

Jamaica Newsletter No. 15

By Thomas Foster

FIRST, mention is given in this letter to an obviously inconstant plate curiosity occurring on the **1875 2s stamp** (SG14), and taking the form of a heavy line of pigment running vertically downwards from the laurel wreath to the 'H' of 'SHILLING'. Although continuous on each line of shading, it is not a plate scratch and probably came about through the plate being only partially cleaned, thus allowing the build-up of a thick ridge of dried pigment.

It is not often that unknown items are found on any issue of an omnibus series but, recently, a block of the **1937 Coronation 1d** value turned up printed from an unrecorded plate 1B. I wonder how this item has hidden away for so long?

Turning to more recent issues, the obsolete **1970 Decimal definitives** continue to present many problems. Supplies were subject to varying limited availability and many of the plate /pane positions used in printing the various values are seldom, if ever, seen. The 1c was issued concurrently throughout its entire life with the 1c of the National Heroes set, of which tremendous quantities must have been printed, whilst stamps of the Tercentenary and other issues replaced other values, notably the 4c, which ran out of stock very quickly and the 5c, 15c and 50c denominations. I have still no information regarding the officially-announced reprinting of the \$1 and \$2 values, scheduled for release by the Crown Agents. Perhaps someone else may know? Incidentally, the 3c Decimal surcharge (S.G.282), is still being sold by most offices, even though it has been replaced by consecutive new definitives of the same value!

The **1972 definitives** have come in for a lot of comment within the island and the aerial views have been especially criticised for not being decisive enough, it being the considered opinion that views taken from a lower altitude would have been far more effective. The colours used have been attacked and there have been many complaints that the word 'JAMAICA' is not bold enough on most of the stamps. Personally, I believe the 15c, showing the Old Iron Bridge at Spanish Town, is charmingly depicted and the best of the designs. Incidentally, distinct shades can be found on the same sheet throughout the 3c and 10c values.

A nice little flaw occurs on the 15c value, of the recent **Jamintel issue**, taking the form of a somewhat ragged letter 'U' printed in the background colour of the stamp and found immediately above the 'IO' of 'COMMUNICATIONS'. This flaw is constant only on Plate 1Bx4, R4/3 (Thirkell N8). An attractive official first day cover, printed in black, yellow and green, and depicting the Arms of Jamaica was used with the Independence Anniversary overprints issued in August.

Postal Rates

Turning to more mundane matters, certain postal increases were introduced with effect from October 1st. After being for long one of the cheapest places from which to despatch mails, Jamaica is now falling into line with other countries! The inland letter rate is increased to 5c and the airmail rate to Commonwealth Caribbean countries has risen to 10c., thus becoming the same as that for the rest of the American continent. Inland and airmail parcel rates are both amended, whilst postcard, newspaper and printed matter rates are all doubled with an increase in the weight limit allowed. Inland postcards will now cost 2c and a special rate of 4c has been introduced for Christmas cards. Could not a similar idea be operated in this country?

All overseas seamailed will now be sent at the foreign letter rate, the former Commonwealth preference having been abolished. Registration envelopes will cost 1c extra in addition to the postage and registration fee, which itself has been raised to 20c, with increases also in charges for Express Letters and special services. It will be interesting to see what effect this increase has on the new registered envelopes, ordered at the old rates and now being printed.

Air Letter Forms

Many of you will know that I possess a fondness for these, both stamped and unstamped. I have reason to believe that the Canadian Forces serving in the island during the last war sometimes used these when writing home and, surely, similar forms together with the airgraph service would have been available to British Forces? I also think that the American Armed Forces would have used the 'V Mail' scheme, which operated similarly to our own airgraph. No examples of any of these items have been seen by me, or recorded, and confirmation of their existence is badly needed, in order that several current studies can be completed.

Incidentally, it is pretty well known that the first two types of air letter form with printed stamps, issued in 1947 and 1952, can be found with the actual stamp impression missing, and a little anecdote can be related regarding the earlier item. The late Everard Aguilar, a pleasant gentleman, part-time dealer and friend of the writer, was in the habit of dealing with much of his philatelic correspondence in the Kingston G.P.O. during his lunch hour and for this purpose often availed himself of the air letter service. One day, with a number of surface mail letters to write and having forgotten his note-paper, he was prevailed upon by one of the postal clerks to use up a wad of air letter forms which bore merely a blank square in place of a stamp. A great many were used as note-paper for personal and business correspondence, often written in pencil, before it was realised that the forms were in fact, errors, having the printed stamp omitted. Anyone having dealings with Mr. Aguilar about this time would be well advised to check any old letters still to hand, in the hope of finding some of these errors.

