

THE STAMPS OF TOBAGO.

By F. F. LAMB.

Few West Indian stamps are more interesting than those from the Island of Tobago. Tobago is a dependency of Trinidad, with a population of about 18,000 of which number a large proportion are coloured people, most of whom would of course make very little use of the postal service.

Tobago, like some other Islands of the Windward and Leeward groups has had rather a chequered career as far as its postal history is concerned. The first letters posted in Tobago were franked through the post without the aid of stamps, it not being until April, 1858, that stamps were available. During that month the 1d, 2d, 4d, 6d and 1sh of the then current stamps of Great Britain were placed on sale. These stamps were in use until April, 1860, when they were withdrawn. The following notice, copied from the 7th report of the Postmaster-General on the Post Office for the year 1861, giving the reason for their withdrawal.

"The transfer of the management of 'the Posts in the West Indies from 'this Office to the Local Government—an object long desired by this Department from a conviction that the 'direction on the spot would be much 'more efficient and economical than 'when conducted at a distance—was 'last year carried into effect."

After English stamps were withdrawn, and they were certainly in use until April, 1860, the old plan of prepaying letters was reverted to. The cancellation used was the same as the one in use before April, 1858, namely, a double-lined oval-shaped circle, containing the words "Paid at Tobago," and broken at the top by a Crown.

This frank was not used when stamps were available.

I have examined a number of entires posted from Tobago between April 1858 and April 1860, nearly all of which had the postage paid by means of the 6d emblems of 1856, and cancelled with the A14 obliteration.

For nearly twenty years after English stamps were withdrawn, the Island pre-paid its letters in cash—a mode of procedure that seems hardly credible, when it is remembered that the neighbouring Island of Trinidad has had its own stamps since 1851.

PROVISIONALS, AUGUST, 1879.

The first Tobago stamps, inscribed Tobago, were issued during July or August, 1879, and consisted of six values, namely, the 1d, 3d, 6d, 1sh, 5sh and 20sh. These stamps were originally intended for fiscal purposes, and it is not until they were authorised for use as postage stamps that they have any value in the eyes of philatelists. Naturally enough, the four new values were fairly extensively used for prepaying correspondence between the Island and Great Britain, while a number found their way to the other West Indian Islands, America and elsewhere. The 5sh and £1 stamps, however, were little used, and collectors should be on the look out for cleaned copies of these two values, also stamps with forged postmarks.



The catalogue prices for these six stamps is I think a very fair criterion as to their relative rarity. The 5sh slate, with genuine cancellation, being worth about £5. These stamps were engraved and printed by Messrs. De la Rue & Co., as are all Tobago stamps; and like all following issues were perforated 14. They were watermarked Crown & CC.

1879. Fiscal stamps authorised for postage.

1d rose.
3d blue.
6d orange.
1sh green.
5sh slate.
£1 mauve.

SECOND PROVISIONAL, 1880.

Owing to a shortage of 1d stamps it was found necessary to create this value by surcharging the 6d stamp, this was done by hand with black ink, each half of the stamp receiving one surcharge—1d—the stamp being then divided vertically with scissors. Naturally enough, being a manuscript surcharge, there is no difficulty in forging it, so collectors are warned against buying unless they have a guarantee of genuineness. This stamp is referred to in the *Philatelic Record* for June, 1881 in the new issue list and chronicled as "a pair of very curious provisional stamps of undoubted authenticity, postmarked the 6th November 1880."

This provisional was undoubtedly primarily used as a *fiscal*, pure and simple, but as all the stamps then in use were available both as postals and fiscals, it naturally followed that a few went through the post.

Nov. 1880. Provisional 1d on 6d.

1d on right half of 6d orange.
1d on left half of 6d orange.

REGULAR ISSUE, 1880.

