

SIERRA LEONE—ITS POSTAL ISSUES.

By P. L. PEMBERTON.

For the first twelve years of its philatelic history this West African Colony was content to issue only 6d postage stamps, this was between 1860 and 1872. Until the latter date there was no inland Postal Service within the Colony, and 6d being the foreign letter rate, it was not thought necessary to issue stamps of any other denomination.

This stamp is unique in its shape and is also, I believe, the only normal-sized stamp which continued to be printed on Crown CC paper until late in the '90's. The reason for the latter peculiarity will be seen later.

6d, No Wmk., Perf. 14.

The first issue of the 6d was made in 1860, probably very late in the year. It was printed in dull purple or lilac, on unwatermarked paper, perf. 14. The sheets consisted of 240 stamps, arranged in twelve panes of 20, in four rows of three. Each pane consisted of 20 stamps in five rows of four. Round the margins and in the spaces between the panes appeared the inscriptions "Sierra Leone—Postage." "Price—6 Pence per Label—2 Shillings per Row of 4—1 Pound per Sheet of 40." The paper was bluish of varying degrees of intensity, or white. Until quite recently most catalogues mentioned this stamp imperforate but since no satisfactory used specimen has turned up it is now believed that the unsorted specimens are proofs, a verdict which is strengthened by the fact of their being on paper which is rather different from that of the perforated stamps.



1872-73 ISSUE, PERF. 12½.

In 1872, no doubt owing partly to the formation of the Inland Postal Service and partly to the need for other values owing to a revision of the postal rates for the Foreign Service, four new values were issued in a design somewhat resembling that afterwards used for the neighbouring Colony of Gold Coast. These four values, the 1d, 3d, 4d and 1sh were printed on paper with the watermark Crown CC sideways and were, together with the 6d, perforated 12½. The last mentioned still came on unwatermarked paper as the Crown CC paper, being made for sheets of stamps arranged in four panes of sixty, could not be made to fit a sheet constructed of twelve panes of twenty. The colour of the 6d was, at the same time, changed to bright violet but the paper continued to be, variously, bluish or white. Mint unused specimens with this perforation, on white paper, are amongst the *desiderata* which collectors should be on the look out for.

In September, 1873, new printings of the 1d, 3d, 4d and 1sh, together with a new value, the 2d, arrived in the Colony and these had the wmk. Crown CC upright. The 3d of this printing was in a very curious shade of saffron-yellow which sometimes stained the paper slightly giving a tinted appearance on

the back. To get sets of the four values with watermark sideways and upright, either unused or used, should be the aim of even the moderate specialist.

It will be noticed, on examining specimens of this issue that the value, which is expressed in words, in the lower label, is rarely in exactly the same shade of colour as the rest of the design while occasionally there is quite a marked difference. It is thus evident that the values were printed at a second operation and that the same plate printed the main portion of the design for all values.

1876-77, Wmk. Crown CC, Perf. 14.

This issue is identical with the last in design and watermark, but perforated 14. Two new values, ½d and 1½d, were added, and all continued to be printed at two operations. All the values are becoming scarce, especially in mint condition, and have shewn marked rises in price in recent years.

JUNE, 1883, Wmk. Crown CA.

This set consists of three values only, the ½d, 2d, and 4d, which are the same as in the last issue but have the wmk. changed to Crown CA. The 4d unused is the greatest rarity among the standard varieties of Sierra Leone. Ten years ago it was worth more than it is today, but an entire pane turned up about the year 1900 which enabled many collectors to provide themselves with copies at prices ranging from £5 to £8 each.

1884-93, Wmk. Crown CA.

This issue is the same design as before, but most of the values are in new colours. A 2½d value was introduced in 1891. All the stamps of this issue, as well as the preceding issues, were printed from plate 1. As with most De la Rue printings of this period, the gum varied from brownish to white. The values most frequently found with the brown gum are the 2d, 4d and 1sh. The most desirable stamp of the set is the first printing of the 1d, which is in the shade of the CC printings instead of in the bright carmine, in which it afterwards appeared.

Crown CC, 6d.

As mentioned before, the sheets of the 6d were so inconvenient in shape that they continued to be printed on unwatermarked paper until 1885. At this date it was found that, though unsuitable, the paper which was used for large-sized Colonial stamps, to wit, the 2r 50c Ceylon and the 5sh stamps of Trinidad and Natal, could be used for the 6d Sierra Leone. Supplies on this paper were first issued in 1885. This colour was similar to that of the last issue of this value, but the perf. was altered to 14. In May, 1890, the *Philatelic Record* chronicled the change of colour from violet to "brown" i.e. to the shade catalogued as "brown-purple." The Philatelic Society's work on Africa fixes the date of this stamp as Jan., 1890. The same work fixes the next change of shade, to brown-lake, at April, 1896, but as it was noted in the *Ph. J. of G. B.*, for April 10, 1896, it is certain that the date of issue could have been no later than March of that year. The brown-purple and brown-lake shades are still attainable in entire panes of 20, and specialists should endeavour to procure a pane with the inscribed margins in-

tact. In this condition they are very beautiful and of convenient shape for an ordinary album. A pane will also show how much too widely spaced are the watermarks for stamps of this size, and if the pane is from the top or bottom of the sheet it may show that no portion of the watermark appears on the upper or lower row of stamps.

