 of obstruction by the Rāmgarh zamindār and of damage done by ryots, and asking for an order on the "reuter" of Burdwan for Rs. 10,000 and for *perquisites* on the zamindārs of Panchet, Bāhnagar, Burdwan and Hooghly to supply him with coolies; this request was granted by the Board of Revenue. He was in charge at least up to 1797, for in January of that year there is mention of his being very angry with the Darogā of Haripal for not getting him coolies. Lieutenant (afterwards

* Bengal Manuscript Records, Vol. I, Letters 115-16, 854, 840-1, 878, 903.

Major) W. D. Playfair, who was in charge from 1816 to 1828, put down mile-stones and divided the road into 7 or 8 sections, each under a road *sarkar*. The road was then 14 feet wide, but the Military Board recommended that it should be widened to 20 feet. In 1828 the road was made over to the Magistrate, and two years later the then Magistrate, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frederick Halliday, reported to Government the extent to which it had suffered from floods, especially that part of it west of the Dāmodar. By 1849 the troops had ceased to use the road, and it had, at least in the flooded parts, become no better than a fair-weather track. Even three years before this only 32 out of 58 bridges were standing, and their arches were being fast worn away. The dāk bungalows were out of repair, and the furniture in them was being stolen piece by piece or going to decay.

Grand
Trunk
Road.

The road now known as the Grand Trunk Road is that running from Howrah to Burdwan *via* Hooghly; but in the forties and fifties of the last century the name was applied to the road from Calcutta to Burdwan *via* Hooghly towns, which crossed the Bhāgirathi at Paltā Ghat. Still earlier, only the portion which branched north-west from Hooghly to Burdwan was called by this name. Hooghly town was, in fact, a junction, from which one great route ran north-west to Benares, while another road ran north to Kalā and then to Nadiā and Murshidābād along the Ganges.

The history of the present road begins in the early years of the 19th century. In 1804, the river having encroached upon the portion between Secampore and Chandernagore, Mr. R. Blochynden was appointed to survey a new alignment with 500 convicts under an European sergeant. In 1820 the part of the road north-west of Hooghly was described as "very indifferent, and in some places next to impassable, specially west of Pānduā." Its reconstruction was taken in hand several years later; and in 1829 the "new road" was first used by troops in preference to the old Benares road. The Rājā of Burdwan in that year gave Rs. 36,000 for the construction of a bridge across the Kuntā Nullah at Magrā; in the following year the road was metalled between Hooghly and Magrā; and by 1836 it had been extended beyond Burdwan. The work is said to have cost fifty lakhs, and is one of the monuments of Lord William Bentinck, who, it is said, was nicknamed William the Conqueror because parts of the road were metalled with *kankar*!

Murshidābād
road.

The older road to Murshidābād *via* Inchurā and Kālnā was also much used by troops and travellers going to Nadiā, Murshidābād and Monghyr. It was apparently unbridged at first, but

in 1828 Prān Krishna Haldār, zamīndār of Jagdispur, gave Rs. 13,000 for a *pecca* bridge over the Saraswati at Tribonī. Prān Krishna Haldār was rewarded for his liberality by the Governor-General allowing him to post 6 sepoyas as sentries at the gates of his house. A suspension bridge was also constructed at Nayānari from money raised by public subscriptions; but both bridges were swept away by a flood in August 1834, and it was not till 1839 that the Court of Directors permitted the surplus of the Ferry Fund to be expended in reconstructing them.

Regarding the road from Hooghly to Dhaniākhali, Mr. Teyabee writes:—"A very special interest attaches to this road, as it was mainly constructed by funds raised by public subscription, and because in the supervision of the expenditure of those funds by a committee of Indian gentlemen we have the germ of the Road Cess Committee and of the Local Self-Government scheme, which was brought to maturity some 50 years afterwards." The amount raised was between Rs. 7,000 and Rs. 8,000, and work was begun in 1838, the Magistrate appointing "Pooran Baba, zamīndār of Makhālpore, Chāker Ram Singh of Dharampore, and Roy Radhagobinda Singh of Hatisāla, to superintend this great public work, to see that the money of the subscribers is well laid out, and to settle all disputes which may arise regarding land."

