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JANUARY 27th, 1954

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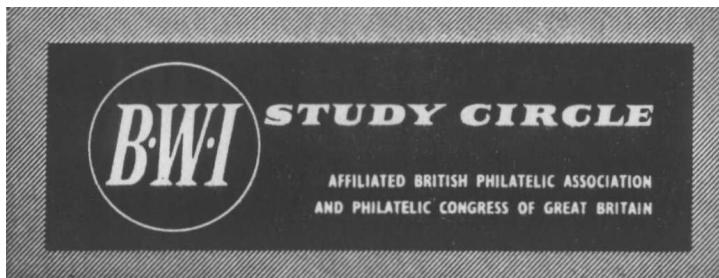
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Tel. Wormelow 261

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B. B. BENWELL.
"Ridgeway", World's End Lane, Chelsfield, Orpington,
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OBJECTS

1. TO promote interest in and the study of the stamps and postal history of:

ANTIGUA • BAHAMAS • BARBADOS
 BERMUDA • BRITISH GUIANA • BRITISH
 HONDURAS • CAYMAN ISLANDS • DOMINICA
 GRENADA • JAMAICA • LEEWARD ISLANDS
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 ST. VINCENT • TRINIDAD and TOBAGO
 TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS • VIRGIN ISLANDS

2. TO issue a quarterly BULLETIN containing articles, items of interest and other features.
3. To loan books from Circle library (home members only).
4. To publicise 'wants'.
5. To furnish opinions on stamp(s) and/or cover(s) for a nominal fee.

MEMBERSHIP

is WORLD-WIDE in scope and open to all whether they be advanced or new collectors. The ANNUAL subscription is £1 or the equivalent in local currency, due 1st February. If remitting in currency please add 30c to cover collection charges. Alternatively a draft for £1 DRAWN on London is acceptable. Cheques and Postal Orders to be made payable to "B.W.I. Study Circle".

AUTUMN MEETING

This will be held in the British Philatelic Association Boardroom at 446 Strand, London, W.C.2. on Saturday, September 27th, 1969, at 3 p.m., when our President will give a display of material from the Leeward Islands.

LONDON EVENING MEETING

A meeting has been arranged to be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 29th October, in the Boardroom of the British Philatelic Association at 446 Strand, London, W.C.2.

DISPLAY

Mid-week meeting of the British West Indies Study Circle, held on Wednesday, the 14th of May, 1969, at 6 p.m. in the Board Room of the British Philatelic Association.

The meeting was attended by 13 persons comprising 12 members and 1 guest. The programme for the evening was a busy one as there were two displays, the first being by Mr. R. H. Austin, who displayed a selection from his well-known collection of the Bahama Islands and the following summary of his display is given for the benefit of members who were unable to be present.

BAHAMA ISLANDS

The display commenced with pre-adhesives which included examples of each of the early handstamps and datestamps. The earliest cover was a ship letter of 1799. Fine examples of the large and small straight line 'Bahamas' handstamp were shown on covers and also the scarce late use of the former in red on a cover of 1845. An example dated 18 May 1848 of the first dated handstamp 'Nassau - New Providence' (Ludington and Raymond Type N.1) was included as well as the similar handstamp dated 3 March 1865 in sans-serif letters on an interesting cover from Ireland to Halifax, Nova Scotia, forwarded to Nassau, which includes the scarce 2mm lettering handstamp 'Advertised' (Ludington and Raymond Type X.2) in red. The two-line 'Bahamas/Ship Letter' handstamp was represented by a very clear strike on a cover to London dated 17 Dec. 1857.

DISPLAY (Cont.)

The Crowned Circle handstamp (Ludington and Raymond Type P.1) included covers dated 1852 and 1864 - the latter registered to London with fine markings: the reason for the late use when adhesives were available is not known. An interesting example on piece was also displayed of this same handstamp in red alongside a Nassau datestamp (Ludington and Raymond Type N.3) dated 20 Oct. 1897. The late use of this same Crowned Circle handstamp in black as an Official Paid stamp was shown on an O.H.M.S. cover of 25 March 1937 with a similar cover dated January 1948 but using Crowned Circle handstamp (Ludington and Raymond Type P.2).