Towards the end of 1880, Messrs. De la Rue sent out a supply of stamps, inscribed Tobago and Postage, using a similar die to the one they had already used for the stamps of St. Christopher, Dominica, etc. The fact that only five values were printed, namely, the ½d, 1d, 4d, 6d and 1sh, proves pretty conclusively that there must have been an *extremely* limited demand for 5sh and 20sh stamps.

It will be noticed that the 3d value was omitted, while a stamp with a face value of ½d was substituted. The colours, too, were all changed.

Considering that these stamps were in use from 1880, until they were gradually replaced, between 1882 and 1884, by those printed on CA paper, it is a wonder that they are all so comparatively rare.

1880. Crown and CC. Perf. 14.

½d purple-brown.
1d venetian-red.
4d yellow-green.
6d stone.
1sh yellow-ochre.

APRIL, 1883. PROVISIONAL, 2½D ON 6D.

This, the first Tobago type-set surcharge was overprinted locally, "2½ PENCE" on the 6d value. The overprint is well done, unfortunately it proved the forerunner of many other surcharges.

This stamp was only in use for a



short time, being replaced in November, 1883, by the 2½d blue. Like most of the surcharged stamps of Tobago, this value was somewhat largely speculated in, with the consequence that the current quotation of 3sh does not represent its true market value.

2½d on 6d stone, wmk. Crown & CC.

CROWN AND CA, 1883-1884.

The first of the Tobago stamps to appear on Crown and CA paper were the ½d and 1d values, which were on sale during the early part of 1883. The 2½d ultramarine shortly followed, taking the place of the provisional already described. It was not until well on in the next year (1884) that the 4d green and 6d stone were issued. The 2½d was also printed in a duller blue, in which shade it is now considerably rarer than the 2½d ultramarine, owing to the former having been extensively used for surcharging.

The colours of these stamps were exactly the same as those used for the CC series. Very few marked shades exist—in fact, there are few countries where shades give less trouble—(or pleasure).

1883-4. Crown and CA.

½d purple-brown.
1d venetian red.
2½d blue.
2½d ultramarine.
4d yellow-green.
6d stone.

1885-6 CROWN AND CA.

Owing to the change of colours necessitated by the Postal Union, several of the stamps, as the supplies ran short, were replaced by stamps in new colours. The 4d pearl grey was the first of these changings to appear, which it did about May of 1885. The 1d rose followed during November, the 6d orange and the ½d green, not being used until the summer of 1886. Owing to the tardy arrival of the ½d green, it was found necessary to surcharge various values for use as ½d stamps. I will, however, describe these surcharges separately.

1885-6. Crown and CA.

½d green.
1d red.
4d pearl-grey.
6d orange-brown.

PROVISIONALS, 1885-89.

The Postmaster at Tobago, evidently was quite aware of the possibilities of surcharging stamps, both as a means of using up old stock, as a profitable transaction, and possibly as the best means of supplying a real demand.

As before mentioned, it was owing to the late arrival of the ½d green that necessitated a number of sheets of the 2½d blue, 6d stone and 6d orange being surcharged "½ PENNY." The 6d stone was the first value to be so treated, followed by the 2½d blue and 6d orange.

Although no variations of the type itself exist, there are several well known varieties. The best known being the variety where the figure of value is printed further away from the word, 3 mm. instead of 2 mm. This variety is to be found on all three varieties.

The fourth surcharge was on the 2½d blue, "1 PENNY" and was issued during July, 1889, nearly three years after the ½d surcharges.

The spaced variety is also known on this stamp. Several other values exist; personally, I am rather doubtful as to their claim to catalogue rank. The British Museum collection contains a pair of the ½d on 6d stone, the lower

stamp having the surcharge inverted. Another curiosity, in a pair, shows the lower stamp without surcharge.

1886-89.

½d on 2½d blue.

½d on 6d stone.

½d on 6d orange-brown.

Variety, ½d and penny spaced.

½d on 2½d blue.

½d on 6d stone.

½d on 6d orange-brown.

Surcharge known inverted, double and also in a pair, one stamp without surcharge.

1d on 2½d dull blue.