Outside municipal areas the management of the public roads rests with the District Board, which provides the funds for their maintenance except in the case of two Provincial roads which are maintained from the Provincial Fund under the supervision of the Engineer of the District Board. These Provincial roads are (1) the new Grand Trunk Road from Uttarpārā to Paltā Ghat, 12 miles $5\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs long. Its average width is 35 feet, of which 8 feet are metalled with stone, except within urban areas, where the metalling is 13 feet wide; it crosses the Dānkuni drainage channel by a small bridge. This is an old road shown in Rennell's Atlas, slightly altered at places. (2) The old Grand Trunk Road from Paltā Ghat, *via* Hooghly and Pānduā to Burdwan, with a length of 33 miles within this district, while 3 miles pass through the territory of French Chandernagore. It has a width of 24 feet, of which 8 feet are metalled with stone and laterite; it is carried over the Saraswati at Sātgaon and the Kuntā at Magrā by iron bridges. This is the old road from Ghiretti to Benares.

The District Board roads are grouped under three heads, viz., metalled, unmetalled and village roads. In 1908 the District Board had under its direct control 512 miles of road, of which



Dhaniā-
khali road.

Provincial
roads.

District
Board
Roads.

nearly 80 miles were metalled. Twenty roads were partially metalled or metalled throughout, nine being metalled throughout. Most of the latter are short in length, the principal being the Pānduā-Kālā road (13 miles), the Uttarparā-Kalipur road (4½ miles), and the Arāmbāgh-Nayāsarai road (6 miles). The metalling is usually 8 feet wide, and consists of stone, brick *jadua*, or both. The smaller roads are usually 10 to 14 feet wide and the larger roads 14 to 20 feet; but the width rises to 25 feet in the case of old roads like the Benares and Nagpur roads, while the metalled road from Chanditūlā to Jansī (1 mile 2½ furlongs) is 30 feet wide. The metalling is expensive, repairs alone costing, in 1907-08, Rs. 446 per mile as against Rs. 45 in the case of unmetalled roads.

The District Board roads converge chiefly on the through roads, such as the Grand Trunk, Old Benares and Burdwan-Midnapore roads, and on the riparian towns on the Hooghly, (which are served by the East Indian Railway), or act as feeder roads to the branch and light railways. The best roads are the Grand Trunk Road and those joining them, which, even where unmetalled, admit of wheeled traffic throughout the rains. The roads in thānas Goghāt are also in good condition owing to the kankariferous soil, and cost comparatively little to keep up. Those in the interior of the Sadar and Serampore subdivisions are much cut up by water channels, and, being generally unmetalled, with a surface composed of sticky earth, are hardly passable during the rains. The worst roads, however, are those lying in thānas Arāmbāgh and Khānākul, which are not only intersected by numerous channels, but also exposed to the annual floods of the Dāmodar. Hence, for half the year, wheeled traffic is next to impossible; the roads are fewer in number than elsewhere; and their upkeep is more costly.

The principal District Board roads arranged according to subdivisions are as follows. In the Sadar subdivision:— (1) Chinsura to Khānpur *via* Dhaniākhālī, with a length of 24½ miles, of which 11½ miles are metalled, with three bridges over the Saraswati, the Kuntī and the Ghīā. This is the old road of 1838. (2) Hooghly to Majnan, 18½ miles, with a bridge over the Saraswati and two bridges over the Kuntī. (3) Chaku Singh's road, from the Grand Trunk Road at Magrā to Khānpur, 21½ miles, with three bridges, of which two are built over the Kantul and the Ghīā. (4) Pānduā to Kālā *via* Inchurā, 13 miles, metalled throughout, with a masonry bridge, over the Behulā and a suspension bridge over the Bagul. (5) Boinchī to