The use of Great Britain stamps in the Bahamas with the "A05" obliterator was shown by the 6d on a fine cover to London dated 21 Feb. 1859.

The display of adhesives was confined to representative examples of the Chalon head types of 1859 to 1882 comprising the Perkins, Bacon issues and those printed by De La Rue from the Perkins, Bacon Plates. Marginal plate proof blocks of six in black on thick card were shown for each of three values. S.G.2 was represented by a corner block of four and singles together with two fine used examples. S.G.4 included a scarce mint strip of three of exceptionally fine colour and a number of used examples. The Perkins, Bacon printings concluded with the 4d dull rose (S.G.5) in both mint and used condition - the latter with "27" out-island canceller.

The De La Rue printings were represented for the 1d value by two attractive covers each with strips of four, the one dated 1865 (S.G.21) and the other 1883 to Germany (S.G.42). The 4d was shown on two covers of 1864 (S.G.27) and 1884 (S.G.41) and two pages of fine used examples and colour shades of S.G.26 and S.G.28 including a pair and strip of three. S.G.27 included a fine mint block and a used strip of three with dated postmark 14 March 1864 (Ludington and Raymond Type B.3). The Chalon heads concluded with a page of the 6d deep violet showing a mint block of four, mint singles and several used examples.

In the remainder of the limited time available a number of unusual and interesting items was shown including sheets of the lithographed forgeries of the early issues and instructive examples of forged cancellations on cleaned fiscally used stamps and a page of fiscal cancellations of the 1918 to 1926 period. Perhaps worthy of mention was the evidence of the economy exercised by De La Rue in the use of duty plates for the surface printed stamps for which they so long held the contract. Examples were shown of the 6d value S.G.54, 64, 75, 86 and 126 showing a similar flaw in the final 'E' of Pence. A full sheet of S.G.86 illustrated the position of the flaw. Interest was also shown in a registered cover from Nassau to New York with 'Air Mail' in manuscript franked with 1d and 2d Bahamas stamps and 5 cent U.S. Air Stamp all

cancelled by the Nassau datestamp 6 Feb. 1929. Around this date there was an agreement between the two countries whereby letters were sent by sea to Miami with U.S. Air Stamp affixed at Nassau for onward transmission by air.

Mr. Challis then gave his display and this was greatly looked forward to as little was known by a number of people present on his particular country. A short summary of the display now follows.

TURKS ISLANDS

This display commenced with pre-adhesive covers including manuscript Turks Islands dispatch mark, also ship letters including the Turks Island Ship Letter mark.

The line engraved issues included blocks, sheets and covers together with an extensive range of the 1881 provisionals showing many complete settings and a sheet of 4d on 1s setting 3 with two double perforations and one setting partially double.

Sheets of the 1d showed the positions of the two neck flaws.

The surface printed were represented by covers, including the ½d provisional and 5d bisect.

Attention was drawn to the perforation varieties and shades of the later issues and War Tax issues showed varieties and provisional use of definitives for this purpose, identifiable by the use of the TI in bars postmark which was applied on such stamps on inwards mail.

War-time Airmails via Haiti and Jamaica, late fee usage of Great Britain stamps and definitives, including combination covers, on letters which were too late for the mail and were posted on board off Grand Turk and a selection of the two out-island covers completed the display.

Mr. J. L. Messenger was called on to propose a vote of thanks to both our members who displayed and as regards Mr. Austin's display Mr. Messenger said that he was struck by the variety of different interesting items which were shown and although he had seen parts of Mr. Austin's collection on a number of other occasions he never tired of seeing a further display and he hoped that Mr. Austin would display a further selection from his extensive collection. In the case of Mr. Challis's display, Mr. Messenger said that he sensed that those present were extremely delighted to see a display of Turks Islands and he had heard more than one remark made by a member that the member in question had never seen a display of this country previously and he also congratulated Mr. Challis on a fine display and hoped that in his turn also he would show again this most interesting country.

