

THE STREET LETTER BOXES OF JAMAICA

by **Bob Swarbrick (Edited by Steve Jarvis)**

Some thirty years ago, Tom Foster produced a monograph entitled "The Street Letter Boxes Of Jamaica". This was an attempt to bring order from chaos, and bearing in mind that photocopying was not available to the majority of us, Tom relied heavily on the artistic skills of fellow collectors.

With this in mind, it would, perhaps be useful, to consider an up-date , and to correct some mistakes which have crept in over the years. Using the illustrations and numbering to facilitate identification, may I invite comments from fellow Jamaican collectors in the hope that we can up-date this facet of Postal History. My thanks to Bill Atmore and Derek Sutcliffe for contributing to this initial listing.

Kingston

SLB1	Foster description:
	The first mark was a metal "TRD", which had a single-lined diamond frame with 23mm sides enclosing the legend "STREET LETTER BOX / JAMAICA" in three lines of slightly seriffed capital letters 21mm high. Undated, struck in black ink and, in its last year of use, battered and misshapen, it was intended to be struck only on the envelope or wrapper, leaving the adhesives to be cancelled by one of the Kingston date stamps. In practice this rarely occurred. Although uncommon on cover, contemporary stamps can very often be found bearing parts of this postmark and it is not so rare as is often stated

I have little to add to Tom's comments. I have both the EKD & LKD in my collection.

	In black:
EKD:	8 May 1889 {Swarbrick}
LKD:	2 April 1892 {Swarbrick}

SLB2 & 2A

Tom records two similar handstamps differing only insomuch as the first had a small dot before and after the words "Street Letter Box".

Here I must disagree with the details in the article. In spite of 50 years diligent searching I have never seen a copy of type 2! To suggest that four identical handstamps exist, and that their use was concurrent with the six similar handstamps listed as SLB 2a, making 10 virtually identical date stamps is, to say the least, somewhat implausible. I would like to suggest that, in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, we delete type 2, and reclassify type 2A as type 2. Having said that, there is some evidence that a second date stamp could exist, in that I have several examples which show a short radial line after the word "Box". This has been noted on several stamps with varying dates which would, I suggest, precludes a speck of dirt or the like. It is evident on examples dated July 1892, to May 1897. The use of the various slugs used to denote time of posting would seem to follow the accepted practice, and the number allocated to the clerk. However, the reason that not all index letters appear to have been utilized is unclear.

SLB2 (was SLB2A)	Adapted Foster description:
	Type SLB2 is a postmark of the Double Circle classification, which has the normal double-circle format with a diameter of 26mm and about 1mm between the circles. The date is in two unit plugs reading "month-day" and "year" in two lines with an index figure and letter above it, all in sans-serif type 2 mm high. The legend at the top reads STREET LETTER BOX and at the bottom KINGSTON JAMAICA in sans-serif caps 3 mm high, with small dots separating the two legends
SLB2A	Swarbrick description
	As above but short radial line after the word "Box"

My EKD is 11th. July 1892, and my LKD 1st. May 1897.

Bill Atmore reports blue strikes in Nov 1893.

Index	1	2	3	4	5
EKD:	2 JUL 1892{Atmore}	9 AUG 1892{Atmore}	16 March 1893{Foster}	15 April 1892{Foster}	15 Feb 1895{Foster}
LKD:	28 Sept 1896{Foster}	6 November 1896	25 Dec 1897{Foster}	14 November 1897{Foster}	27 June 1896 {Swarbrick}
In black:					
{Foster}	C E F H I K L M	C E I K M O Y	A C E F I J K M Q T	C E H I K M O U	C I M
{Swarbrick}			A C		

{Atmore}	A C E F H I K M	C I K	C E I K M Q	C E F H K M	C I M
{Sutcliffe}	H K M	E F H I K M Q	F H I M	C	C M
In blue	K {Foster}			4K {Foster} H K {Atmore}	

SLB3

	Foster description:
	Type SLB3 closely resembles Type SLB2a in the size of the various units and in overall diameter, but it has dots at the sides and 1½ mm between the circles, as in Type SLB2. The index combination above the date is replaced by a single central index letter ranging from A-Z; it is only known struck in black. The author considers that only a single dater of this type existed, and it would appear to have been issued at a later-date than the previous two types

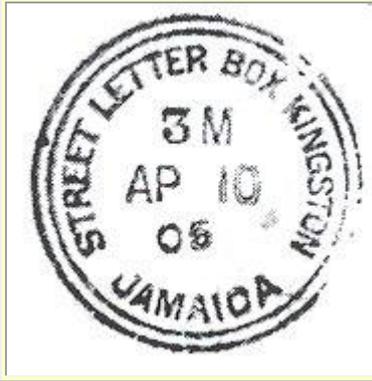
Little to add, except that, in usage, the side "dots" get very weak and examples of late usage could easily be thought to have no dots.

