

The 'Birmingham' Postmarks of Jamaica

By Thomas Foster

The datestamps of this group were issued to certain departments of the General Post Office in Kingston, some of the older Post Town offices and most of the new Postal Agencies opened between mid-1939 and 1948. Generally speaking, the majority are quite common but some are scarce and examples of others are completely unknown. In addition, certain daters are surrounded by mystery and this always tends to make things much more interesting.

The name, 'Birmingham', by which this type of postmark is known, was derived from a phrase which first appeared in the local Jamaica Philatelist of 1939, which stated that "The new handstamps are very similar in design to those used in England, from Birmingham, for instance". They were originally intended to be a new general issue postmark replacing and supplementing the then current 'double-circle' datestamps used by the older offices, many of which were quickly deteriorating and urgently needing replacement. They were also to be the first definitive daters issued to the newly-opened postal agencies in the rapidly expanding postal service.

The new postmarks had not been in use for long before they, too, started wearing badly and many offices had to revert to using the old double-circle daters, or received the new style 'oval' markings, the 'New Birmingham' types and the modern 'single-circle' items. In addition, the ever-increasing revenue from stamp collectors requiring fine used stamps had to be considered and complaints had already been received by the Colonial Office and the Crown Agents from commercial philately regarding the near impossibility of finding stamps in such a saleable condition. This matter, possibly one of the few occasions when government had taken any interest in the wishes of the collector, was eventually to lead to the emergence of the 'New Birmingham' daters with their side bars which produced a far bigger percentage of good copies, especially on the lucrative first day covers.

The asterisk, day, month and year 'plugs' which make up the centre portion of the postmark are often found inverted, transposed or missing completely. During the war years, post office supplies from the United Kingdom became increasingly difficult to obtain and it was impossible to replace losses of plugs. Consequently, many of these postmarks appear without a year plug during this period and it is difficult to date certain offices with any degree of exactness. Whilst these varieties are interesting to the philatelist, they are of little value in providing useful information but they are noted when seen to occur.

At one time, it was thought that only one datestamp of this group had been issued to any one office, with the exception of Whitfield Town, but intensive research and study during the past few years has brought to light several interesting and previously unknown facts which disprove this theory.

It can now be shown that certain offices that were issued with this postmark in the early years of its use, were issued with a second datestamp of the same type in later years. Investigations into this matter are probably still incomplete but, at the moment, it is sufficient to say that Allman Town, Brown's Town, Kellits and Kingston had two daters each of type B1.

These duplications can usually be distinguished by differences in styles of lettering and the length of the spacer bars at the sides. The most distinctive are the Kellits daters in which the spelling of the office name differs. It is possible that examples of similar duplication exist from other towns and the author would be grateful if discoveries of this nature were brought to his attention as soon as they are noticed.

The various departments of the G.P.O., with their large postal traffic, were responsible for other duplications and several had more than one datestamp of the same type. Certain departmental daters of this group will also be cross listed in other sections of the main work as and when they appear and more detailed

information will usually be found in the section concerned, as they are included here only for the benefit of specialists who like to collect each group of postmarks in its entirety.

All items listed are struck in black ink unless otherwise stated. Where a Postal Agency had been using a Temporary Rubber Datestamp before changing over to a "Birmingham" type, early strikes of the latter can be found in purple ink. These items are of extreme interest and are well worth a place in a specialised collection of Jamaican postmarks despite the derogatory remarks which are often made by some philatelists regarding coloured postal markings.

Proof and courtesy strikes of certain daters in this group are known struck on sheets of paper in purple ink. Where these proof strikes exist, the mark + has been placed after the date of issue. Whilst the dates struck in these proofs are of interest, they are not necessarily the correct dates of issue of those particular daters and in many examples, the dates of these strikes are prior to the official dates of receipt of the handstamp.

All the 'Birmingham' postmarks, with the possible exception of the 'B2', 'B2a' and 'B3' types, were manufactured in this country and sent out to Jamaica. The author is of the opinion that the three exceptions were manufactured locally in imitation of the normal type, thus accounting for the lack of the colonial name on each item.

Possibly the most interesting aspect of this group is the known fact that several daters, although received at the Supply Department from England, were never put into use. In at least one case, that of Top Hill, when that office eventually received its 'Birmingham', it was one of the locally-produced types and not the original, 'B1', sent out to Jamaica. It was one of these unused daters which was later converted into the abnormal Whitfield Town type, 'B3'. Under strong magnification in later stages of the particular postmark, it is possible to make out traces of palimpsest lettering where the spacer bar should have been.