The meeting terminated at about 8.30 p.m.

A further midweek meeting was then arranged in agreement with all present for Wednesday the 5th November, 1969, but please note that this date has now

DISPLAY (Cont.)

been altered to Wednesday the 29th October, 1969, when at 6 p.m. in the Board Room of the British Philatelic Association Mr. G. Moray Stephenson will give a display of Village and Islands Postmarks of St. Vincent from 1872 to 1910 and in contrast Mr. J. C. Loach will be exhibiting modern items and his display is entitled "A 20th Century Miscellany."

Will all members who intend coming to the meeting please note the change of date of the meeting.

NOTES AND QUERIES

WHY NOT COLLECT POSTAL HISTORY ?

PAYMENT OF POSTAGE

In the early days prepayment of postage was optional with the sender. Very few letters were prepaid in the 18th and early part of the 19th centuries, particularly if the mail was to an overseas destination. Owing to the hazards of the seas, enemy warships and privateers, there was always the possibility that the letter would never be delivered. It must be remembered, also, that the Packet Captains had instructions to sink all mail and dispatches if there was a chance of them being captured. Due to this state of affairs letters were often sent in duplicate, and important ones in triplicate, by different vessels, in the hope that at least one would complete its journey.

Before such letters were delivered the amount of postage due from the recipient was marked on the front by the postal clerks, e.g. "1 N 6" (1s. 6d.), 2/2. Such amounts included the Packet Letter rate (or the Ship Letter rate and the Captain's gratuity if the letter had been sent by merchant ship) and the Inland postage rate from the port of entry to the destination. Occasionally one finds, for example, "In all 7," indicating the total charge to be paid.

If an alteration in the amount entered had to be made, the former amount was deleted, the new amount inserted, and sometimes a Crown, in red, stamped alongside. The figures of amounts due from the recipient were always written in black ink, whilst prepayment was indicated in red ink, e.g. "Postage Paid 1/1."

In the case of Jamaica the sender of a letter living some distance from Kingston often prepaid the postage to Kingston, leaving the recipient to pay the postage from there to ultimate destination. Such payments would be noted in manuscript, usually in red ink, in the top right hand corner of the letter, thus "Inland Postage paid 7½." This would be deleted before the letter was finally delivered.

With the ending of the sailing Packet era in the early 1840's (as far as the B.W.I. were concerned) the practice of prepayment of postage grew. Postage rates generally were reduced and simplified, the 'mileage' rate in Great Britain being replaced in 1839 by the uniform rate.

Following the introduction of the adhesive stamps in Britain in 1840 many of the Colonies applied for a similar privilege. The G.P.O., however, looked with disfavour upon this idea, fearing the possibility of forgery. Instead they issued the Colonial Postmasters with various types of "PAID" handstamps.

Probably the most interesting of these were the so called "Crowned Circles." The design consisted of a double or single ring surmounted by a crown: inside the ring were the words "PAID AT —." These stamps were struck in red (generally) on the front of the letter, and the amount paid added in manuscript, also in red, alongside. The actual sizes and shapes of the crown differ slightly for different Colonies, but all those issued up till the end of January, 1852, had a double ring. Those after that date had a single ring. The following is a list of those B.W.I. Colonies supplied with these Crowned Circles, together with the dates when the stamps were sent out from the G.P.O., London.

Antigua	9.3.1850	Dominica	17.5.1805
English Harbour,		Grenada	13.11.1846
Antigua	10.12.1857	Carriacou	24.10.1850
Bahamas	22.5.1846	Montserrat	15.7.1852
"	1.6.1846	Nevis	-9.1852
Barbados	3.10.1849	St. Lucia	1.5.1844
St. Georges'		St. Vincent	30.1.1852
Bermuda	1.8.1845	Tobago	31.10.1851
Ireland Island		Trinidad	21.3.1854
"	1.8.1845	Tortola	15.12.1842
Hamilton		"	21.6.1854
"	13.11.1846		
Demerera	? (single ring)		
Belize	13.11.1841		

It will be noticed that Jamaica does not figure in the above list. This is because various "PAID" stamps had already been issued to this Island from about 1820 onwards.

