



Land of Wood and Water

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Jamaica: Temporary adhesive cancelling measures employed due to loss of numeral obliterators, 1860-1886

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If I may be allowed to slightly disagree with a tiny part of what is no doubt a seminal work, then I have to admit that the following passage from Tom Foster's "Jamaica, the Postal History 1662-1860" has always stuck a discordant note:

"All post town date stamps were intended to be struck on the letter leaving the adhesive to be cancelled by the numbered obliterator provided. From time to time, certain offices lost or damaged their oblitterators and cancelled the stamps with their date-stamps. These items are of little significance."

It is with the concluding remark that I tend to disagree. In my mind any "emergency" use of

a circular datestamp or other unusual marking as a direct result of the loss of or damage to an obliterator (rather than attributable to laziness or some other aberration on the part of a local postmaster) forms part of the history of the office concerned and is therefore worthy of further study (Nicholson, incidentally, concurs²). It is these events, some well known, others less so, that form the topic of this article.

Over the past few years I have actively pursued all examples of such temporary measures, not least because this is perhaps the only way to build a representative "CDS used" collection of Jamaica's early issues! Combining details of my

discoveries with information from other sources has been a natural thing to do and in publishing this article I hope that others may be inspired to take a closer look at the "odd" items in their own collections.

The information below, presented chronologically and by office, represents my attempt at dividing the meaningful from the aberrant. For the scarcer usages, I have listed and numbered each individual item and, wherever possible, have also included an illustration. Given the wide range of sources, some of the illustrations leave something to be desired, but should nevertheless be useful as an aid to identification.

1. Use of manuscript "36" at Dry Harbour, 1860-62

This is perhaps the most well known of the "loss of obliterator" events. The rarity of the original A36 Type H obliterator on Imperial stamps³ and the complete lack of specimens on the Pine-apple issue, indicate that the obliterator was lost, mislaid or otherwise put

out of action at some juncture during 1860⁴.

This was not the only mishap to befall the Dry Harbour office, however. Quite possibly concurrently with the loss of the obliterator, the office also mislaid its Foster Type P8 datestamp.

Proof of this is the existence on cover of a previously unrecorded "skeleton" datestamp (Foster Type P7B?) of Dry Harbour dated 9th November 1860⁵.

Thus, when Jamaica's first stamps were issued (23rd November

1860), Dry Harbour was bereft of any suitable cancelling instrument. Faced with this parlous situation, the postmaster at Dry Harbour introduced the practice of pen cancelling stamps with a "36". This practice remained in force until some time between the end of 1860 and November 1862⁶, at which time the replacement Type L obliterator was put into use. I have been able to record 16 examples (see Table 1).

For obvious reasons, all manuscript 36 items should be treated with a certain degree of caution.

Item No.	Value	Notes	Source	Fig.
1.1	1d	Also bears Kingston CDS	Exploring Jamaica through Obliterators ⁷	
1.2	1d	Also bears Kingston A01 at 7 o/c	ex. Hooton Mitchell ⁸	
1.3	1d	Straight edge at left	ex. Hooton Mitchell	
1.4	1d	Also bears Kingston CDS of SP2/62	Author's collection	1
1.5	1d	Pair	ex. Nicholson (Robson Lowe 14-15/2/40 Lot 198)	
1.6	2d	Also bears Kingston A01	Exploring Jamaica through Obliterators	
1.7	2d		ex. Hooton Mitchell	
1.8	2d		Author's collection	2
1.9	4d	Straight edge at left	ex. Hooton Mitchell	
1.10	4d	Also bears Kingston A01 at 8 o/c	Author's collection	3
1.11	4d		Author's collection	3a
1.12	6d	Also bears unidentifiable CDS	Exploring Jamaica through Obliterators	
1.13	6d	Straight edge at right	ex. Hooton Mitchell	
1.14	6d	Small part CDS at left	M. Hamilton "Postmarks 19" Lot 397	
1.15	6d	Also bears Kingston CDS of AP9/61	ex. Amaryllis (Phillips 1/3/01 Lot 324)	
1.16	?	Unidentifiable	Exploring Jamaica through Obliterators	

Table 1



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 3a

2. Use of Foster Type P11a Datestamp at Savanna-la-Mar, 1861-62

The various measures employed at Savanna-la-Mar following the loss of the A75 Type H obliterator in early 1861 were the topic of an article⁹ in the British Caribbean Philatelic Journal. Since then, several further items have come to light. All examples known to the author at the time of writing are summarised in Table 2.