Dagherā *via* Dhaniākhālī, 18½ miles, with 5 bridges. (6) Dhaniākhālī to Haripāl in Serampore, 9½ miles, of which 7 miles are metalled, with a masonry bridge over the Kānā Nadī. (7) Chandernagore to Bholā, 12 miles, with a masonry bridge on to Saraswati. (8) Hooghly to Sātgaon, 3½ miles. (9) Pānduā to Kalyānpur, nearly 8 miles. (10) Rāmuāthpur to Harāl, 9½ miles. (11) Inchurā to Balāgarh, 6 miles. (12) Damurdā to Balāgarh, 1 mile. (13) Tribeni to Guptipārā, 16½ miles, with an iron suspension bridge at Nayāsarai. This road is a part of the old Murshidābād road *via* Inchurā. (14) Sheyā to Alāsin, *via* Kalipārā, 8 miles.

In the Serampore subdivision:—(15) Baidyabātī to Tārakeswar, 21½ miles, of which 10 miles are metalled, with 5 masonry bridges, of which one is over the Kānā Dāmodar. (16) Nabagrām to Charpur, 13½ miles, with 5 masonry bridges. (17) Konnagar to Kisterāmpur, 9½ miles, with one masonry bridge. (18) Old Benares road from Devipārā to Khatul, lying partly in the Arāmbāgh subdivision, with a length of nearly 60 miles, of which only 4½ miles are metalled; it has one wooden, one brick and one light iron bridge. West of the Dāmodar, the 23rd mile is very muddy, while from the 35th to the 39th mile, the road is a mere track, being washed away every year by the Dāmodar floods. (19) (20) Bhadreswar to Nasibpur, and Nasibpur to Janāi, 13 miles. (21) Dirghanga to Singur, 6½ miles, with a light iron bridge and a small arched bridge. (22) Gaugādharpur to Nawābpur, 8½ miles. (23) Singur station to Masāt, 6½ miles, with a wooden bridge. (24) Gaja to Rājbalhāt *via* Dwarhātā, 7½ miles, with three bridges including a timber bridge over the Kānā Dāmodar and an iron bridge over the Rānāband Khāl. (25) Charpur to Sitāpur, 7½ miles, with a light iron bridge over the Charigāchi Khāl. (26) Masāt to Dhitpur (Howrah boundary), 11 miles.

In the Arāmbāgh subdivision the principal roads are (27) Arāmbāgh to Nayāsarai (Burdwan boundary), 6 miles, metalled throughout, with two arched bridges; in the rains this is the only passable road to Burdwan. (28) Arāmbāgh to Udrājpur 7½ miles. (29) Arāmbāgh to Tetalmāri, 17 miles, with a masonry bridge; this is the old Nagpur road. (30) Pundait to Mandali (Midnapore boundary), 15½ miles. This is the old Midnapore-Burdwan road. (31) Arāmbāgh to Arandi, 6½ miles. (32) Māyāpur to Charpur *via* Khānākul, 16½ miles; the greater portion of this road is under water during the rains. (33) Bigdā to Bālī Hāt, 6½ miles. (34) Goghāt to Kumārganj, 7½ miles, with a timber bridge over the Raghubātī Jalla. (35) Badārganj to Subirchak, 7 miles.

The village roads, which are under the Local Boards, are fair-weather roads intended for communication between important villages and markets. Several of them in the Arāmbāgh and Serampore subdivisions are 5 to 8 miles in length, are provided with culverts, and have an average width of 10 to 12 feet. They are thus nearly equal in importance to the smaller District Board roads. In 1908 there were 190 village roads under the Hooghly Local Board, 75 under the Serampore Local Board and 51 under the Arāmbāgh Local Board—in all 316, with a total mileage of some 600 miles. The average cost of repairs in 1907-08 was Rs. 15 per mile.

