

# Jamaica Newsletter No. 1

It is hoped through this series of quarterly newsletters, to advise those interested in the island of the many changes occurring in Jamaican philately. Jamaican specialists have always claimed that no matter what aspect of the hobby one was interested in, sooner or later it would make its appearance in Jamaica and as 1968 has proved no exception to the rule, this letter will be devoted to a review of the year's happenings.

In February 1968, a miniature sheet of nine stamps in three different designs appeared to commemorate the M.C.C.'s West Indian Tour. Whilst no official first day cover was produced for this issue, a specially-inscribed Temporary Rubber Date-stamp (T.R.D.) was used to postmark mail posted at the Philatelic Branch of the Kingston G.P.O. from February 8th-17th inclusive. The stamps themselves were printed by Harrisons on paper backed with either gum arabic or PVA (polyvinyl alcohol) adhesive, supplies sent to the island apparently consisting entirely of the former whilst the Crown Agents distributed both types. The gum arabic paper has the watermark placed sideways to the left as viewed from the front of the stamp whilst the PVA paper has it sideways to the right. More about the use of PVA on stamps printed by this firm in a later letter.

March should have seen the appearance of the Human Rights issue designed by Jennifer Toombs and printed in Holland, but the stamps were rejected shortly before issue and the whole printing destroyed. Again, more about this in a later letter. In the meantime, an open competition for suitable designs was held in the island and the stamps finally appeared on December 3rd, together with an attractive official first day cover but no special postmark.

One major variety has already appeared on this issue—a sheet of the 3d having been discovered with the gold colour completely missing. The same value also exists with inverted watermark, but at the moment its scarcity is not apparent. It was originally intended that the Is. value should have a sideways watermark, but this decision was rescinded when the printers received fresh supplies of paper. Nevertheless, it is always possible that this variety may turn up and so it may prove worthwhile to check copies on hand.

Varieties of this kind are becoming quite common on modern Jamaican issues as the 6d. Commonwealth Games and is. Exposition can both be found with inverted watermarks. The 3d Constabulary exists with watermark sideways, but prices charged for this item do not appear to be justified as most supplies received in the island consisted of this variety and it was freely used commercially. The 2d definitive exists with inverted watermark and is far scarcer than the 3d. Constabulary, whilst a small quantity of the 6d definitive and one sheet of the 3s definitive have been discovered in the same condition. For those who like missing colours, one sheet of the 6d definitive has been found with the blue colour on the butterfly's wings missing (Blue, Plate 1C).

In July, extensive changes occurred in postal rates. The airletter rate went up to 9d. (except to certain Caribbean islands) and the Post Office began selling the old 6d forms with a 3d adhesive stamp affixed to make up the new rate. The "Publicity" airletters issued in 1967 and sold at 9d are still available as they have proved unpopular, carrying, as they do, a non-postal charge of 3d. New 9d airletters are expected later this year.

One other change concerned the newspaper rate, which rose from 1½d to 2d. As no ½d definitive stamp exists, the present 1½d wrappers were revalued by hand-stamping them in purple "Postage Paid/Half Penny" alongside the printed stamp. Two different hand-stamps appear to have been used and examples occur of double hand-stamping one of each type being superimposed on the same wrapper. Inverted examples also exist and some later supplies show a short 'P' in 'PAID' which may prove to be either a third hand stamp or merely a variety of the second type. At the same time, stocks of the old obsolete 1d wrapper were placed on sale with an affixed 1d adhesive stamp to make up the new rate.

## New Postal Agencies

Postal Agencies were opened in 1968 at the following places in the parishes stated:—

ST. ANN—Concord (March 29th) and Parry Town (September 6th).

MANCHESTER—Evergreen (September 20th) and Morrison (August 30th).

ST. ANDREW—Meadowbridge (March 13th) and New Town (November 15th).

TRELAWNEY—Martha Brae (August).

WESTMORELAND—Paradise Road (June 14th).

ST. THOMAS—Winchester (August 28th).

CLARENDON—Green Park (September 13th) and Pedro River (October 4th).

ST. MARY—Days Mountain (November 1st).

All these agencies used the Aguilar type TRD37 at opening.

## Decimalisation

Finally, on September 8th of this year, Jamaica is changing over to the West Indian Dollar currency and the current definitives will be provisionally overprinted, to be followed by a new definitive series later in the year. On this date, too, new \$½, \$1, \$2 and \$10 currency notes and a 1c piece will be issued, whilst new 5c, 10c, 20c and 25c coins will be introduced during April-July. There will also be a special souvenir issue of the present Jamaica ½d and 1d. coins marking their centenary and bearing the dates "1869-1969", together with a specially-minted 'crown' sized \$1 piece.

THOMAS FOSTER.