

THE STAMPS OF ST. HELENA.

By P. L. PEMBERTON.

This is not a difficult country for a "moderate specialist" as all the normal issues are attainable, both used and unused, though many of them are worth from 10sh to 40sh each. Of late years they have been somewhat out of favour ("out of fashion" would be a better term) and consequently can be obtained, in common with many other interesting old Colonials, at prices which should show a very considerable advance when their "turn" comes round.

The population of St. Helena, including troops, at the last census was about 5,000, but as the Garrison has recently been withdrawn the number is reduced to 2,000. Some idea of what this small population is can be gathered from the fact that it would not greatly tax the accommodation of an average liner. I am informed that since the troops left it has only been necessary to open the post office on one day in each week, so stamps of the current issues used in the ordinary way should become scarce.

ISSUE OF 1856-63.

The date of the first issue of stamps is generally given as Jan. 1, 1856, but it is possible that the imperf. 6d was issued before that date, as the supply was despatched to the Colony on Sept. 1st, 1855. Collectors should therefore always be on the look out for these stamps on entires, in the hope of finding one used in the last month of 1855. At this time the postage for a half-ounce letter to Great Britain was 6d, whether sent by Packet or by Private Ship; and it was not, at first, thought necessary to issue stamps of any other denominations.

Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Co. were the printers of the first sixpenny stamp. The plate, which was of steel, contained 240 impressions arranged in twenty horizontal rows of twelve. The stamps were printed on paper watermarked with the large Star, similar to that issued by the same firm for Ceylon, New Zealand and other Colonies. The first issue was without perforation and was in a shade of blue which varies but little on different specimens. The imperf. stamps were in use for five years, and at the end of 1860 the printers despatched 6,000 stamps



which were perforated 14 to 16 with fairly clean-cut holes. They are described in Gibbons' as "clean-cut" but they are never so clean-cut as the perforations of the 5d Ceylon, Star, the Queenlands of 1860, or the clean-cut perfs. of Trinidad. Later on the same stamp appeared perforated 14 to 16 rough. The exact date when the latter variety was issued is not known, but according to The Philatelic Society's work on Africa it was more than twelve months later than the date given in Gibbons' Catalogue (Jan. 1863). Several varieties of this stamp with bogus perforations gauging 12 or 13 are known.

FIRST SURCHARGED ISSUE, IMPERF.

In 1863 the postage rate to Great Britain was raised from 6d to 1sh per ounce if sent by Packet, and reduced to 4d if sent by Private ship. At the same time the rate for newspapers was fixed at 1d and private soldiers' and non-commissioned officers' letters were allowed to pass at this rate. These changes necessitated the issue of new stamps.

In the meantime, the contract for printing St. Helena stamps was transferred from Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Co. to Messrs. De La Rue & Co. The latter firm supplied the new stamps, which were printed from the same plates as before (which were handed over by Messrs. Perkins, Bacon) but in new colours and with the new value surcharged in black. The stamps were imperforate as, at that time, Messrs. De La Rue had no machine capable of perforating stamps of this size. The watermark is Crown & CC and it is worthy of note that there are only three other instances of stamps with this watermark which were ever intentionally issued imperforate, these being the 4d and 6d Gambia of 1874, and the 1d triangular Cape of Good Hope, of which only very few copies are known to exist.

There are two varieties of the One Penny surcharge. In one the bar under the words measures 16½ to 17 mm., in the other about 18½ mm. In some sheets all the stamps are of one variety, but unsevered pairs are known shewing both types side by side, from which it follows that some sheets were printed on which both varieties were represented. Pairs shewing both types together are of great rarity and are amongst the most desirable objects that a specialist can acquire.

While the 1d surcharge appears on the 6d stamps printed in lake, the 4d is on a rose-carmin stamp. The latter is known with double surcharge, but from its rarity this variety is not likely to trouble any of my readers. The lake stamp is known without overprint and specimens have changed hands at fancy prices, but no used copy is known. The best authorities agree that it was never issued in this state.

FIRST PERFORATED ISSUE, 1864-67.