Note: The earliest recorded date of the replacement A75 Type L obliterator at this office is November 23rd 1862.

Item No.	Value	Date	Notes	Source	Fig.
2.1	1d	JU20/61		ex. V.N.F. Surtees ¹⁰	
2.2	1d	JU23/61		Author's collection	
2.3	4d ¹¹	AP4/61		Robson Lowe 2/4/74 Lot 374	
2.4	4d	JU17/61			
2.5	4d	JU20/61		Author's collection (ex. V.N.F. Surtees)	4
2.6	4d	SP16/61	Pair (ex Astley Clerk/Pinchess)	M. Hamilton	
2.7	4d	OC6/62 - LKD		B.W.I. Auctions 1/11/88 Lot 620	
2.8	6d	MR7/61 - EKD		ex. Hooton Mitchell	
2.9	6d	AU23/61	On cover to London	M. Hamilton 22/5/97 Lot 235	
2.10	6d	SP7/61	Pair on cover to Liverpool	ex. V.N.F. Surtees	
2.11	6d	OC17/61			
2.12	6d	OC23/61	On cover to London	Author's collection	4
2.13	6d	MY??/62	Wing margin, left	Pennymead Auctions 23/9/00 Lot 332	
2.14	6d	JU--/62	No day slugs inserted	ex. Hooton Mitchell	
2.15	6d	JY--/62	No day slugs inserted. Facing 9 o/c	ex. Hooton Mitchell	
2.16	6d	JY--/62	No day slugs inserted. Facing 6 o/c	Author's collection	
2.17	6d	JY--/62	No day slugs inserted. Facing 10 o/c	Bill Witschard collection	
2.18	6d	JY23/62		ex. Hooton Mitchell	
2.19	6d	AU4/62			
2.20	6d	AU7/62		Robson Lowe 2/4/74 Lot 376	
2.21	6d	AU21/62		Author's collection	6
2.22	6d	SP22/62			
2.23	6d	SP23/62		ex. Hooton Mitchell	
2.24	6d	OC--/62		M. Hamilton	
2.25	6d	OC--/62	No day slugs inserted. Facing 7 o/c	Bill Witschard collection	
2.26	1s ¹¹	1861	No details available	Robson Lowe 2/4/74 Lot 375	
2.27	1s	JY31/62		M. Hamilton	
2.28	1s	AU7/62		Author's collection	

Table 2



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

3. Redistribution of Obliterators, October 1862

The 1860-62 period saw the closure of several smaller post offices (Ewarton, Little River and Montpelier) and the opening of new offices at Malvern and Newport. Rather than simply transfer two of the obliterated from the closed to the newly opened offices, the Kingston G.P.O. undertook (for the first and only time) a scheme designed to retain the alphabetical integrity of the obliterator distribution.

Nineteen offices were instructed to return their obliterated to Kingston during the last fortnight of October 1862. These were:

Falmouth	Goshen	Lilliput	Mile Gully
Flint River	Grange Hill	Lucea	Moneague
Gayle	Green Island	Manchioneal	Montego Bay
Golden Spring	Highgate	Mandeville	Morant Bay
Gordon Town	Hope Bay	May Hill	

The obliterated from these offices, combined with the A38 from Ewarton and the A50 from Little River, were then re-distributed in such a manner as to include the new offices, alphabetically, within the numbering plan.

During the last two weeks of October 1862, therefore, all of the above named offices were left without the use

of an obliterator. In this situation, many (if not all) resorted to the use of their datestamps to cancel the adhesives on letters posted during this period. Given the very short period of use, all such items are very scarce. It is possible that specimens exist from all nineteen offices affected by the obliterator re-distribution, however Foster only records examples from seven¹², as follows:

Office	Datestamp Used (Foster Type)	Date/Period of Use
Gayle	P8	?? Oct 1862
Golden Spring	P5	24 Oct 1862
Lilliput	P9	23 Oct 1862
Manchioneal	P11	24 Oct 1862
Mile Gully	P9	16 Oct 1862, 24 Oct 1862
Montego Bay	P11a	23 Oct 1862, 27 Oct 1862
Morant Bay	P2a	24 Oct 1862

Unfortunately, none of these items are illustrated in Foster's work, nor are details of the stamp denominations given.