In 1858 (8th May) the use of G.B. stamps for the prepayment of postage was allowed in the B.W.I., their use being restricted to letters for overseas. This was extended to internal mail in February, 1859, but was withdrawn from all the Colonies by August, 1860, when they took over the control of their own Posts. Such stamps may be distinguished by the obliterations used to cancel them. The only two B.W.I. Colonies not accorded this privilege were Barbados and Trinidad, who had issued their own adhesive stamps in 1852.

WHY NOT COLLECT POSTAL HISTORY? (Cont.)

Gradually, after the withdrawal of permission to use G.B. stamps, the Colonies began issuing their own. During the interval some of the former "PAID" stamps were used, and in some cases fresh ones were sent out from the G.P.O.

By this time the prepayment of postage had become compulsory, and many devices were adopted by the local Postmasters to supply stamps during a temporary shortage of a particular denomination, or to supply a demand due to a revised postal rate before an appropriate new value could be sent out from England. A study of these "provisional" issues can prove most interesting, and merits a separate article, which it is hoped can be included in a later number of the Bulletin but outside this series.

L. E. Britnor

BARBADOS

I have recently acquired an example of the Official Paid Handstamp of Barbados, either P5 or P6 (the bottom of the handstamp is indistinct) dated 2.30 p.m. 9 Ja 59 on the then current 4c (S.G.293). I shall be glad to know if official mail from Barbados still has to bear postage stamps or whether the official canceller was used in error.

R. Radford

BRITISH GUIANA

Can any of the Circle members give me any information on the 1899 surcharges on the 1898 Jubilee issue of British Guiana?

I have accumulated a number of these stamps over the past year and find, apart from the varieties listed in Gibbons, the following variations from the normal.

S.G.222

(a) Both first and second T raised above the rest of the letters by from 1 to 2 cm.

(b) The O almost solid black and another with a dot in it.

*(c) The second T with only half its stem.

(d) The E almost completely missing.

*(e) Comma instead of stop.

S.G.223

*(a) One arm of both the Ts short.

(b) Two distinct shades of blue black.

S.G.224

(a) As (a) for 222.

(b) Broken base of Won no stop variety.

(c) A large comma after T of cents.

I realise that some of these variations may be due to over inking, smudging or broken type, but the three I have marked * are all clear cut and not broken.

Why were the stamps surcharged? In fact what information is there about the reasons for the many low value surcharges on the stamps of this country from 1878 to 1898?

Any information about any of these issues and the 1882 S.G.162/65 would be most welcome.

G. W. Astridge

CAYMAN ISLANDS

The following notes, with additions to the Aguilar & Saunders handbook, published seven years ago, may be of interest.

Q.V. issue of 1901 (page 37/8 of handbook):

I have a cover in my collection, franked with a pair of S.G.1a, postmarked with Type IIIa obliterator, dated November 15, 1900 (the 15 is inverted and reversed). The cover is addressed to Kingston, Jamaica, backstamped November 19, 1900, re-addressed to Grand Cayman, backstamped again November 19, 1900, and received back in Grand Cayman on December 12, 1900. This pre-dates the earliest suggested usage by at least one month and the "official" first day usage of 19 February, 1901, by over two months.

There appears to have been a considerable amount of Germany orientated correspondence to and from Georgetown at the beginning of the century. I have two covers in my collection identically franked, postmarked and addressed (in the same handwriting) as the cover illustrated on page 36 of the handbook.

K.E. VII issue of 1907-19 (Postage and Revenue) (page 43 of handbook):

Apparently the 6d values exist with plate number 2 as well as "1" though I do not have either in my collection.

K.G. VII provisionals of 1907-8 (page 67-71 of handbook):

½d/5s provisional: A copy of S.G.19 on O.H.M.S. piece from Cayman Brac dated November 30, 1907, with obliterator Type II of Cayman Brac has been seen.

