

# Jamaica Newsletter No. 18

By Thomas Foster

One often wonders why certain postage stamps are more popular with collectors than others of the same territory and. I intend discussing, lightly, an old and a more modern issue to illustrate this point. Once upon a time, long long ago, there was a period when postage stamps looked like postage stamps and, as such, were easily recognised for what they were, instead of being mistaken for cheese labels or the offerings of various preserve manufacturers !

Jamaica has by no means reached this drastic state as yet but if the present trend continues, it is only a matter of time before its postal emissions become as unpopular with the present day philatelist as have those of certain other West Indian islands. At one time, a general collector could look at a stamp without noticing the name or denomination and say to himself, "Ah, yes, that is a Canadian high value" or "These must be new issues of Switzerland", but the appearance of stamps such as those recently depicting some of Jamaica's most beautiful flora makes such knowledgeable utterances just mere guesswork. Surely it should be possible to design and produce stamps showing the breathtaking beauty of those chosen subjects instead of the flat, uninspiring insipidity of the latest creations, which could be mistaken for items issued by any one of a score of countries? Surely, it should be possible to reintroduce that indigenous angle whilst continuing to portray a flower in as good a style as any high-class nurseryman's catalogue? Incidentally, the set issued in July depicts simply garden flowers and not their wilder relations as has often been stated.

## The appeal of the 'Keyplates'

In the past, possibly one of the most neglected of all the adhesive series have been those of the 'King's Head' type, issued in the years between 1912-20. Like most keyplate stamps, either colonial or foreign, they were common to more than one territory and their beauty in mint condition far surpasses that of used and a collection depicting the various shades and papers, many of which still remain unlisted in the major catalogues, presents a colourful and interesting showing.

The papers and inks used in production correspond to those of the now defunct Universal Colour Scheme and of course, during the war years, when certain chemical dyes of German manufacture ran out, these had to be replaced by substitutes, resulting in the wide range of coloured papers that are found on the 3d, 4d, 1s, 2s, and 5s values. At one time, it was intended to replace all stamps then in use with issues of this type but the task was never completed, although die proofs in black exist of unissued values, including 8s6d and 10s rates which had not been previously used.

As certain values were printed on chalky paper and in fugitive inks, it is essential to take great care in handling and selecting mint stamps and these remarks also apply to used copies of the same items, where fine copies are difficult to find. Many of these stamps were used for telegraphic purposes and as such, are commoner than postally used items but that does not prevent them being presented as postally used items by people who should know better. In addition, they were also used fiscally and can be found overprinted 'JUDICIAL' with the oval, purple hand-stamps of the various parish administrations.

They do, of course, have one further attraction—they look like stamps !

## Postal History

The only items of interest to have emerged during the past quarter are earliest known dates of July 25th, 1854, and November 1830 for BUFF BAY, type P6, and PLANTAIN GARDEN RIVER, type P5, respectively, and a latest known date of October 8th, 1861, for FALMOUTH, type P10c.

Reference to these leads to comment on the so-called unrecorded postmarks, often advertised as 'Not listed in Foster' by various specialist dealers and auction houses. Almost without exception, these 'rarities' turn out to be under-inked or worn

impressions of recorded items and anyone offered, or proposing to purchase, same, is advised to contact the writer before going ahead with his intentions. Although our postal rates have gone up to 3½p for a first class letter, that is still cheaper than finding that you have bought a third-rate copy of a postal marking already possessed!

## The fakes of the 1d Bisect of 1860

Other items on which comment is called for are the bisected 1d Pines of 1860 and it may be a propitious time to offer a few words. This bisect was authorised to pay the inland postage on newspapers at ½d per item and, as a result, it is commonly found from all offices open at that time. Authorisation for bisection was withdrawn on December 1st, 1872, after the new ½d adhesive had appeared. Certificates of genuineness can be sought for these items but these will seldom be given for bisects merely reposing on small pieces of paper. Various kinds of fake and / or forgery exist and these remarks may save a blushing countenance at a later date.

The most common type of forgery is found on cover or small piece, tied with a forged obliterator and often with a genuine strike of the office date-stamp alongside. In those days, regulations required the office dater to be struck on the envelope and so it is easy to find covers with such markings on them, awaiting the addition of a 'bisect' and a forged obliterator. These items can almost always be detected by comparison with copies of the correct obliterator used by the office at that time. Bearing in mind the fact that obliterated tend to wear like everything else, these still retained certain points of comparison which will facilitate identification and it must also be remembered that the bisects occurred during early use of these obliterated.

The other fakes found are generally on small pieces of paper bearing a 'bisect' tied by a genuine obliterator. These items were made at a later date whilst the obliterator was still in current use and are the result of the faker having a willing friend in the post office concerned. It is seldom that these fakes have the corresponding date-stamp on the piece, and if they have it is usually the wrong type. One further observation which will detect a lot of these fakes is the fact that many are on pieces of thin plain card. Genuine bisects are almost always on the thin paper of newspaper wrappers or on the actual newsprint itself and items on anything but these are immediately suspect. Examples of covers carrying bisected 1d. Pines to make up the correct postage are known but they are exceedingly rare and it is easy to distinguish the faked item in this field. Bisected 1d stamps of later issues may also be met with on piece and these are almost always fakes struck with favour strikes of obliterated and / or date-stamps, usually of the wrong type. Incidentally, the 2d.Pine is known genuinely quartered and used as a ½d. stamp on wrapper, although not authorised.

Turning to more modern times, HAGLEY PARK is the latest office to have been noted using an S.C.1 date-stamp with an index letter (in this case, a 'B') above the date and others probably exist. In News Letter No. 7, mention was made of the new dating dies being used on the automatic machines at the Kingston G.P.O., which have 'W.L.' after the word 'JAMAICA', OCHO RIOS is now using a similar type, the earliest known date being February 1973 and mail from other offices using these machines should be checked for further examples of the new types.

Finally, two new TRD's which are in use at older agencies. RAYMONDS was using a new type, TRD41d, struck in purple on February 1st, 1972, and this differs from the TRD41 used at opening in having no asterisk at the sides. FORT GEORGE had its original TRD41(i) replaced by TRD41(ii) about mid-1972, the new sub-type having much larger lettering when compared with the old.