In the lists which follow, all the available information in the hands of the author is given for each dater. The dates of issue are those supplied by the Post Office Headquarters in Jamaica and where no date of issue is known, the last known date of the preceding datestamp is given. The Post Office Record Books in this country could possibly be of great interest here, if and when they become available for this period.

The earliest known date (e.k.d.) and latest known date (l.k.d.) of each dater is given together with all known varieties. Where a dater is still in current use, the letter "c" replaces the l.k.d. The author would be pleased to receive any updating or additional information regarding these postmarks.

Variety Notations..

The bracketed numerals after the dates of use in the tables indicate that the following varieties exist:—

1. Without year plug.
2. With day and month plugs transposed.
3. Without asterisk.
4. Without asterisk and with entire date inverted.
5. With year plug inverted.
6. With asterisk and year plug transposed.
7. With day plug inserted in manuscript.
8. With day and month line inverted as a whole.
9. With entire central portion inverted as a whole.
10. With month plug inverted.

NOTE. Where + appears against a date of issue, proofs struck by courtesy in purple on sheets of paper are known to exist. Such proofs are not necessarily correctly dated for the day of issue of the handstamps.

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Type B1 consists of two spaced concentric circles with an external diameter of 26½ mm. The name of the office or agency is placed at the top with the word 'JAMAICA' at the bottom, separated by a single, thick 'spacer' bar at either side. In the centre are the date-plugs in two lines with an asterisk placed above them.



This is the basic type and all other listed items are variations of it. In many cases, progressive damage to letters or figures may be observed and traced over a period of years and it is possible to find copies where the date has been inserted in manuscript owing to the date-plugs being lost or misplaced.

Name of Office, Parish and Date Issue, followed by colour of handstamp and earliest and latest known dates.