To this list, I can add the following examples (the figures in brackets relate to the denomination and, where known, the orientation of the datestamp):



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Item No.	Office	Datestamp Used	Date	Source	Fig.
3.1a	Falmouth	Foster Type P10c	2? Oct 1862 (2d, 12 o/c)	M. Hamilton 28/5/92 Lot 375	
3.1b			23 Oct 1862 (1d, 7 o/c)	M. Hamilton 28/5/92 Lot 375	
3.1c			23 Oct 1862 (1d, 1 o/c)	Author's collection	
3.1d			23 Oct 1862 (1d, 10 o/c)	M. Hamilton	
3.1e			23 Oct 1862 (6d, 9 o/c)	Author's collection	7
3.1f			28 Oct 1862 (1d, 11 o/c)	M. Hamilton 28/5/92 Lot 375	
3.1g			25 Oct 1862 (1dwml, 5 o/c)	Pennymead 25/9/99 Lot 295	
3.1h			21 Oct 1862 (1d, 11 o/c)	Author's collection	8
3.5a	Gordon Town	Foster Type P5	24 Oct 1862 (4d, 12 o/c)	Phillips 1/3/01 Lot 330	9
3.6a	Goshen	Foster Type P11	17 Oct 1862 (1d, 6 o/c)	M. Hamilton 15/7/92 Lot 1229	
3.6b			21 Oct 1862 (1d, 2 o/c)	Bill Witschard collection	10
3.11a	Lilliput	Foster Type P9	21 Oct 1862 (6d, 3 o/c)	Bill Witschard collection	11
3.12a	Lucea	Foster Type P6	23 Oct 1862 (6d, 5 o/c)	M. Hamilton 22/4/92 Lot 441	12
3.13a	Manchioneal	Foster Type P11	2? Oct 1862 (2d, 5 o/c)	Author's collection	13
			24 Oct 1862 (2d, 5 o/c)	Author's collection	13a
3.18a	Montego Bay	Foster Type P11	23 Oct 1862 (6d, 7 o/c)	Author's collection	14
3.19a	Morant Bay	Foster Type P2a	24 Oct 1862 (2d, 1 o/c)	Author's collection	15

Table 3



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 13a



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

4. Use of Foster Type P9 Datestamp at Mile Gully, 1863-5 and 1883-6

Examples of the use of the Mile Gully P9 datestamp as an adhesive canceller are by no means rare. I have recorded more than 50 examples and there are doubtless many more. Given this frequency, one can be forgiven the first impression that the Mile Gully postmaster, Henry Senior, was less inclined to follow regulations than many of his contemporaries. However, upon closer inspection, and with one solitary exception (best left classified as an honest mistake), two distinct patterns of usage emerge (as shown in Table 4 below and Figs. 16, 17).

The earliest period of use, 1863 to late 1865, is readily explainable. During the re-distribution of obliterators in October 1862, the Mile Gully office relinquished its A55 obliterator and awaited the arrival

of the replacement A54 (ex of May Hill). It now seems certain that the A54 (Type H) obliterator never arrived; it was either temporarily mislaid in transit or at May Hill, or the May Hill postmaster ignored or misunderstood the G.P.O. instructions. This assertion is supported by the existence of a cover from May Hill, dated 3rd August 1871, which clearly shows the use of the A54 (Type H) obliterator at that office⁷.

With no other alternative, the postmaster at Mile Gully simply continued the practice of cancelling stamps with the P9 datestamp. This did not escape the notice of the G.P.O. in Kingston and a replacement A54 (Type J) was eventually requisitioned during 1865 (per Nicholson¹³).