There is a circuit-house at Hooghly, formerly the residence of the Judge-Magistrate, Mr. D. C. Smyth, which was purchased by Government for Rs. 16,000 in 1856. The second storey of the Serampore subdivisional court is used as an inspection bungalow. The District Board has inspection bungalows at the following places:—in the Sadar subdivision at Inchūrā, Pānduā, Magrā (attached to the post-office bungalow) and Dhaniākhālī; in the Serampore subdivision at Haripāl, Dwarhātā and Tārakeswar; in the Arāmbāgh subdivision at Arāmbāgh, Māyāpur, Parsurā, Khānākul, Kumārpukhur, Kumārganj, Syāmbavat and Sarul Chanmatha (a hut). The land on which the Tārakeswar inspection bungalow was built was given free of cost by the Mahant of the temple. The more important railway stations, such as Serampore, Sheorāphulī, Chandernagore, Bāndel, Pānduā, and Tārakeswar, have waiting rooms for passengers.

Until comparatively recent times roads were few in number, except in thāna Goghāt, and generally only passable after the rains. Horses were rare, being used only by Musalmāns or up-country men. Elephants were still rarer, being only occasionally brought down from Northern India by Musalmān Governors or the chief zamīndārs. Most travellers went on foot, but the well-to-do used *sukhāns*, i.e., crescent-shaped litters covered with camlet or scarlet cloth, and borne on poles, to which they were attached by iron hooks; they resembled the modern *chaturdālā*, in which brides and bridegrooms are now carried in the mofussil. They were eventually replaced by *palkis* or palanquins carried by bearers chiefly Oriyas or Bagdis. *Palkis* were at one time regarded as insignia of rank, e.g., in the English factory at Hooghly one palanquin was allowed for the Chief and another for the second Factor, while in subordinate factories only one palanquin was allowed, and that was reserved for the Chief. We are further told that Mirshid Kuli Khan, Nawāb of Bengal, forbade the

use of *palkis* by Hindu zamīndārs.* Bullock carts were also used by respectable people, and a description of the English Governor's procession to the English garden, 2 miles north of Hooghly, states that the members of the Council followed him in large coaches drawn by oxen. Respectable ladies were carried in palanquins or covered bullock carts. Goods were brought to the towns or markets by coolies or pack-bullocks. All these kinds of conveyances have survived to the present day, but have been supplemented, and in towns largely replaced, by the familiar *thika gāri* and bicycle.

The river Hooghly has been from time immemorial a highway for the commerce of Western Bengal. The Damodar and Rupnārāyan are also waterways of importance, while in the rains almost all the creeks and channels are able to carry boats of at least 10 maunds burden. Hence, during these months, when most of the roads become impassable, boats are constantly in use.

Of the numerous rivers and creeks (*khāls*) bounding or intersecting the district, the following are the most important:— (1) the Hooghly, navigable by boats and ordinary river steamers throughout its length along the district, i.e., 50 miles; (2) the Damodar (25 miles), navigable by boats up to 1,000 maunds in the rains; (3) the Rupnārāyan, navigable, from Bandar downwards to Rāntchak (6 miles), by river steamers in the rains and by boats of 20 maunds at other times of the year; (4) the Dwarakeswar and Dhalchisor, 20 miles down to Bandar, navigable by boats of 500 maunds in the rains; (5) the Behulā Khāl, 15 miles, by boats of 200 maunds in the rains; (6) the Kuntī Khāl or Kāśā Nadi, 40 miles, by small boats for about 20 miles up to its junction with the Ghā, and by large boats of 500 maunds throughout its course in the rains; (7) the Saraswati, 22 miles, by boats of 100 maunds in the rains; (8) the Dānkuni drainage channel by boats of 20 maunds; (9) the Bally Khāl, 8 miles, by boats of 10 maunds in the dry season and of 50 maunds in the rains; (10) the Mundeswarī or Kāśā Dwarakeswar, from Bandar northwards for 10 miles, by boats of 100 maunds in the rains.

The country boats now in use along the rivers and streams are much the same as they have been for centuries past.

Among them may be mentioned budgerows or "green boats," i.e., flat-bottomed boats with a mast and low-roofed cabin; *bhārs* or country boats of light draught, with broad bows suitable for carrying goods, and *bānūls* or smaller *pānūs*, i.e., passenger

* *Riyasat-Salāhī*, translated by Maulavi Abdus Salam (1904), p. 258.