- ALDERTON, St. Ann, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Aug. 17 1939 (1)—Sep. 15, 1965.
- ALEXANDRIA, St. Ann, DC1 still current, black: Apr. 1, 1945 (2)—Nov. 21, 1970. Exists with centrally placed figure '8' in place of '1968'.
- ALLMAN TOWN, Kingston, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black (i): Dec. 7, 1941—Sep. 30, 1965. Black (ii): Nov. 14, 1951—Jul. 15, 1971. In 'B1(i)', the spacer bars measure 7 mm. in length. In 'B1 (ii)', they are 10-10½ mm., with a smaller gap between words and taller, thinner lettering, the date of issue being unknown.
- ANCHOVY, St. James, DC2 still current, black: Jul. 25, 1950 (1, 3,4)c.
- ASHLEY, Clarendon, TRD49(i), Apr. 23, 1950. No example recorded. Datestamp type, 'OV1', was issued to this agency in April 1950. The use of 'B1' may have been confined to non postal business as with other unrecorded daters.
- BALACLAVA, St. Elizabeth, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Jul. 18, 1939 (5)—c.
- BELLAS GATE, St. Catherine, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jul. 10, 1951 (1)—Jun. 7, 1970. Exists with figure '5' of '1951' inverted.
- BENBOW, St. Catherine, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple, Dec. 30, 1946—Jan. 28, 1948. Black: Nov. 15, 1949 (1)—c.
- BENSONTON, St. Ann, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jun. 27, 1941 (1)—Apr. 7, 1961.
- BETHEL TOWN, Westmoreland, DC1 still current. No example recorded.
- BIGWOODS, Westmoreland, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Oct. 11, 1948—Dec. 1948. Black: Mar. 13, 1951—May 27, 1970.
- BIRDS HILL, Clarendon, Dec. 6, 1946 +, Purple: Mar. 13, 1951—Jun. 17, 1953. Black: Mar. 1951—Apr. 29, 1965.
- BLACK RIVER, St. Elizabeth, DC1b & DC1c still current. No example recorded.
- BLAIRS HILL, Hanover, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Apr. 19, 1948 — Jul. 14, 1948. Black: Mar. 27, 1951—Jun. 17, 1963.
- BOG WALK, St. Catherine, DC2 & DC1b still current, black: Jun. 7, 1945—c.
- BOMBAY, Manchester, Apr. 20, 1947, purple: Apr. 20, 1948—Black: Apr. 4, 1951—Mar. 14, 1966.
- BONNY GATE, St. Mary, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jan. 14, 1944—Jun. 29, 1956.
- BOSCABEL, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Sep. 25, 1939—c? (The correct name of this office is Boscobel.)
- BRAETON, St. Catherine, Dec. 26, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946—Dec. 24, 1947. Black: Mar. 31, 1951—Jun. 7, 1963.
- BRAINERD, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: May 22, 1945—Dec. 17, 1971.
- BRANDON HILL, St. Andrew, Dec. 22, 1946 +, purple: Jan. 7, 1947. Black: Jul. 12, 1951—c?
- BROWN'S TOWN, St. Ann, DC1b & DC1c still current, black: (i): Jun. 22, 1940—Mar. 3, 1972. Black (ii): Mar. 14, 1965 — Aug. 9, 1968. In 'B1 (i)', the spacer bar at the right is 9 mm. long and 8+ mm. at the left. In 'B1 (ii)', the left bar is 10½ mm. long and the right bar 9 mm. Neither date of issue is recorded.
- BURNT SAVANNAH, St. Elizabeth, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946. Black: Apr. 2, 1951—Jun. 15, 1968.
- BUSHEY PARK, St. Catherine, Jul. 18, 1939, black: May 13, 1940 (6)—c.
- CARMEL, Westmoreland, Jan. 3, 1947 +, purple: May 16, 1947—Aug. 27, 1947. Black: Jul. 4, 1949—Dec. 5, 1968.
- CASTLETON, St. Mary, DC2, Jan. 26, 1940, black. Nov. 6, 1940—Jun. 24, 1971.
- CAVE VALLEY, St. Ann, DC1 still current, black: Jan. 7, 1950—c.
- CLAREMONT, St. Ann, DC2 still current, black: Oct. 15, 1946 (1, 3)—Jan. 28, 1959.
- CLOVER HILL, St. Ann, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Jan. 1, 1947—Dec. 9, 1948. Black: Jan. 28, 1951-1967.
- CLYDESDALE, St. Ann, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Apr. 19, 1948—Oct. 8, 1948. Black: Mar. 20, 1949—c.
- COPESE, Hanover, Apr. 16, 1948 +, purple: Apr. 16, 1948—Nov. 1948. Black: Apr. 3, 1951 (5)—Jan. 14, 1961.
- DALVEY, St. Thomas, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Feb. 6, 1940-1961.
- DARLEY, Portland, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Jan. 3, 1948. Black: Jul. 11, 1951 (7)—May 20, 1967.
- DENHAM TOWN, Kingston, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Nov. 13, 1940—Jul. 28, 1957.
- DEVON, Manchester, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Nov. 6, 1946 (8)c.
- DIAS, Hanover, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple: Undatable. Black: Sep. 10, 1948 (1, 9)—c.
- DISCOVERY BAY, St. Ann, TRD46a still current, black: Mar. 16, 1949 (1)—c. (This dater could not have been issued prior to July 18th, 1948 when the office was renamed from Dry Harbour.)
- DRESSIKIE, St. Mary, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Aug. 3, 1948—Oct. 8, 1948. Black: Feb. 22, 1949 (1)—Jan. 8, 1968.
- DUMFRIES, St. James, Dec. 1946 +, black: May 27, 1950—Feb. 19, 1968.
- FALMOUTH, Trelawney, Dec. 1946 +, black: Apr. 2, 1947 (3)—c.
- FREEMAN'S HALL, Trelawney, Jan. 2, 1947 +, purple: Jan. 2, 1947-1968. Black: Sep. 24, 1950 (2, 5, 6, 8)—Feb. 15, 1968. Exists with centrally placed figure '8' in place of '1968'.
- FROME, Westmoreland, Oct. 1, 1940, black: Oct. 21, 1940—Sep. 14, 1962. Exists with a second asterisk in place of the year plug.
- GINGER RIDGE, St. Catherine, DC1 still current. No example recorded.
- GLENGOFFE, St. Catherine, DC1 still current. No example recorded.
- GLENISLAY, Westmoreland, DC1, May 11, 1955. Black: Aug. 13, 1956. Only one example of this dater has been recorded by the author!
- GOLDEN GROVE, St. Thomas, Feb. 15-17, 1940; black: Jul. 24, 1941—Aug. 21, 1971.
- GORDON TOWN, St. Andrew, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Sep. 29, 1939—c.
- GREAT VALLEY, Hanover, DC1, Mar. 29, 1946, black: Apr. 4, 1951 (9)—c.
- GREEN ISLAND, Hanover, DC1b still current, black: Mar. 30, 1951 (1)—c.
- GROVE TOWN, Manchester, Jan. 1, 1947 +, purple: Feb. 1, 1947 (1). Black: Dec. 2, 1949—C.

