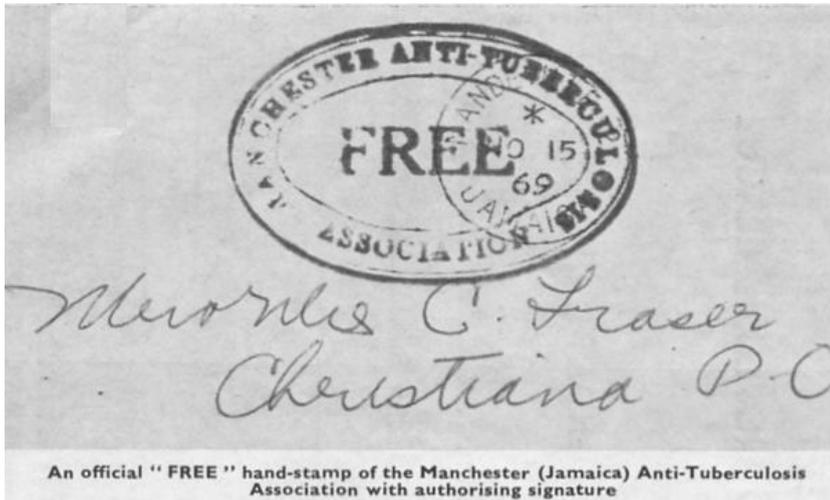
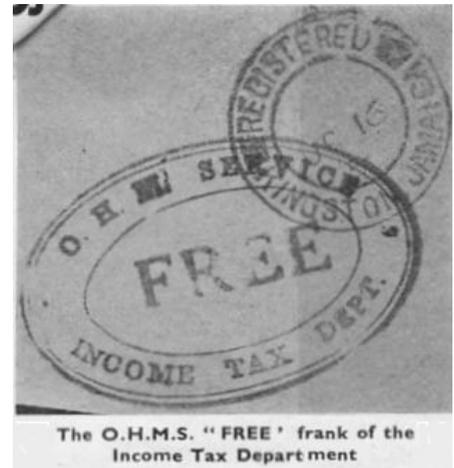


# Jamaica Newsletter No. 27

By Thomas Foster



An official "FREE" hand-stamp of the Manchester (Jamaica) Anti-Tuberculosis Association with authorising signature



The O.H.M.S. "FREE" frank of the Income Tax Department

It has always surprised me that more collectors have not taken an interest in the wealth of official mail emanating from Jamaica.

Officially paid, pre-stamp correspondence is not uncommon but handstamps were not used until 1847 when the Post Office were issued with two daters inscribed, 'On Post Office Business—Free', type FR1. For a time, these sufficed but some years later, a demand for stricter accounting of official mail led to the introduction of specially-overprinted adhesives in 1890, many people being worried that the great use of 'free' mail had led to deficiencies in postal revenue.

At that time, government departments and individual officials were able to send and receive mail free of charge, this entitlement extending to the receipt of registered mail by some ministries. In addition, semi-governmental bodies, schools and a host of charitable organisations had certain of the same privileges so that it would appear that the complaints had some justification! It must be pointed out here that free postage only applied within Jamaica and official mail going out of the island had to be fully paid in the normal way, the only exception being the Post Office who, throughout the years, continued to send their mail completely free.

The introduction of official stamps did not solve the problem and it was not long before complaints relating to their misuse were constantly heard and it came as no surprise therefore, when they were quietly discarded a few years later. In an attempt to tidy up the matter, the list of 'free postage' entitlements was pruned a little but was still very large.

Official policy then reverted to the use of 'free' handstamps inscribed with the name of the Department or Charity, the word 'Free', and the legend 'O.H.M.S.' in various forms, which had to be struck on the letter and signed by the official concerned. A large variety of these markings exist, some being extremely rare and others, unknown!

Each year, the list of entitlements was vetted and adjusted until about 1939, when the practice of issuing individual departments and organisations with distinctive free handstamps ceased and, in their place, all users were issued with official envelopes, either printed with, or which could be handstamped with, various types of the 'Crown in Circle' free markings which exist in black, purple, green, blue or red inks.

Certain of the old free handstamps are still in use and commonly seen, such as the 'Parliament', 'Government Chemist' and 'Ministry of Local Government', and it would surprise many people in this country to know that mail from the Salvation Army, the Y.M.C.A., the Young Women's Catholic League and the Jamaica Cricket Association is carried free of charge!

Some ministries left it to the post office to indicate free postage and the MONTEGO BAY wavy-lined canceller exists with the words 'OFFICIAL PAID' inserted in place of the central section.

A few words of warning! The handstamps used in many offices, and often struck on official mail, must not be confused as postal markings. All handstamps authorising free postage indicated this clearly either by the words 'OFFICIAL PAID' or 'FREE'. The office handstamps mentioned merely indicate the source of the letter, the authorisation being the 'Crown in Circle' free handstamp on the letter itself.

## Postal History

Since about May 3rd, BROWN'S TOWN has been using a new dating die in its automatic cancelling machine, this being in the new style with 'JAMAICA W.I.' at the bottom. Can anyone confirm whether this type of die has appeared at any of the other machine-using offices besides Ocho Rios and Kingston?

The following new TRD's have appeared at the under-mentioned offices and agencies, all being type TRD45 struck in purple unless otherwise stated:

- BEESTON SPRING, February 25th, 1975
- BORDER, TRD41 (iii), May 26th, 1975
- BRAINERD P.O.1, December 12th, 1974
- CASTLETON TRD41d, March 13th, 1975
- CATADUPA TRD41d, April 8th, 1975
- COBBLA, May 6th, 1975
- FRANKLIN TOWN TRD41d, August 21st, 1975
- HIGGIN TOWN, January 3rd, 1975
- LEAMINGTON, March 18th, 1975
- MONGRAVE, March 29th, 1975
- MOUNTAINSIDE, January 8th, 1975
- NEW YARMOUTH, January 1975
- RICHMOND (purple, later black), February 14th, 1975
- SANGSTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, January 6th, 1975
- SAVANNAH LA MAR, May 13th, 1975
- SLIGOVILLE, September 25th, 1975
- WELCOME HALL, March 6th, 1975

BORDER, TRD41(iii), can be distinguished from its earlier daters of this type by the positions of the asterisks at the sides. It is possible that two daters also exist for SAVANNAH LA Mar. The dater for SANGSTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT replaces those of AIRPORT MONTEGO, due to an official renaming of the agency there. In addition, two new registered TRDs have been put into use of the G.P.O. TRD81, circular, inscribed 'REGISTERED' at the top and 'KINGSTON' at the bottom, has an earliest known date of September 22nd, 1975. TRD55c, oval and in purple, reading 'REGISTERED' at the top and 'KINGSTON

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JAMAICA' it the bottom has been seen from February 21st, 1975.

I can also report new last known dates for earlier postal markings, namely, OcHo Rios, P11—April 28th, 1930; RIO BUENO, P11 b—October 3rd, 1902; and HAGLY GAP, PSQC1—September 1927.

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Finally, the 1964 definitives continue to produce previously unrecorded varieties. On the 1d value, Plate 1A, R7/5, a constant flaw appears in the form of a brown dot at the top of the 'O', neatly converting it into a 'U', and this is also to be found on the decimal-overprinted version. I have been shown what appears to be a perfect unmounted mint copy of the 3s value seemingly printed completely in blue! The normal stamp was printed in blue and green, and one can only assume that in some way, the green colour of this 'variety' has been changed, as the two 'blues' match one another exactly.