WATER
COMMUNIC-
ATIONS.

RIVERS
AND
KHALS.

COUNTRY
BOATS.

boats with a cabin. The most common boats, however, are the *dingi* and *donga*, which have been in use from time immemorial both for fishing and for carrying passengers and goods. *Dongas* or dug-outs are scooped out from a single tree-trunk, e.g., mango, *sāl* tree, cotton or palm. They have a capacity of 3 to 20 maunds, and are managed by one or two men. They may be as large as 30 feet long and 2½ feet broad, and can carry, if necessary, more than 15 men. The *dingi* is 25 or 30 feet by 4 feet, with an arched roof of matting in the middle and a bamboo mast. It is usually managed by two men, one at the bow and the other at the stern, and its average burthen is 13 to 15 maunds. These small boats ply in the interior during the rains and for several months after the rains, until the channels dry up. In times of flood temporary rafts, made of three or four plantain stems, are used for passing over streams.

European
vessels.

Formerly ships, sloops and pinnaces ascended the river Hooghly as far up as Sitgaon and Hooghly, and mention is also made of bigger vessels like men-of-war coming up to Hooghly and Chandernagore. As early as 1828 a line of steamers ran daily between Hooghly and Calcutta, carrying the mail and calling at Chinsura, Chandernagore, etc. At present there is a daily service of steamers, belonging to the Calcutta Steam Navigation Company, between Hátkhola Ghát, Calcutta and Káluá in Burdwan. The steamers are stern-wheelers of light draught, and carry passengers and smaller goods. They leave on week-days, touching at Uttarpará, Serampore, Sheoráphuli, Bhadreswar, Chandernagore, Chinsura, Hooghly, Bânaberiá, Tribeni, Sije, Jirel, Sripur, Semrá and Guptipará on the west bank. This line is a convenient one for passengers for Tribeni and places further up, as they are situated at some distance from the East Indian Railway, which from Magrá junction diverges away from the river. On Sundays a steamer of the same company leaves Mir Bahar Ghát (Calcutta) direct for Hooghly, starting at noon and returning before dusk. Another line of steamers runs from the Armenian Ghát (Calcutta) to Rántchak in the Midnapore district; opposite the point where the boundaries of the Hooghly and Howrah districts meet. This is the most convenient way of reaching Khánakul and Krishnagar. During the summer and the latter part of winter, these steamers stop at Teyális Ghát, a mile below Rántchak. In the rains small steamers go up to Ghátál; touching at Bandar in this district.

Ferries.

There are a number of ferries across the Hooghly, most of which belong to the zamindáras and the municipalities. Two only have been made over to the District Board of Hooghly, viz.,

that at Peltá Ghát and that at Telinipará, of which the first is valuable, having an average rental of more than three thousand rupees. It has four country boats for passengers and two for cattle; while the second has a green boat and two ordinary country boats for passengers and cattle. On the Old Benares road there is a ferry at Parsurá across the Dámodar, which plies only in the rains. Further along this road there are ferries at Balarámpur, at Harinkholá and Sodpur, where it crosses the Munsewari, and at Haraditya on the *khál* of the same name. The Asádkholá ferry on the Burdwan-Midnapore road, though declared a public ferry, has not been farmed out, as the stream is generally fordable in all seasons. The following is a list showing municipal ferries and the proportions in which the proceeds are divided:—Hooghly Bazar and Babuganj (3ths to Hooghly and 3ths to Naiháti); Nimaitálá (half to Baidyabáti and half to Government); Kauhoidiwántalá, Court and Jagannáth Ghát (half to Serampore and half to Government); and Uttarpará (half to Uttarpará and half to Government).

The main line of the East Indian Railway enters the district at Uttarpará, crossing the Bally Khál by a large iron bridge, and leaves it a little beyond Boinchi. It has a length of about 41 miles in the district, and in this length there are 19 stations. There are also 2 branch lines, viz., from Sheoráphuli to Tárakeswar (22 miles) and from Bándel to Naiháti (3 miles); while another large branch from Bándel to Kátwá is under construction. The Bengal Provincial Railway from Tribeni to Tárakeswar, 33 miles long, is practically a feeder to the East Indian Railway line, which it crosses at Magrá junction. There are also 2 small lines in the south, viz., the Howrah-Shiákhála Light Railway and the extension of the Howrah-Amrá Light Railway from Bargáchhiá to Chámpádánga.