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- HADDINGTON, Hanover, Dec. 26, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946—Jul. 8, 1947. Black: Apr. 4, 1951—c.
- HADDO, Westmoreland, May 1945 ?, black: Aug. 26, 1946—Jul. 9, 1951.
- HAINTNG, Portland, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946 (1). Black: Jun. 22, 1951—c.
- HALF WAY TREE, St. Andrew, May, 1945? +, black, Jul. 1, 1945—Jun. 21, 1971.
- IRISH TOWN, St. Andrew, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946. Black: May 11, 1948—c.
- ISLINGTON, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Aug. 15, 1939—Jul. 9, 1955.
- JACKSON TOWN, Trelawney, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Sep. 26, 1939 (1)—c?
- JACK'S RIVER, St. Mary, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 30, 1946—Sep. 25, 1947. Black: Oct. 27, 1948 (9)—Sep. 23, 1963.
- JAMES HILL, Clarendon, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Dec. 2, 1940 (1, 9)—c.
- JEFFREY TOWN, St. Mary, May 30, 1945 +, purple: Jun. 3, 194(?). Black: ?—Jul. 2, 1951.
- JERICHO, Hanover, DC1 still current. No example recorded.
- JOHNS HALL, St. James, DC1 still current. No example recorded.
- JONES TOWN, Kingston, ?, black: Mar. 13, 1943 (1)—Jun. 14, 1971. The office at Jones Pen was renamed Jones Town at some time in 1943 and the above dater issued. The then current Jones Pen datestamps, types 'DC1a' and 'DC1b', continued to remain in use at this office until about 1958.
- KELLITS, Clarendon, Feb. 15-17, 1940. black (i): Apr. 1, 1942 (1)—Dec. 8, 1948. Black (ii): Apr. 11, 1944—Dec. 2, 1969. In B1 (i), the village name is correctly spelled. In B1 (ii), the spelling is 'mums' and the lettering is narrower, the date of issue being unknown.
- KINGSTON, at the G.P.O., Dec. 1946 +, black: (i): Mar. 5, 1947 (3)—Aug. 21, 1960. Black (ii): Jan. 23, 1950 (3) 1961. In 'B1(i)', the letter 'K' is narrow, the asterisk elongated horizontally and the spacer bars measure 15 and 14 mm. in length. In 'B1 (ii)', the 'K' is wide, the asterisk square and the bars are 12½ mm. long. Both daters were issued on the same date and should not be confused with type 'B4' from this office which has an index letter above the date in place of the asterisk.
- KINGS VALE, Hanover, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Jul. 6, 1948—Dec. 28, 1948. Black: Feb. 18, 1949 (8)—Jul. 17, 1971.
- KNOCKPATRICK, Manchester, DC1 in current use. No example recorded.
- LACOVIA, St. Elizabeth, May 1945? +, black: Feb. 1, 1945—Nov. 6, 1955.
- LANCES BAY, Hanover, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: May 1, 1948—Oct. 8, 1948. Black: Nov. 10, 1951 (1)—c.
- LIGUANE, St. Andrew, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Oct. 1, 1941 (1, 3)—c. This dater is very worn in its later years and the spacer bars often fail to appear, thus tending to create some confusion between it and type "NB1" of this office.
- LIME TREE GARDENS, St. Ann, Dec. 12, 1945, black: Dec. 13, 1949 (9)—Dec. 11, 1965.
- LINSTEAD, St. Catherine, DC1b still current, black: Aug. 31, 1957—Jun. 9, 1971. One can only surmise that this dater must have been employed in a non-postal capacity at this very busy office to account for its late appearance.
- LLOYDS, St. Thomas, TRD41, Dec. 11, 1945, purple: Dec. 5, 1961—Dec. 27, 1961. Black: Dec. 2, 1946—c.
- LUCKY HILL, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Oct. 24, 1940 (1)—Jun. 17, 1971.
- MAGOTTY, St. Elizabeth, May 1945? +, black: 1945 (1)—Jun. 15, 1970.
- MAIN RIDGE, Clarendon, TRD44a, Sep. 25, 1948, black: Mar. 17, 1952 (1, 2, 9)—Feb. 12, 1968.
- MANDEVILLE, Manchester, Dec. 6, 1946 +, black: Sep. 25, 1947 (1, 9)—Jan. 3, 1975.
- MIDDLE QUARTERS, St. Elizabeth, Jul. 18, 1939,, black: Dec. 4, 1940 (1)—Nov. 27, 1964.
- MONTEAGUE, St. Ann; DC1b still current, black: Jul. 1, 1952—Jan. 4, 1965.
- MORGANS PASS, Clarendon, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946—Feb. 18, 1948. Black: Feb. 9, 1948—c.
- MOUNT INDUSTRY, St. Catherine, TRD48, Apr. 13, 1948, purple: ?—March, 1974. Black: Apr. 6, 1951—Feb. 13, 1968.
- MOUNT MORELAND, St. Catherine, Apr. 19, 1948 +, black: Oct. 11, 1948 (2)—Jul. 15, 1965.
- MOUNT PLEASANT, Portland, Apr. 17, 1948, purple, Apr. 17, 1948—Jul. 6, 1951. Black: ?—Jan. 14, 1966. An example of this dater is known struck in black and dated April 16th, 1948, one day prior to issue, and probably an error by the postmistress in changing her 'plugs'!
- MOUNT REGALE, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Apr. 30, 1940—Aug. 28, 1951.
- MUM HOUSE, St. Ann, Dec. 1, 1946, black: Dec. 13, 1946 (10)—Mar. 15, 1968. Exists with centrally placed figure "8" in place of "1968".
- NEW GREEN, Manchester, TRD46, Mar. 15, 1948, purple: Jul. 2, 1948. Black: Mar. 10, 1951 (1)—c.
- NEWTON, St. Elizabeth, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple: Jan. 18, 1947—May 21, 1947. Black: Mar. 15, 1948—Feb. 9, 1966
- NINE TURNS, Clarendon, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Feb. 4, 1948 ?—Apr. 25, 1949. Black: Mar. 21, 1951—c.
- PAUL MOUNTAIN, St. Catherine, Oct. 1947, black: Nov. 26, 1948 (3)—c.
- PEDRO, St. Ann, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jul. 9, 1945 (1)—Jan. 17, 1961. This office closed at some time in 1961. PEMBROKE HALL, St. Mary, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Jul. 31, 1939—Jun. 4, 1956.
- PEPPER, St. Elizabeth, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Oct. 28, 1940—Jul. 29, 1957.
- PERTH TOWN, Trelawney, Dec. 30, 1946 +, purple: May 21, 1951. Black: Jun. 16, 1953—c.
- PETERSFIELD, Westmoreland, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Nov. 21, 1940—c.
- PISGAH, St. Elizabeth, Dec. 12, 1945, black: Oct. 30, 1946—Dec. 17, 1957.
- PORT ANTONIO, Portland, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Dec. 11, 1945—Mar. 9, 1961. Purple: Dec. 5, 1961.
- PORTERS MOUNTAIN, Westmoreland, April, 1948, black: Oct. 11, 1948 (9)—Oct. 21, 1953.
- PORTLAND COTTAGE, Clarendon, May 30, 1945 +, purple: Nov. 9, 1946. Black: Sep. 24, 1947 (8)—Nov. 12, 1958.
- PORT MARIA, St. Mary, DC1c & DC1d still current, black: Feb. 15, 1949 (1, 8)—May 2, 1967.
- PORUS, Manchester, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Feb. 15, 1941 c.
- RAMBLE, Hanover, DC2, Dec. 16, 1947, black: Jun. 28, 1949 (1)—c.
- RETIREMENT, St. Elizabeth, TRD41, Mar. 23, 1948, purple: Apr. 6, 1951—Nov. 28, 1951. Black: Jul. 6, 1953 (1)—c.
- ROEHAMPTON, St. James, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Apr. 19, 1948—Nov. 19, 1951. Black: ?—Jul. 8, 1953.
- ROWLANDSFIELD, St. Thomas, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 24, 1946. Black: Jul. 15, 1950—Nov. 15, 1961.
- SALT MARSH, Trelawney, Dec. 17, 1945, black: Jan. 30, 1947 (1, 2, 8)—Feb. 16, 1968.
- SALT SPRING, St. James, Dec. 26, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 30, 1946—Dec. 1948. Black: Jul. 7, 1951 (1)—Feb. 7, 1968.
- SAMUEL PROSPECT, Trelawney, Apr. 19, 1948, purple: Oct. 8, 1948—Apr. 3, 1950. Black: Jul. 17, 1951 (6)—c.