½d/5s: Pair of S.G.18 on O.H.M.S. cover (half) dated November 25, 1907, is noted (B.P.A. certificate 1962). This half cover is addressed to a Birmingham stamp dealer and can be explained as:

(i) dealt with by Miss Parsons on Monday (25th) and dealing with a stamp order before local demand began on 26th

(ii) Miss Parsons omitted to change date plug on the 26th.

CAYMAN ISLANDS (Cont.)

Manuscript provisionals (page 73 of handbook):

I have a copy of Type I "Postage Paid G.A.P." on full cover, addressed to Manderville, Jamaica, dated May 13, 1908, backstamped Kingston May 19 and Manderville May 20, 1908. I believe covers pre-dating May 13 also exist (? May 3) and were on offer in a philatelic magazine some few years ago.

K.G.V. issue of 1921-26 (page 47-50 of handbook):

From the blocks of four and larger seen of this issue the 3d value is also found with the comb. perforation as well as line and the 2/- value (S.G.80) with line perforation as well as comb.

Jubilee Issue (page 60):

The ½d value exists with plate number 1 as well as 2A

Plate numbers: ½d, 1, 2B

2½d, 3A

6d. 2B

Victory Issue of 1946 (page 61):

I have a plate block numbered "B1". Is this not correct rather than "IB" ?

Variety, 1½d value. Plate A1 stamp No. 45 (Row 8 stamp 3):-

Re-entry. Re-cutting of frame lines of name tablet above and below "IS" of "Islands", thickening of "JU" of "June," "doubling" of lower shading line of "S" of "Islands" and of base frame lines.

Plate numbers for both values should read A1 and B1.

1959 Constitution (page 64):

I have been shown complete sheets of both values without plate numbers.

Dr. John M. Lockie

GUYANA

I would be interested to hear if any member has obtained copies of the 'local' GUYANA Independence issue and, if so, where. Although these are listed in the Commonwealth Catalogue no supplies seem to be available.

G. L. Pullar

JAMAICA

Re Mr. Bruce Walker's query on the JAMAICA/ date 2 line marking: Mr. Walker is perfectly correct, there are several other examples of this type which pre-date the one used by Mr. Johnson. In contrast to his 15th January, 1803 date given as EDK., I have, in my own collections, a cover with date of 19th July, 1801, and Mr. Walker's cover evidently is even earlier than mine. In Mr. Thomas Foster's latest handbook, he gives 4 types of this 2 Line date-stamp (J4, J5, J6 and J7) J4 known used 16 April, 1799; J5 on 12 Sep. 1800; J6 on 18 Mar., 1802; and J7 5 Aug., 1801; all 4 are given as 4mm. in height. Our JAMAICA STUDY GROUP is compiling a large listing of earlier and later known dates (along with much other extremely useful information) and will publish a Handbook in some future year. I can heartily endorse Mr. Foster's Handbook as being of much value to the philatelist!

Re Mr. R. Henrique's query on the WAR STAMP overprints: Indeed these overprints have been investigated and well-written about. Our JAMAICA STUDY GROUP'S "Jamaica Bibliography" lists no less than eight articles on same, along with innumerable articles on all the other overprints (CAYMAN ISLANDS, OFFICIAL, 2½d. Provisionals, etc.) found on Jamaican stamps.