"HALF-PENNY" ON 1½d. 1893.

This surcharge was normally applied just above the middle of the stamp with two lines obliterating the original value at foot. The overprinting, being done locally, was not always in its correct position, and specimens in which the two obliterating bars were either too high or too low, frequently have a line ruled by hand in ink across the words, "3 half pence." These manuscript lines were sometimes drawn across the sheets without a break, but more often they were done in short lines which just covered the old values. An error occurred on the first stamp of the third row, reading "PENNY." There were also many minor varieties in which HALF appears HALF or HAIF, but these, and others, were due to defective printing and were not constant. The surcharge is also found inverted.

At the date of this provisional the 1½d on CA paper had only just superseded that with the CC watermark, and while most of the surcharges were applied on the new stamps, there were a few sheets with the CC watermark left on hand which were used. The stamps with this surcharge are very rare, while the error PENNY is, of course, sixty times scarcer. The greatest care should be exercised in buying these stamps as the surcharges have been cleverly counterfeited.



ISSUE OF 1896-97.

This set is in one of Messrs. De la Rue and Co.'s convenient designs which were adaptable for several different Colonies. The stamps were printed with the labels at top and below left blank for the reception of the name and value at a second printing. The set comprised the same values as before with the addition of the 5d, 2sh, 5sh, and £1. There are slight shades of most of the lower values. Marginal strips or blocks shewing the plate number should be sought for. The first head plate had been dissipated in the preparation of stamps for Gold Coast, Leeward Isles, etc., before 1896, and therefore all the values of this issue are from plate 2, while supplies of the ½d, 1d and 3d, were also printed, later on, from plate 3. These are well worth procuring, especially the last mentioned.

SURCHARGED FISCALS, 1897.

This provisional issue was rendered necessary by a shortage of 1d and 2½d stamps. To make up for the former the one penny revenue stamps were overprinted with the words "Postage—and—Revenue" in three lines. Gibbons'

catalogue lists a variety with double surcharge, but I have not seen it.

The 3d and 6d Revenue stamps were similarly overprinted but with the addition of six bars covering the old value and the new value surcharged in numerals. Of this surcharge there are four types. The entire sheets of sixty stamps, in six rows of ten, were overprinted by a setting of type arranged in three rows of ten, which was applied twice to each sheet. The varieties occur in the following quantities on each sheet:—

Forty-four of Type	I.
Ten ... "	III.
Four ... "	IV.
Two ... "	V.

The 1sh and 2sh revenue stamps were overprinted with "Postage and Revenue" in two lines, and five bars instead of six obliterating the old value. The 2½d surcharge now appears above instead of below "Postage and Revenue," and in addition to three of the types appearing in the setting just described there are two others, Nos. 2 and 6. This setting was arranged in three rows of ten as before and applied twice to each sheet. The numbers of each type are as follows:—

Forty-four of Type	I.
Two ... "	II.
Four ... "	III.
Eight ... "	IV.
Two ... "	VI.

The number of 1sh and 2sh sheets overprinted was very small, especially of the latter, and the completion of the

set of types on this value will be found to be a matter of the greatest difficulty.

KING'S HEAD ISSUE.

This set presents few special features. It first appeared in 1903 on paper water-marked with single *Crown CA*. There must have been a very small supply of these, as they were shortly superseded by the issue on *mult. Crown CA* paper. The single *wmk.* stamps are therefore worth procuring, and their present catalogue quotations seems to be less inflated than those of most other King's Heads with the single *wmk.* Only one of the values in the original colors appeared on the *mult.* ordinary paper, namely, the 1d, and of this there could have been but



a small printing. All values have since been issued on chalky paper.

In 1907 the ½d, 1d and 2½d appeared in single colours, instead of bi-coloured as at first issued, and on multiple ordinary paper.

POSTAL FISCALS.

A provisional fiscal stamp was issued in 1894 formed by surcharging the long 6d Revenue stamp with the new value "One Penny" in words. There were two

settings of the surcharge which can be distinguished in single specimens by the presence or absence of a hyphen between "One" and "Penny." I have seen a portion of a sheet of the setting without hyphen, from which it seems that the surcharges were probably set up in a block of 60 in order to print the whole sheet at one time, and not, as in the case of the 2½d surcharges of 1897, in a block of fifteen which was struck twice on each sheet. A variety without stop after PENNY occurs more than once on each sheet, but I am only able to locate one of these which occurs on the second stamps in the fifth row. There is also a variety with inverted "N" in "PENNY." The stamps in the first, second and fourth rows have the value obliterated with two thick and one thin line. In the third and fifth rows there are one thick and three thin lines, the two centre thin lines being very close together, on the bottom row there is one thick and three thin lines, all of which are equal distances apart.

The setting with the hyphen is much commoner than the other, but I have not seen a large block of it. From the fact that the same varieties as I have described are said to occur in it it seems possible that the type was not re-arranged and that the hyphens were either removed or inserted. There is no necessity for a hyphen between the words "One Penny" and the probability is that the surcharge being first set up with the hyphen was afterwards corrected.—*Phil. Jour. of Gt. Britain.*