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SHERWOOD CONTENT, Trelawney, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Sep. 30, 1940_c.
 SILOAH, St. Elizabeth, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jan. 23, 1941—c.
 SILVER SPRING, Clarendon, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple, Dec. 23, 1946—Jan. 1947. Black: Apr. 2, 1949 (1)—c.
 SOUTHFIELD, St. Elizabeth, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Dec. 2, 1939
 STRATHBOGIE, Westmoreland, Dec. 24, 1946 +, purple: Dec. 31, 1946—Feb. 24, 1947. Black: Mar. 7, 1951—May 25, 1967.
 STURGE TOWN, St. Ann, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jan. 15, 1941 (1, 2, 8)—c.
 THOMPSON TOWN, Clarendon, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Aug. 20, 1939—Aug. 18, 1962.
 TOP HILL, St. Elizabeth, TRD38a, Feb. 9, 1944, purple: Aug. 4, 1944. The above item is a proof strike and the only known example of this dater. The e.k.d. of Top Hill, type 'B2', is March 3rd, 1944.
 TREASURE BEACH, St. Elizabeth, May 19, 1945? +, purple: Mar. 6, 1945—Dec. 17, 1946. Black: Aug. 29, 1947—Aug. 1956.
 WAIT-A-BIT, Trelawney, Feb. 15-17, 1940, black: Jan. 6, 1941 (1, 6)—May 6, 1974.
 WARSOP, Trelawney, Jul. 18, 1939, black: Jan. 31, 1941 (2)—Feb. 8, 1974. Purple. Oct. 8, 1973.
 WATCHWELL, St. Elizabeth, May 22, 1948? +, purple: Oct. 11, 1948—Nov. 13, 1948. Black: May 30, 1950—Apr. 15, 1967. The proof strike of this dater is on October 11th, 1948 and carries a manuscript annotation by the post-mistress saying, "s.d.s. (steel datestamp) received by P.M. 22 May 1948 and in use by her from 23 June 1948".
 WHITEHALL, St. Thomas, Dec. 23, 1946 +, purple: Mar. 24, 1947. Black: May 22, 1951 (1)—Jul. 13, 1968.
 WINDWARD ROAD, Kingston, DC1b & DC1c still current, black: Dec. 16, 1948 (3)—Feb. 3, 1970.