Howard J. Gaiton

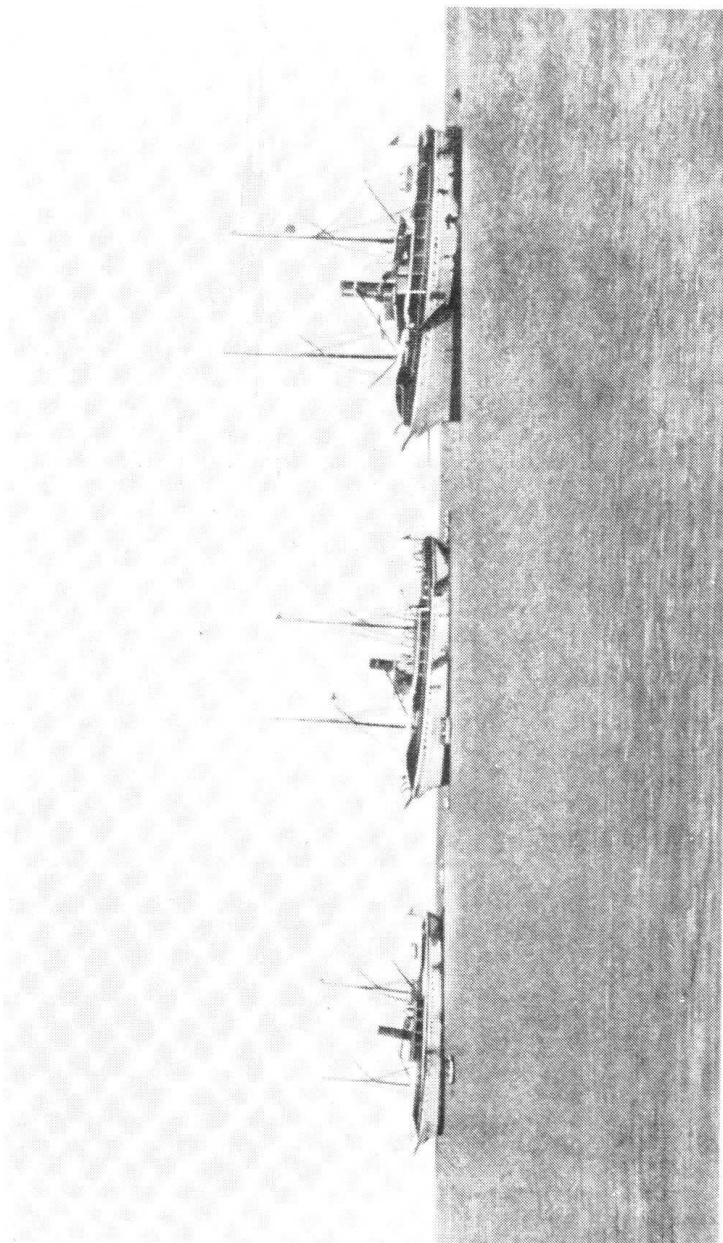
Copies of the Philatelic Literature Review, which contain these articles, may be obtained from the author.

LEEWARD ISLANDS

Manuscript Markings of Royal Mail Steam Packets "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent"
(Continued from Bulletin No. 61, page 16).

The other reason mentioned before, viz. that St. Thomas had the disadvantage of being in the middle of the hurricane region, speaks for itself. On more than one occasion ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company suffered grievously as a result of being caught by hurricanes and many ships were destroyed or damaged so badly that they were out of commission for a considerable period of time. However, it is not the purpose of this article to deal with the effect of the hurricanes at various times insofar as they affected ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company - this in itself forms an interesting story but it is too far removed from the objectives of this article.

LEEWARD ISLANDS (Cont.)



Reverting to the disease of yellow fever, as there was no abatement in this scourge at St. Thomas it was decided in 1868 to make Colon in Panama the terminal port for the trans-Atlantic steamers. St. Thomas thus became a port of call instead of a terminus for the larger ships, though it still remained for some years a base for the local services between the various islands in the Caribbean.

In 1885 a decision was made for the final abandonment of St. Thomas as the transfer station for the West Indies. Its place was taken by the island of Barbados, which became the first port of call for all the West Indian mail steamers for the next twenty six years, i.e. up to 1911. After 1885 St. Thomas was served by one of the intercolonial steamers "Eden" "Esk" and "Solent," which had recently been built specially for the inter-island traffic. All three of these ships were sent to St. Thomas at regular intervals for overhaul and repairs.

In 1898, thirteen years after Barbados became the transfer station for the West Indies, Captain W. H. Owen, who was previously Captain of R.M.S.P. "Lame," was appointed Marine Superintendent at Barbados and one of his principal duties was to look after and control the three inter-colonial steamers "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent" based on that island. Captain Owen maintained these ships like men-o'-war, so that they became noted up and down the West Indies for their smart appearance. In harbour if a boom was not square or an awning was badly spread, the officer in charge would be severely reprimanded for his failure to attain the high standard of efficiency expected of him. The reason for this was that Captain Owen in addition to his early training in H.M.S. "Britannia" was an officer in the Royal Naval Reserve and was very proud of the naval tradition. If members will refer to the illustration of the three steamers "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent," it will be observed that they do look extremely smart and were a considerable credit to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company.