Either at the end of 1863 or early in 1864, Messrs. De La Rue acquired a new guillotine perforating machine, giving a gauge of 12½, and the St. Helena stamps were among the first to be operated upon. The set included two new values, namely, the 3d., which was rendered necessary by an alteration in the postal rates, fixing the postage on books not exceeding a quarter of a pound at that amount, and the 1sh. All the stamps were printed from the same plate as before, and surcharged with the new value and a long thin bar, the latter measuring from 16 to 17 mm.—nearly the same length as the words. The colour of the 1d remained as before, but the 4d was changed slightly, but appreciably, in shade, having less rose in it. The 3d was printed in purple and the 1sh in yellow-green. In order to distinguish the 1d of this issue from that of 1871-73, it is necessary to remember that the letters forming the surcharge measure 2½-2¾ mm. in height instead of 3 mm. as in the later issue.

SHORT THICK BAR ISSUE, 1865 TO '68.

During the years of 1865 to 1868 new printings of all values were made, in which the surcharges were re-set. For purposes of identification it is only necessary to note that the bars are thicker and shorter, measuring from 14 to 14½, and, in the case of the one penny, occasionally 15 mm. in length. The words also differ in length, notably in the case of the one shilling. Two new values were added during this period, both having the same characteristics. These were the 5sh and 2d. In the latter, owing to the words not taking up so much space, they barely exceed the length of the bar, but in all the other values the words are much longer than the bar.

The four pence of this set is found in two different types of surcharge, in one the words measure about 18 mm. in length and in the other, which is the rarer, the measurement is about 19 mm.

This issue provides several varieties with double surcharge, and in order to explain how these occurred it is important to remember how the surcharges were printed. The entire sheets contained 240 stamps in twenty horizontal rows of twelve, the surcharges were set up in blocks of sixty in five horizontal rows of twelve, which necessitated the sheets being put four times through the press. It follows that if the sheets were not placed exactly in position to receive the different descents of the press, double surcharges would be inevitable, and in proportion to the number of horizontal rows of stamps which received two surcharges there would be rows without any surcharge at all. This is known to have occurred in the case of the 1sh value. An entire sheet turned up some years ago on which the stamps in the fifth row all had a double surcharge, and all in the tenth row were without surcharge. It is known that this sheet was never issued at the post office in St. Helena and therefore the varieties of this value with double surcharge and without surcharge are not given in the catalogue.

The other values known with double surcharge are the 3d and the 4d, but it is a curious fact that neither value is known without a surcharge. It is possible that the Post Office authorities in St. Helena noticed the errors, and, though not objecting to the double surcharges being used, kept the unsurcharged ones back on account of their face value being higher. Both types of the fourpence are known with double surcharge, and specimens are also known shewing both types of surcharge, thus proving that the two varieties occur on the same sheet. I believe that, with the exception of the one shilling, all the known specimens with double surcharge are used; they are of great rarity. The four lowest values exist imperforate, but these are either proofs, or stamps which were rejected as imperfect; there is no evidence that any were ever used.

ISSUE WITH SURCHARGE IN TALLER TYPE.

The stamps of this issue are placed in Gibbons' Catalogue, for convenience of classification, much lower down on the list than the date of their issue would warrant. Properly speaking they should come here, as they were issued in the early seventies, namely between the years

1871 and 1873. In this issue the perforation and watermark remained as before but the surcharges were altered to types resembling those of 1864-67, but differing from them in the following respects.

In the one penny the letters are 3 mm. instead of 2½ mm. high, the bar being of the same length as the words. In the 1sh the words are of the same length as in the first issue, but the bar is longer than before, being exactly the same length as the words. In the second issue the length of the surcharge is 18 mm. instead of 15½ mm. as in the previous issue. The letters forming the words "TWO PENCE" are in the same type but are spaced wider apart.

In 1873 was issued the first 6d stamp printed by Messrs. De La Rue. When the contract for printing passed into their hands, Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Co. delivered, with the plates, a large quantity of 6d stamps which had been prepared in anticipation of further requirements. These lasted until 1873 when a fresh printing was made by Messrs. De La Rue. The first printing was evidently a small one as it lasted only about a year. The colour was a rather dull blue, and fine specimens, either used or unused, are among the scarcest of the ordinary issues of St. Helena. The second printing, which was made in 1874, was in a rather bright ultramarine shade. Both were perforated 12½ and watermarked Crown & CC.

THE ISSUE OF 1882-83.