FAITH'S PEN, St. Ann, TRD38 still current, black: Nov. 26, 1942 (1, 3, 5)—Feb. 16, 1968. The records are again in error here, quoting an issue date of March 12th, 1943 and into use on May 1st. In actual fact, several 1942 dates and covers are known.
 LYDFORD, St. Ann, May 1, 1941, black: Feb. 5, 1942—Nov. 1964.
 ROCK SPRING, Trelawney, Dec. 10, 1943, purple: 1944—Oct. 1946. Black: Jul. 28, 1951—Feb. 16, 1958. Exists with a centrally placed figure '8' in place of '1968'.
 SANDY GULLY, Clarendon, TRD40, Oct. 28, 1943, black: Apr. 24, 1945 (1)—Aug. 21, 1953. This office closed w.e.f. November 16th, 1954 when an agency at Yarmouth was opened.
 TOP HILL, St. Elizabeth, TRD38a, Feb. 9, 1944, purple: Mar. 3, 1944—Mar. 31, 1944. Black: 1944 (1)—c.
 ULSTER SPRING, Trelawney, DC2 Dec. 18, 1941, black: Apr. 17, 1944—Apr. 1, 1963.

Type B2a. Similar in most respects to type 'B2', with the exception that there is no asterisk above the date. I have never seen any of the five daters comprising this group with an asterisk.

GIBRALTAR CAMP, St. Andrew, Mar. 12, 1943, black: May 10, 1943 (2)—Feb. 19, 1947. This agency was closed in 1947 when the refugee camp at Mona shut down.
 LINTON PARK, St. Ann, May 1, 1943?, black: Jul. 24, 1946 (5)—Aug. 11, 1965. Favour strikes of this item are known dated March 12th, 1943.
 ST. PAUL'S, Manchester, Dec. 3, 1941, black: Jun. 8, 1943—c.
 VINEYARD TOWN, St. Andrew, Mar. 12, 1943, black: Aug. 5, 1943—Jul. 7, 1962.
 WHITFIELD TOWN, St. Andrew, Mar. 12, 1943,? black: Jul. 6, 1943 (5)—Jan 5, 1965. The name of this office was changed from Whitfield Pen on 12th March, 1943 but the 'DC1' dater of the old office remained in use until 1957. The records state that a datestamp of this new type was issued to Whitfield Town on the date of opening but there is no direct evidence that it was the above type rather than the abnormal "B3" from this office.



Type B2



Type B2a

Type B2. This has the same general format as type "B1" but the word 'JAMAICA' is omitted, with the spacer bar continuing around the bottom of the datestamp. I am of the opinion that this type was manufactured in imitation of the normal, hence the absence of the island name.

These daters originally appeared complete with an asterisk over the date but in cases of wear and tear, this item is often missing. The damaged states must not be confused with the 'B2a' types which never had an asterisk as part of their make up.
 BERMADY, St. Catherine, Dec. 3, 1943, black: Feb. 2, 1944—Mar. 10, 1955. This agency was closed on September 1st, 1956.

CHATHAM, St. James, ?, black: Jul. 11, 1951—Feb. 16, 1968. The agency opened on February 20th 1944 and according to the postmistress, was never issued with a TRD on opening, having already received this dater. It exists with a centrally placed figure '6' in place of '1968'.