Variety, 1 and penny spaced.

1d on 2½d dull blue.

1891-4, PROVISIONALS.

Yet more provisionals, fortunately almost the last Tobago was to issue, have now to be listed. They consist of the 2½d on 4d grey, in a type smaller—but similar—to the first 2½d surcharge of 1883, and the ½d on the same value in the same type as the previous surcharges on the 6d stone and 6d orange-brown.

The "spaced" variety is not, however, known on the 4d grey.

The spaced variety occurs, however, on the last of the Tobago surcharges, namely, the 4d lilac and carmine fiscal stamp, which was surcharged for postal service. Both varieties occur on the same sheet, and it is said of this stamp that it was not sold over the P.O. counter, but was affixed to letters by the postal clerks. I am afraid the number of surcharges is disproportional, considering the number of Tobago stamps issued.

1891-4. Provisional ½d and 2½d.

½d on 4d pearl-grey.

2½d on 4d pearl-grey.

½d on 4d lilac and carmine, fiscal stamp.

Variety, ½d and 1d, spaced.

½d on 4d, fiscal stamp.

Doubtless numerous curiosities exist, such as double surcharge, pair, one with and one without surcharge, inverted surcharge, and so on.

1894, 1SH YELLOW.

The CC 1sh yellow-ochre, of 1880, being but in small demand the supply sent out in that year lasted until 1894, when a fresh supply printed on CA paper was received from Messrs. De la Rue & Co.

Two marked shades exist, namely olive, and greenish-yellow.

The design, of course, is the same as all other CA Tobago stamps, and they were printed, as were all the other values, in panes of 60.

1894. Crown & CA.

1sh olive-yellow.

1sh greenish-yellow.

1896, 1SH ORANGE-BROWN.

The last consignment from Messrs. De la Rue & Co. consisted of a parcel of 6,000 1sh stamps, printed, however in error, in the colour of the current 6d. These stamps were largely cornered by speculators, with the result that the current market price is not commensurate with the number of stamps printed.

1896. Error of colour.

1sh orange-brown.

Although I described in the *P. J. G. B.* for March last an interesting flaw that is to be found on the stamps of Tobago, I think the description will bear repetition. The below illustration shows at a glance the position of the flaw, namely, just above the "e" of "postage," this flaw is to be found on all the five values of the 1885-94 issues.

Another variety and one possibly not so well known is to be found on the 1d red of 1885, and consists of a marked difference in the size of the letter o in the word "one."

Minute differences are also to be found in the word "pence" on the 4d pearl grey—but they are not so marked as the

one described on the 1d value.

Frequently collectors are puzzled by seeing Tobago stamps without the word Postage in the design, on both CC and CA paper. These are fiscals, pure and simple. Any postmarked copies, excepting those of course used prior to December, 1880, have been cancelled to order.

Early during January 1900, the Crown Agents for the Colonies offered for sale the remainder of Tobago stamps, consisting of the following:—

Postage Stamps. Crown and CA.

½d green 10,927

1d rose 2,833

2½d blue 6,989

4d grey 4,775

6d orange 3,941

1sh ochre 7,553

These stamps were not, I believe, tendered for all the time, but from the number of them on the market at the present time they must, I think, have been subsequently sold to a dealer. At the time they were offered a guarantee was given that they constituted the whole stock then held by the Trinidad Government, also that the plates from which they were printed had been destroyed.

As everybody knows, the stamps of Tobago are now obsolete. Trinidad stamps being used in the Island. I was recently examining a lot of Trinidad stamps with the Tobago postmark, which is the usual circular hand stamp, containing Tobago at the top and a letter (generally A. B. or C.) and the date and year, when I noticed that in nearly every case the letter in the postmark was either inverted or sideways.

The letter and the date in the postmark are of course movable, so that owing to carelessness it might occasionally happen that the letter was misplaced, but why should it in 90 cases out of a 100 be either upside down or sideways? —*Phil. Journal of Great Britain.*