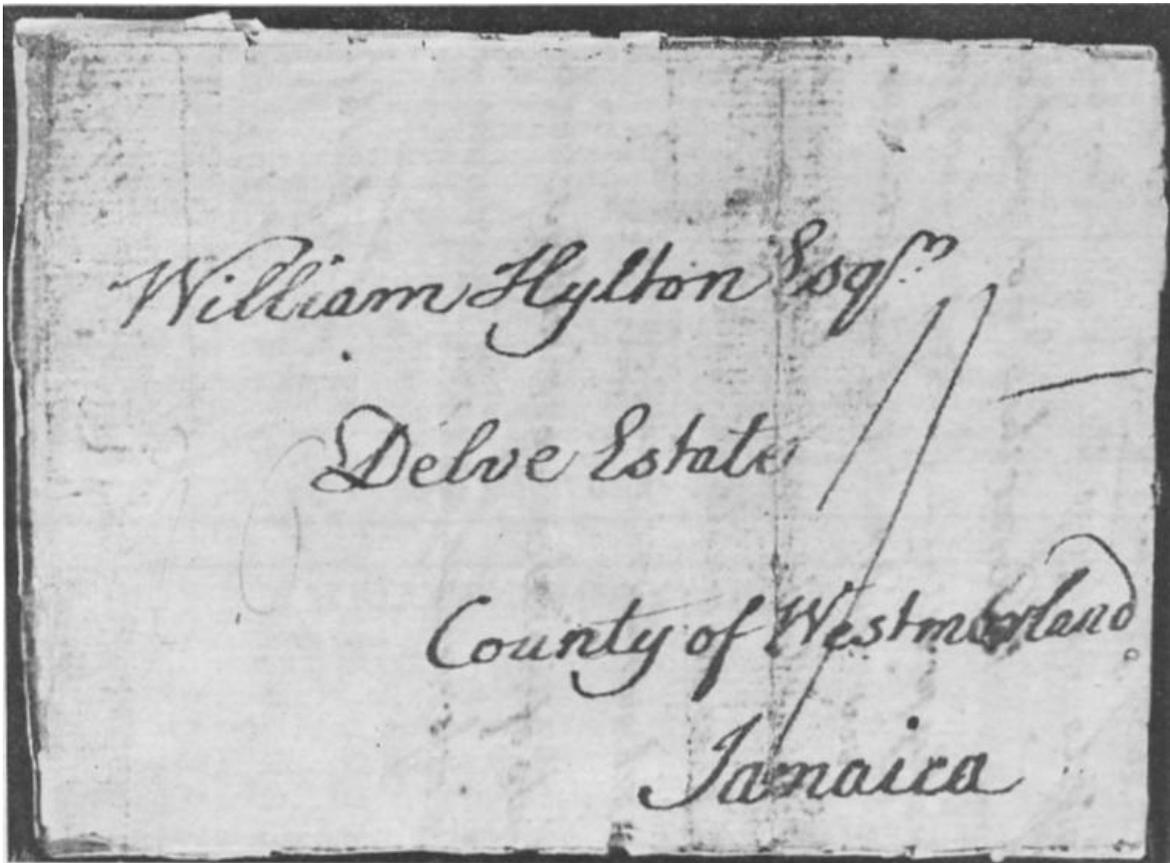


Delve-ing into History

By Thomas Foster



Jamaica is studded with small villages and settlements that have their origin in the plantations of yesteryear, but it is difficult to find philatelic evidence substantiating a direct link between such an estate and a settlement of today equipped with postal facilities.

Delve was a very old sugar plantation located on the western edge of what is known as the Westmorland 'Sugar Bowl', a district of large plantations now mainly owned by the West Indian Sugar Corporation based on its factory at nearby Frome. For a long time, Delve was the property of the Hylton family but after emancipation and the accompanying slump in trade, the estate was split into small peasant holdings which now form the settlement of Delveland (init. Delve Land), where a postal agency opened on March 29th 1952.

This letter, dated October 20th 1789, is from William Hilton (no relation ?) of Newcastle on Tyne to William Hylton* of Delve Estate, the writer being a genealogist engaged by the owner in trying to trace his claim to the defunct baronetcy, Hilton of Hilton Castle in County Durham.

There is no postal mark of origin but it was received in London on November 4th with 1/- postage charged and sent by private ship to Jamaica. Letters carried by the Jamaica inland post at this time seldom bore postal markings and this is no exception but there is a charge of 10d, faintly inscribed in red ink on the left obverse, which would have been the correct prepaid rate in local currency on a ship letter landed at Kingston and sent to Savannah La Mar, the chief town and post office of Westmorland, where it would have been collected by the addressee

* *William Hylton*, 1749-1857, of Delve, Westmorland and Glebe Chateau Pen in St. Andrew.