Postal History

Colonel James T. DeVoss of State College, Pennsylvania (secretary of the American Philatelic Society) has shown me two further examples of letters carrying the manuscript forwarding agent's cachet of 'R.M. Harrison /U.S. Consul / Kingston', dated June 5th and 6th, 1835, thus making the rarity rating of this item, VR3.

A number of interesting items can be reported in this letter, including new latest known dates of September 8th, 1868, for the Ship Letter hand-stamp, type SL5, and August 1909 for MILK RIVER, type P11. The recent 'Erickson' sale included a further example, the fourth, of the Darrell & Barclay forwarding agents' cachet, type FAC4, on a letter dated October 9th, 1843, together with a letter bearing a previously-unrecorded manuscript forwarding agents' cachet reading 'Red. and forwarded by your most obedient servants, Marlow & La Bichey, Kingston, Jamaica, 9th July 1844', to be listed as Serial 19. A third example of the extremely rare LACOVIA, type P2a, date-stamp of April 21st, 1842, was sold at a recent provincial auction but, unfortunately, this was struck only on a small piece of paper, obviously cut from the original. A second, dated 1850, was sold in a London auction last year, the only previously known example being in the Customs Archives.

**Charles M. Bæer, Captain, Signal Corps,
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C E N S O R E D

Type M-USAC2 (see below).

I am also able to illustrate, at last, the censor marking, type M—USAC2, mentioned in my articles ('STAMP COLLECTING' of July 16th and 23rd, 1970, and February 4th, 1971) on postal markings of the United States bases in the island.

A cover has now come to light posted on the first day of operations at OSBORNE STORE post office on October 9th, 1931, cancelled with the type DC1 date-stamp, thus proving beyond any doubt that no TRD was used at the opening. BORDER has been observed using a type SC1 dater for the first time about January 6th, 1971, and strikes in purple ink, of this same type, have recently been discovered from DENBIGH and BROMLEY, dated May 21st and May 20th, 1968, respectively.

New TRDs have been issued to the following established offices and agencies, all in black ink unless otherwise stated:

BLACKSTONEDGE, St. Anne. TRD41d e.k.d. November 1971;

CORN PIECE, Clarendon. TRD38d known December 1971—
February 10th, 1972;

PALISADOES, Kingston. TRD41f known December 14th,
1971—May 8th, 1972;

PLEASANT VALLEY, Clarendon. TRD41d in purple known
March 24th-26th, 1972;

SPRING VALE, St. Catherine. TRD41(iii) in purple, c. May
1972;

SPRING VILLAGE, St. Catherine. TRD41 c. April 1972.

The SPRING VALE item differs from the two previous TRDs of the same type in having a comma after the word 'VALE'. Single-circle daters of the current type, SCI, have been put into use at the following agencies, replacing TRDs issued on opening and all were struck in purple ink for a short period prior to black inkpads being issued: KELLAM, MACCA TREE, MARTHA BRAE, PARADISE ROAD, PARRY TOWN, SPRING VILLAGE, VICTORIA TOWN and WINCHESTER.

Finally, for type verification purposes, can anyone show me examples of the following TRDs, none of which I have ever seen? CAYMANAS BAY, C. 1964; CLAY GROUND, C. 1964; EWARTON, C. 1949; GEDDES TOWN, C. 1963; GINGER HILL, C. 1907; GOLDEN VALLEY, C. 1968 only; and GREGORY PARK, C. 1896.

Stamp Collecting Jan 1973

JAMAICAN AIRGRAPHS

Sir,—I have only just had the opportunity to peruse Thomas Foster's 'Jamaica News Letter No. 15' in your issue of December 14th, 1972.

Mr. Foster appears to confuse the sequence of the appearance and use of Air Letter forms, 'V.Mails' and Airgraphs. The Airgraph procedure preceded Military Air Letter forms and 'V. Mail' forms. Airgraphs had to be processed at central points involving a delay in transit of several days at each end, and the light-weight Air Letter forms were initiated as a more speedy method of keeping the troops in touch with the home front and vice versa. Because there was no processing headquarters, except over the major war theatre mail routes, there was no Airgraph service to Britain or U.S.A. from Jamaica, the nearest processing points being the Kodak headquarters in Miami and New York.

Sutton Coldfield.

FRANCIS J. FIELD.