My listing of known index letters is A C E F I K L M O Q & T. My EKD is Oct.28th. 1897 & my LKD Aug.13th. 1902.

Datestamp	
EKD:	28 October 1897 {Swarbrick}
LKD:	13 August 1902 {Swarbrick & Atmore}
In black:	A C E F I K L M O & T {Swarbrick}

SLB4

SLB4	Foster description:
	Type SLB4 is another double-circle date stamp of 28mm diameter, with 1½ mm between the circles. It has the legend STREET LETTER BOX KINGSTON around the top and JAMAICA at the bottom in small square capitals about 2 mm high; it is without separating dots at the sides. There is an index combination above the date in tall upright 3mm units, the figure being heavily seriffed. Six identical daters of this type were issued distinguished by the fixed figures 1 - 6, the index letters ranging from A - Z. These stamps are, found in either black or blue
SLB4A	



Examples exist in which replacement "year" plugs have been inserted in slightly smaller figures

Another mystery! I have never seen an example of any of the date stamps 1 & 2, nor 4,5 & 6. Do they, in fact exist? All the examples of this mark I have seen are all with the prefix "3". I have examples 3A 3B 3E 3F 3J 3L & 3M. In addition, I have an example with the letter K inverted, but the figure 3 as normal. I feel I must question the existence of six hand stamps as suggested in the article, but I note two sizes of year. My EKD is Sept. 1902, and the date slugs are large. Their use seems to have continued until Jan. 1905 when it is noted that small sized slugs came into use, possibly due to the loss of the original ones, as by July 1907 the large type were back in use. My LKD is April 27th. 1907. Bill Atmore reports blue strikes from 26 Nov 03 to 19 Dec 03

Index	3
EKD:	18 Aug. 1902 {Atmore}
LKD:	April 27th. 1907 {Swarbrick}
In black:	A B E F J L M, K inverted {Swarbrick} E reversed, K O {Atmore} K O R {Sutcliffe}
In blue :	A F K {Atmore}

SLB5

	Foster description
	<p>Type SLB5 is very similar in format to SLB4, but with an overall diameter of 27½ mm and with 1 mm between the circles. The lettering is 2½ mm high, tall and slender, but the date units and index combinations are exactly as in Type SLB4. There are, however, dots at either side. In all probability a set of these daters was issued, but only one has been recorded, struck in black. The illustration M18 in 'Nicholson' is incorrect, and should be disregarded</p>

Here, I disagree with the illustration. All my examples show dots either side of the word "Jamaica", therefore, it is the illustration which is in error, as the text states that the dots exist. My EKD is Aug.15th. 1907, and my LKD July 5th. 1910. and I have the following index letters. B, C, E, F, J, & O.

Datestamp	Index 3
EKD:	15Aug 1907 {Swarbrick}
LKD:	10 Sept 1910 {Atmore}
In black:	B C E F J & O {Swarbrick} B reversed {Atmore}

SLB6

	Foster description
	<p>The next dater closely resembles SLB4 with the same diameter and distance between the circles. The lettering is similar to that of SLB5 but is narrower and closer together, with a period after the word "BOX" but without the dots at the sides. A single central index letter above the date ranges from A-Z, but this and the date are in smaller squarer type 2½mm high Probably only one stamp of this type existed, and it is known, only in black</p>

Although of somewhat similar dimensions to the previous two types, it is probable that it was of different issue. There are no stops before or after "Jamaica", but there is now a stop, or colon, after "Box". My EKD is 30th. September 1910 and my LKD Nov.29th. 1919. In this series, the PostOffice has reverted to the single index letter, and I can record the following B, E, F, I, J, & O. In addition, I have an example without any index letter.

EKD:	19. Sept 1910 {Atmore}
LKD:	4 Aug 1922{Atmore}
In black:	None B E F I J O {Swarbrick} B reversed {Atmore}

In putting together this resume of my holding of the "Street Letter Box" postmarks, I offer it to fellow members in the hope that we can extend our knowledge. It would be nice to narrow the gaps between the EKD & the LKD to attempt to find out when the actual date-stamp was introduced. It would also be interesting to identify any additional index letters and to hear of any theories as to why not all letters appear to have been used.

I have not included the Montego Bay or Port Antonio hand stamps in this study, as they were adequately covered in the monograph, but should anything further come to light, I am certain I, together with fellow members who read this will be most interested to record anything useful.