The possible cause of the later pe-

riod, 1883 to mid 1886, is less clear. The A54 obliterators was certainly available for use at some point during 1884-5, as evidenced by examples on 2d stamps with Crown CA watermarks. It is plausible that the A54 (Type J) obliterator was temporarily lost or removed for refurbishment in 1882 or early 1883, leading to the re-introduction of the P9 datestamp as an adhesive canceller, only to be subsequently reintroduced. Why, during 1884-6, it seems to have been used concurrently with the P9 datestamp remains a mystery.

What is clear, however, is that the new “squared circle” combined datestamp and obliterator was in use in early 1886 (the current EKD is 17th March 1886 according to Potter¹⁴).

Year	Date, watermark and value
1863	JA8/63 (Pine 6d), FE6/63 (Pine 1d), FE6/63 (Pine 6d), MR9/63 (Pine 6d), AU7/63 (Pine 6d pair), OC13/63 (Pine 6d), ??23/63 (Pine 1d)
1864	MY7/64 (Pine 2d), JU10/64 (Pine 2d), JY8/64 (Pine 1d), AU23/64 (Pine 6d), OC7/64 (Pine 6d), OC24/64 (Pine 4d), NO8/64 (Pine 2d), DE23/64 (Pine 2d)
1865	JU7/65 (Pine 3d), JU8/65 (Pine 3d), JY6/65 (Pine 2d), SP8/65 (Pine 6d), SP19/65 (Pine 2d), OC24/65 (Pine 1s), NO24/65 (Pine 6d), DE8/65 (Pine 1s), ?Y9/65 (Pine 2d)
1878	JA9/78 (CC 4d)
1883	FE5/83 (CC 2d), MR19/83 (CC 1/2d), AP9/83 (CC 1d), AP16/83 (CC 1d), MY7/83 (CC 1d), JU15/83 (CC 1/2d), JU23/83 (CC 2d pair), JU27/83 (CC 2d), JY8/83 (CC 1d), JY23/83 (CC 1/2d pair), JY23/83 (CC 4d), JY27/83 (CC 1d), AU1/83 (CC 2d), SP1/83 (CC 1/2d), SP7/83 (CA 4d), SP10/83 (CC 1d pair), OC29/83 (CC 1d pair), NO28/83 (CC 1/2d), DE8/83 (2d CC), DE19/83 (CC 1d)
1884	FE11/84 (CC 6d), FE13/84 (CC 1/2d pair), FE25/84 (CC 2d), JU30/84 (CC 2d), SP7/84 (CA 2d - rose), SP15/84 (CA 4d), DE31/84 (CA 2d)
1885	JA30/85 (CC 1d), JU21/85 (CC 2d - rose), AU29/85 (CC 1/2d)
1886	JU24/86 (CA 2d - slate), JY1/86 (CA 1/2d) - Year plugs unclear in both cases, could be 85

Table 4



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

5. Use of assisted and manuscript cancellations at Port Royal, 1875

An interesting soldier’s letter, from Port Royal to Scarborough dated November 24th 1875, was one of several that appeared in the V.N.F. Surtees sale (Lot 692¹⁰ – also illustrated by Foster, page 60¹). What is unusual is that both the Port Royal P11 CDS and the A67 obliterator, used to cancel the adhesive, are “assisted” i.e. parts of both marks are overwritten in

black ink (see Fig. 18).



Fig. 18

That these additions were made by some vandal some time after the letter had arrived at its destination would be an understandable assumption to make. Such a conclusion may indeed have been reached by prospective buyers as the item did not, as it transpired, sell particularly well.

However, the discovery of some ad-

ditional items ex Port Royal perhaps shed a different light. Lot 420 of the B.W.I. Auctions sale of 27/1/84 contains three examples of the use of an assisted A67 obliterator, plus a “normal” example described as being in a “worn or damaged state”. A further example appeared in Lot 139 of the Hooton Mitchell sale⁸. There is also an example known (ex Duffus) of an *entirely* manuscript A67 marking.

It is highly unlikely that all of these items are the work of the aforementioned vandal. What is more probable is that some time during 1875-6, the A67 obliterator in use at Port Royal became so worn (or damaged) or clogged with ink residue that it consistently failed to leave a complete impression. The missing portions of the mark were then duly completed in ink by the postmaster. Perhaps, then, the instrument became so

ineffective that it was withdrawn from service entirely for a short period while repairs or cleaning took place. This would explain the appearance of the manuscript A67 marking.