CRAWLE RIVER, Clarendon, Dec. 10, 1943, black: Aug. 4, 1944—Sep. 3, 1966.

DANVERS PEN, St. Mary, TRD41, May 5, 1945, black: Jan. 3, 1945—Sep. 2, 1963. Purple: Jul. 1965-1965. Postal Headquarters records state that this dater was issued on May 10th 1946, this being an obvious error for the previous year as many 1945 dates are known.



Type B3



Type B4

Type B3. This is a peculiar and fascinating datestamp that was only used by one office. It has the name of the office at the bottom with the spacer bar around the top and without an asterisk above the date. I am convinced that it was manufactured locally from a previously unused dater of the "Birmingham" group.

WHITFIELD TOWN, St. Andrew, B2a still current, black: Aug. 9, 1945 (1, 5)—Oct. 23, 1964. The dater exists in three different states or stages of wear, each stage separated by an inexplicable gap of a number of years. At times, it alternated in general use with the "B2a" dater but in the last two or three years of its life, both postmarks were in use together. It would appear to have been manufactured after 1943 and was possibly brought into use when the 'B2a' dater became damaged or mislaid. With the reappearance of the latter, it was taken out of service for a while, only to emerge again in its second state. A gap of about two years passes before it once

The 'Birmingham' Postmarks of Jamaica

By Thomas Foster

again appears in its third and final state. **State I.** As initially described. A dater of the 'Birmingham' group which has been inscribed with the names 'KINGSTON' at the top and 'WHITFIELD TOWN' at the bottom, was used for this purpose. The word 'KINGSTON' was partly erased and the resulting space blocked in with a metal filler to make a continuous spacer bar around the top of the datestamp. This state was common immediately following the war but the work was not very well done and I have never seen a really first-class strike. It was probably short lived. E.k.d.—Aug. 9, 1945. L.k.d.—Dec. 1945

State II. In this state, the filling has worked loose and dropped out or been removed, leaving a clear space between the rings at the top of the datestamp. The original short spacer bars at the sides still remain. E.k.d.—Nov. 12, 1946. L.k.d.—Aug. 2, 1955

State III The postmark is now wearing and in the space at the top of the dater appear traces of the last few letters of the word "KINGSTON".

E.k.d.—May 13, 1957 L.k.d.—Oct. 23, 1964.

This hypothesis is based on my personal close study of the postmark but I regret that I have been unable to confirm my findings at either Post Office Headquarters or at the Whitfield Town office itself, despite many enquiries. I am of the opinion that there is no other satisfactory explanation for the existence of this datestamp and point out, in support of my reasoning, the fact that "filling in" of unwanted words by a metal filler was a practice undertaken on a larger scale with the wrongly inscribed 'Registered' daters comprising the 'Oval' types issued from 1946 onwards. (See the article I wrote for Caribbean, Journal of the Roses Caribbean Philatelic Society, No. 5 of May 1975.)

Whitfield Town is in St. Andrews Parish and not in Kingston itself, although it now forms Kingston Postal Zone 13 in the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporate Area. At the time, it was intended to issue datestamps to some of the local post offices inscribed with their name at the bottom and the parent office of Kingston at the top. For various reasons, objections were raised against the idea and the matter shelved until the damage to, or the need to supplement, the "B2a" dater created a demand for another postmark, resulting in the making of this abnormal type. It is a matter that will probably be cleared up when the Post Office Record books become available for inspection.

Type B4. This dater differs from 'B1' only in the fact that the asterisk above the date is replaced by an index letter 'F', which can often be found inserted sideways. It is the only "Birmingham" dater to have employed an index letter and was normally used for cancelling small packets at the G.P.O., though it does exist postmarking normal mail. The date of issue is not recorded.

KINGSTON, at the G.P.O., black: Jan. 12, 1951—Feb. 9, 1954.



Type B5



Type B6

Type B5. Similar in format to 'B1' but with the legend "PARCEL POST" at the top and "KINGSTON" at the bottom. It was used in the parcel Post Department of the Kingston G.P.O., and is cross-listed in the section dealing with the markings of that department. The date of issue is not recorded.

PARCEL POST KINGSTON, black: Sep. 16, 1940-1960? This is a difficult postmark to find in any condition owing to the surfaces on which it is usually applied. Dated copies are generally indecipherable.

Type B6. Similar to 'B5' but with the legend at the top reading 'PARCELS OFFICE'. Three datestamps of this type were issued to the Parcel Post Department of the Kingston G.P.O. on December 6th, 1946 and all are cross-listed.