The East Indian Railway line from Howrah to Hooghly was opened for passenger traffic on 15th August 1854, and was extended to Pánduá a fortnight later, and to Rániganj in February of the following year. Among the subsequent additions to the line, the following may be mentioned:—(1) The opening of a branch line to Tárakeswar, a noted place of pilgrimage. The line was constructed by private enterprise and handed over to the East Indian Railway to work on the 1st January 1855. (2) The construction of a branch line to Naiháti (3 miles) on the Eastern Bengal State Railway over the Jubilee bridge at Hooghly. This great bridge, as yet the only permanent bridge over the Hooghly, has a length between abutments of 1,200 feet and is so called because it was opened by the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, in

Rail-
ways.

East
Indian
Railway.

the Jubilee year, 1887. (3) The construction of the Hooghly-Kātwā branch, 66 miles long, which is now in progress.

Bengal
Provincial
Railway.

The Bengal Provincial Railway line, on the 2 feet 6 inches gauge, was built by a company formed through the exertions of Mr. A. L. Ray. The first section from Tāraleswar to Basū (12.5 miles) was opened to traffic in 1894, the second section from Basū to Magrā (18.12 miles) in 1895, and the third section from Magrā to Tribeni (2.15 miles) in 1904. This railway line is financed and managed by Indians. There are altogether 16 stations on it, and through communication with Calcutta is afforded by a jetty with a gangway at Tribeni, which connects the line with the steamers of the Calcutta Steam Navigation Company. The working of the line is carried on under the Bengal Tramways Act of 1883 and is governed by two contracts, one relating to the main line concluded with the District Board of Hooghly in 1890, and the other concluded with the Secretary of State for India in 1904, by which a free grant of land was given for the Tribeni extension under certain conditions.

Light
railways.

The Howrah-Shiakhālā and a branch of the Howrah-Amā light railways traverse thānas Chanditalā and Kristānagar in the Serampore subdivision. Both are on the 2-feet gauge and start from Howrah. The line to Shiakhālā is 19 miles long, of which more than 10 miles are in this district; there is also a branch line with a length of 3 miles from Jenai to Chanditalā. This line was opened up to Chanditalā in August 1897, and up to Shiakhālā in November of the same year. The Hooghly District Board has given the company the use of its roads for the line and guaranteed interest of 4 per cent. on the capital; in return for these concessions it receives half the net profits above 4 per cent. On the Howrah-Amā line there is a branch from Bargāchhia station to Chāmpādāngā on the Dāmedār, which was opened in 1908. Both these light railways are under the management of Messrs. Martin and Company.

Post
offices.

In 1907-08 there were in this district 341½ miles of postal communication and 105 post offices, or one post office for every 11 miles. The number of postal articles delivered was 3,532,724, viz., 2,093,260 post cards, 1,136,018 letters, 118,872 packets, 169,338 newspapers and 15,236 parcels. The value of money orders issued was Rs. 14,69,885 and nearly equalled that of money orders paid, viz., Rs. 15,62,320, and there were 15,785 Savings Bank accounts deposits, the amount deposited being Rs. 11,33,340.

Tele-
graph
offices.

In the first quarter of the 19th century an experimental semaphore telegraph system was tried between Calcutta and Chunar. The experiment proved a failure and was abandoned

before 1830, in which year some of the semaphore towers were utilised for the Trigonometrical Survey of India. In this district five of them still survive, situated at Nālikul, Dilakhas, Hyātpur, Mohārakpur and Navāsan. In 1907-08, besides the general telegraph office at Serampore, there were five postal telegraph offices, viz., at Chinsurā, Hooghly, Magrā, Chandernāgore and Tāraleswar, which issued 6,867 messages.