At this time, this explanation remains supposition. Perhaps if more items come to light, particularly any further dated examples, then this theory could be confirmed.

6. (Possible) Use of Manuscript “37” at Duncans, c.1876

It has long been considered that only one Jamaica manuscript “postmark” exists, that being the “36” employed at Dry Harbour between 1860-2 (see section 1). However, two copies of another manuscript marking, coincidentally “37”, have now been discovered.

Obliterator A37 was used at Duncans between 1860 and “about 1880”¹³ at which point it was replaced, for reasons unknown but presumably loss or damage, by the lettered obliterator B.

The two manuscript “37” markings (Figs. 19 and 20) are undeniably in the same hand and *could* represent the period between the loss of the A37 and the arrival of the replacement B. It is widely believed that the lettered

obliterators A to E were intended for use at new offices or as temporary replacements should other instruments be taken out of service for some reason. The important fact is that they were already on the island and therefore could be deployed very quickly.

If these manuscript “37” markings are indeed examples of an emergency practice used at Duncans prior to the arrival of the B obliterator, then it is likely that this practice was in use for a matter of mere weeks, if not days.

One of the specimens bears no other postal markings of any kind. The other, however, has a part London/Registered mark of (possibly) DE/76¹⁸.



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

7. Use of Foster Type P11 Datestamp at Falmouth, 1881

Another relatively common example of the irregular use of a datestamp as an adhesive canceller is the use of the P11 datestamp at Falmouth between March and September 1881¹⁵, of which I have recorded 22 examples (see Table 5)

Two examples are illustrated (Figs. 21 and 22).

According to Nicholson, the Falmouth office changed from the A38 Type H obliterator to the A38 Type N obliterator “about 1880”, presumably due to the loss of, or damage to, the original instrument. With this in mind and given the quantity and well defined date range of the P11 examples, I think

Value	Dates
1/2d CA	AU5/81
1d CA	MR23/81 - EKD, JU1/81, JU8/81, JU13/81 (pair), JU??/81, JY17/81, AU7/81
2d CA	MY2/81 (strip of 6), JU6/81, JU13/81 (strip of 3), JU13/81 (single), JY15/81
3d CA	JU23/81, JY5/81
4d CA	MY7/81, JU7/81, JU23/81, JY6/81, JY28/81
Unknown ²	AP20/81, JU17/81, SP5/81—LKD

Table 5

it is reasonable to suggest that the P11 was employed during the period between the loss of the original obliterator and the arrival of its replacement¹⁶.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

8. Other possible candidates

There is one common factor linking all of these examples of the irregular use of manuscript marks or datestamps for adhesive cancelling purposes. All have occurred due to the loss of or damage to obliterators and have a lifespan equivalent to the period between the loss and the arrival of a suitable replacement.

In addition to Dry Harbour, Savanna-la-Mar, Mile Gully and Falmouth (and excluding those offices which closed only to subsequently re-open with a different obliterator), nine other post offices are known to have utilised two obliterators in the years after 1860. These are listed in Table 6.

It is possible that emergency cancelling measures of some description may have been used at any or all of these offices in the period between the withdrawal from service of the first obliterator and the introduction of the second. To date, I have come across two potential candidates. However, as they are all, at present, single examples they must remain in the

Office	First Obliterator	Second Obliterator	Approximate Date of Change ¹³
Annotto Bay	A28 Type H	A28 type M	circa 1876
Lacovia	E30 Type K	A64 Type H	circa 1891
Mandeville/May Hill	A53 Type H (ver. 1)	A53 Type H (ver. 2)	circa 1862 ¹⁷
Milk River	A Type P	201 Type O	circa 1875
Montego Bay	A56 Type H	A56 Type K	circa 1876
Ocho Rios	A60 Type H	A60 Type M	circa 1876
Richmond	A79 Type H	A79 Type J	circa 1865
Spanish Town	A76 Type H	A76 Type O	circa 1874

Table 6

“aberrant” category for the time being until such time as their status can be determined. The three are:

- A Pineapple 1d cancelled with the Foster Type P11 datestamp of Montego Bay, dated DE13/7?
- A Crown CC 1d cancelled with the Foster Type P11b datestamp of Spanish Town, dated JY5/75

In addition, Foster records the use of the rare Type P13 datestamp at Lacovia between 3rd September 1888 and 9th December 1891. I have not seen any examples of this instrument (Foster states that three are known) so I am unable to determine whether the P13 datestamp was used as an adhesive canceller or in conjunction with an obliterator.