PARCELS OFFICE KINGSTON, black (i): Mar. 21, 1947-1960. Black (ii): Aug. 5, 1947—Dec. 10, 1965. Black 1947—1960. These datestamps can easily be distinguished by the following points: 'B6(i)' has a gap of 1½ mm. between the top of the letter 'L' and the top of the first letter 'F'; the spacer bars are 5 mm. in length and the asterisk is elongated. 'B6(ii)' has a gap of 104 mm. with 6 mm. bars and an elongated asterisk. 'B6(iii)' has a gap of 9½ mm. with 7 mm. bars and the asterisk is square.

Proof strikes of all three datestamps exist struck in purple and dated July 26th, 1946. Favour strikes in purple of 'B6(iii)' also exist but are without the date-plugs and asterisk.



Type B7



Type B8

Type B7. Possibly the earliest of the two registered types, it has the normal 'Birmingham' format with the legend 'REGISTERED' at the top and 'KINGSTON JAMAICA' at the bottom. It was used at the Kingston G.P.O. and is cross-listed in the registered section.

REGISTERED KINGSTON JAMAICA, black: Feb. 5, 1949 (1, 3)—Feb. 21, 1964. Purple: May 19, 1969-1969. This marking and the two "B8" datestamps (see below) were used G.P.O. although the two types were intended to differentiate between mail registered at the G.P.O., as opposed to the postmarking of registered letters passing through that office. The date of issue is unrecorded.

Type B8. The second registered marking has the normal format with 'KINGSTON JAMAICA' at the top and the legend 'REGISTERED' at the bottom.

Two datestamps of this type were issued to the Kingston G.P.O., on December 6th, 1946 and are cross-listed. Proof strikes of both exist struck in purple and dated July 26th, 1946.

KINGSTON JAMAICA REGISTERED, black (i): May 2, 1947—Jul. 22, 1953. black (ii): Dec. 2, 1948—Apr. 14, 1965. These daters can be distinguished as follows: 'B8(i)' has a gap of 4 mm. from the top of the last 'N' to the top of the 'J'; the spacer bars are 6 mm. long and the asterisk is square. 'B8(ii)', has a gap of 5½ mm., the bars are 7½ mm. long and the asterisk is elongated.

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Type B9



Type B10

Type B9. These two daters have the normal format and bear the legend, 'T.P.O.' at the top and 'JAMAICA' at the bottom. They were issued to the Railway Travelling Post Offices in December 1946 and are cross-listed in the T.P.O. section, where fuller details of their use is recorded.

T.P.O., black (i): Dec. 11, 1949 (9)—Jan. 4, 1963. Black (ii): Jul. 12, 1949—Nov. 2, 1964. The differences between these two daters are slight but they can be distinguished by the following details: 'B9(i)' has a distance of 3½ mm. from the period after the 'T' to the period after the 'P'; there is a distance of 14 mm. from the top of the 'J' to the top of the last letter 'A', which is narrow, and the spacer bars are 16 mm. and 16½ mm. long. 'B9(ii)' is only 3 mm. between the two periods and this makes the second appear to be under the 'P'. From the 'J' to "A" is 13½ mm., the 'A' being wide. The spacer bars are 17 mm. and 17½ mm. respectively. There are also noticeable differences in the shape of the 'J' and the asterisk. Proof strikes in purple exist of both daters for July 26th, 1946.

Type B10. Another dater of the normal format, with the wording at the top reading 'ACCOUNTANT' and that at the bottom, 'JAMAICA P.O.'.

It was issued on September 16th, 1940 to the Accounting Department of the Postal Headquarters for use as a Free Franking stamp, and is cross-listed in the relevant section.

ACCOUNTANT JAMAICA P.O., black: Apr. 20, 1945—Jul. 12, 1945.

I believe that other internal datestamps of this type may have been used within Post Office Headquarters and would be pleased to receive details of any known to readers.



Type B11



Type B12

Type B11. A datestamp with the familiar format of 'B1'. The legend at the top reads 'JAMAICA TELEGRAPHS' and that at the bottom, 'KINGSTON'.

It was used for datestamping telegrams received at the Kingston G.P.O., and is cross-listed in the telegraph section. The date of issue is unknown.

JAMAICA TELEGRAPHS KINGSTON, black: Sep. 16, 1940-1942.

Type B12. This has the same 'B1' format with the legend at the top reading 'M.O.B. KINGSTON' and at the bottom, 'PAID'.

It was used as a Free Franking stamp at the Money Order Branch of the Kingston G.P.O., to whom it was issued on December 6th, 1946 and is cross-listed in the relevant section. M.O.B. KINGSTON PAID, BLACK: 1949—1950. Proof Strikes in Purple exist dated July 26th, 1946.

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| | and many others |

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