In preparing fresh printings of the 1d, 2d, 3d and 4d values, Messrs. De La Rue again altered the types of the surcharges. These resembled those of the 1865 to '68 issue in having the bar much shorter than the words in the case of the 1d, 3d and 4d, while the height of the letters forming the words on the 1d was reduced to 2½ mm. again. In the 2d, the letters forming the words are placed closer together, as in the 1865 to '68 issue, and the bar is but very slightly shorter than the words.

The most striking fact in connection with this issue is the new perforation. At first this gauged 14x12½, the result of two single-line machines being used; that gauging 14 perforating horizontally, the old one, with the 12½ gauge, being used vertically. The 1sh stamp of 1871-73 was issued, together with the lower values, in this perforation, and this stamp, though common used, is worth getting unused, at its present price. The set also includes a new printing of the 6d. in a pale greyish blue.

In the following year, 1883, three of the values were issued perf. 14. These were the 1d, 2d and 1sh, and at the same time the last mentioned value was altered to conform, as to the type of the overprint, with the rest of the set.

The bar was smaller and the letters measured 2½ mm. in height and 17 mm. in length, instead of 3 mm. and 18 mm. as before. The stock of the 6d with 14 x12½ perf. was evidently a large one, as it was not replaced by the stamps perforated 14 until 1889.

ISSUE OF 1884-1894. WMK. CR. & CA.

This set was not all issued at the same time, the stamps with the new watermark being put on sale as the old stocks of the different values became used up. The types of the surcharges were almost identical with those of the previous issue. A new value, 2½d, was added in September, 1893. This differs from the rest of the set in having the value surcharged in figures instead of in words. The colours of these "CA" stamps vary much more than do those of the earlier issues, and the earlier shades are those which are most like the "CC" stamps. The setting of the surcharge of the half-penny was changed in 1894, the value being made shorter, measuring 14½ mm. instead of 17 mm. Of the first type of the ½d there are two distinct colours, namely, yellow-green and emerald-green, the latter being much the scarcer. There is a minor variety of the ½d of this type, in which the "Y" is further away from the "N" than in the normal; this is No. 216 on the sheet.

The Crown CA paper used for these stamps was not suitable for receiving impressions of 240 stamps of this size, and consequently the unwatermarked edges of the sheets had to be utilised and specimens may frequently be found without a watermark.



ISSUE OF 1890-97.

The first value to appear in the new design was a 1½d stamp, this being issued six years before the other values of the set. The design is one of the well-known key-patterns of Messrs. De La Rue & Co., and is the same as that used for Gambia, Seychelles and one or two other Colonies. It has the word "POSTAGE" on either side. The plate numbers known are as follows:—

- ½d, plates 2 and 3.
- 1d, plates 2 and 3.
- 1½d, plate 1.
- 2d, 2½d, 5d and 10d, all plate 2 only.

There were no 3d, 4d, 1sh and 5sh values issued in this design as a large stock of the old stamps remained on hand.

REMAINDERS OF QUEEN'S HEAD ISSUES.

In a circular dated 11th July, 1904, the Crown Agents offered all the remainders of the 1884-1894 and 1890-97 issues, for sale. The stamps so offered, with the exact number of each, were as follows:—

1884-94.		1890-97.	
3d.....	53,882	1½d.....	49,409
4d.....	68,216	2d.....	58,304
6d.....	47,650	2½d.....	29,229
1sh.....	7,090	5d.....	39,588
1865-68.		10d.....	43,376
5sh.....	3,015		

As there was no big demand for the stamps the whole, or at any rate a large proportion, was sold to a London dealer, after being obliterated with a diamond-shaped cancellation struck in violet. This is quite unlike a postmark and is unlikely to deceive anyone.

KING'S HEAD ISSUE OF MARCH, 1902.

Only two values, namely, the ½d and 1d, were issued in the ordinary stock design with the King's Head. They are both from plate 1.



PICTORIAL ISSUE OF JUNE, 1903.

It was evidently thought that pictorial stamps would form a more profitable source of revenue than the ordinary form of postage stamp, shewing the head of His Majesty alone. At the same time the authorities did not like to do away with the head of the sovereign.



A compromise was the result and a new set, consisting of ½d, 1d, 2d, 8d, 1sh and 2sh values, was brought out, on each of which appeared a view of some part of the island and, impinging on the same, from above, an oval frame enclosing the regulation portrait of the King. The stamps are all printed in two colours, perforated 14, and are on paper watermarked Cr. & CC.—*Phil. Jour. of Gt. Britain.*