To conclude....

This article has been based upon items from my own collection combined with information drawn from readily available sources. As such, it is almost certainly far from

complete, but hopefully will provide a good platform for the further study of this interesting area of Jamaican postal history. I would be most interested in hearing from

any fellow collectors able to correct or add to the information presented.

Footnotes and References

1. Jamaica - The Postal History 1662-1860 by T. Foster. Robson Lowe 1968. Page 100
2. Dated Postmarks on Early Jamaica Stamps by L. C. C. Nicholson. The Jamaica Philatelist, June 1931
3. Foster records only seven examples of the A36 Type H obliterator used on Imperial stamps
4. It is known that stocks of Imperial stamps had begun to run out at several offices as early as 1859, even before their official withdrawal from use on 1st August 1860. In these circumstances, the obliterators at most, if not all, offices became temporarily redundant, possibly leading to their loss or damage
5. Robson Lowe 4/7/80 Lot 1926. Foster records (as Type P7) two versions of a utility datestamp “intended for provisional use in case of the damage to or loss of any current date-stamp”. The first type, only known used at Clarendon in 1855, measures 33mm in diameter. Use of the second type, sent out in 1858 and measuring 27½mm in diameter, is not recorded by Foster at any office
6. The only other Type L obliterator (A75 used at Savanna-la-Mar), requisitioned at the same time as the replacement A36, has an earliest known date of use of November 23rd 1862 (Cover to London in the author’s collection)
7. Exploring Jamaica through Obliterators by I. R. Woodward. BCPSG 1982
8. The Hooton Mitchell collection of

- Jamaican cancellations.
Stanley Gibbons 21-22/9/72
9. Savanna-la-Mar, Jamaica, 1861-62 by W. Atmore. BCPJ, December 1994
 10. The V.N.F. Surtees Jamaica collection. Robson Lowe 14-15/9/76
 11. Lot 1419 of the Erickson sale (Robson Lowe 6/9/72) contains two 4d Pineapple *on separate pieces* and a 1s Pineapple (amongst others) all with the Savanna-la-Mar P11 CDS. Unfortunately, no further details are given and none of the items are illustrated
 12. Jamaica - The Postal History 1662-1860 by T. Foster. Robson Lowe 1968. Page 101
 13. Jamaica - Its Postal History, Postage Stamps and Postmarks by Collett, Buckland Edwards, Morton and Nicholson. Stanley Gibbons 1928
 14. The Postal Markings of Jamaica ed. I. A. Potter. 1996
 15. A 1½d on 3d UPU Post Card is known used from Falmouth cancelled with the P11 datestamp of FE7/82 (BWISC 25/4/98 Lot 251). Whether this item represents a legitimate extension of the period of use of the P11 datestamp at Falmouth as the primary or only canceller remains to be confirmed
 16. It is not certain when, *if at all*, the replacement A38 Type N was put into use at Falmouth (I am not aware of any dated examples of the use of the Type N obliterator at that office). The new type "squared circle" instrument was introduced at some juncture during 1882 and the A38 Type N was in use at Up Park Camp by 1884
 17. The history of the A53 obliterator at Mandeville and, after October 1862, at May Hill is rather mysterious. Nicholson notes "On 11 May, 1863, another A53 obliterator [differing very slightly from the original - author's note] was sent out, entered in the G.P.O. Record Book as "for Mandeville" (evidently ordered before November 1862). It is evident that the original A53 was mislaid...." It may be assumed, therefore, that possibly both Mandeville (prior to October 1862) and May Hill (from November 1862) were left bereft of an obliterator for some extended period
 18. See Jamaica Oddities by W. Atmore. BCPJ, December 1997
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