Captain Owen came to England on leave in August, 1900, and while in London obtained consent to a drastic alteration in the hull and funnel colours of his station ships so as to improve their appearance. The Captain kept his plans to himself and on his return to Barbados in October, 1900, he ordered the "Eden" and "Esk" up to St. Thomas, where the Company still maintained its long-established repair shops and stores. Here the painters got busy. The "Solent" was at Southampton for dry-docking and arrangements had been made for that ship also to be painted in the new colours at the completion of her overhaul.

On Saturday, November 10th, 1900, when "Eden" and "Esk" arrived back at Barbados, their glistening white hulls and buff funnels were in such contrast to their former colours that those who for years had been accustomed to see

LEEWARD ISLANDS (Cont.)





1/2 mail

Miss
Rylands sons & Co
Manchester

Mail
17/3/98

LEEWARD ISLANDS (Cont.)



them in sedate black failed entirely to recognise them and took them for American warships on a surprise visit. The "Solent," similarly transformed, arrived out from England in mid-December. The three ships, with their long lean hulls, clipper bows and schooner rig, looked very well in their new dress and earned the immediate approval of passengers and islanders. Indeed, the comely appearance and regularity of service by "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent" find a mention in more than one book written on the West Indies about this time.

In 1911 Barbadoes ceased to be the transfer station for the mails and Trinidad took its place for this purpose during the next five years: but more about this anon.

At the opening of the 20th century the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's connection with the West Indies was at its zenith. The names of the mail ships "Orinoco," "Atrato," "Magdalena" and "Danube" and of the intercolonial ships "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent" were household words. In addition there was a fleet of smaller craft sailing round and between many of the islands. "Spey" and "Arno" at Jamaica, "Tees" at St. Lucia, "Taw" and "Wear" at Grenada, "Yare" at Dominica and "Kennet" at Trinidad. All these craft became familiar names and sights to the people of the Caribbean and must have helped to foster good feelings and relations and in effect these craft served much the same purpose as an omnibus in a busy city.

On the 9th May, 1902, news of a dreadful disaster which shocked the world came from St. Thomas. It was that St. Pierre on the French island of Martinique and its inhabitants together with all shipping had been totally destroyed by the volcano known as Mont Pelée. The town of St. Pierre was one of the oldest and most picturesque in the West Indies. It was founded in 1635 and its quaint old houses and churches, interspersed with clumps of waving palms, were set upon the shores of a wide bay, backed by the towering majesty of Mont Pelée. This mountain rises to a height of 5,000 feet and was thought to be extinct until, in 1851, it gave unmistakable signs that it was not. The inhabitants of St. Pierre were largely of coloured stock with a few hundred whites, mostly merchants and members of the French Government Service.

Shortly before 8 a.m. on the morning of 8th May, 1902, a series of shattering detonations shook the city to its very foundations. Within a few seconds, the whole area was enveloped in a sea of flame, accompanied by a fall of incandescent ash and followed by suffocating smoke and sulphurous gases. No living creature could possibly survive such an inferno, and it is thought that the whole population of 35,000 souls save one, as it was later discovered - perished within a few minutes. The reason for telling members about this

LEEWARD ISLANDS (Cont.)

catastrophe was that St. Pierre was one of the ports of call of the Royal Mail Northern Islands service and on the night of 8th May, 1902, the "Esk" approached the stricken city. The scene which met the eyes of the crew was such that none of them would ever forget what he saw. The rain of ash had not yet ceased and the "Esk" was forced to anchor five miles off the land, which was completely invisible. A boat was lowered and rowed inshore, only to return later to report the entire city a mass of flames, unapproachable from the sea with no sign of life extant and some of the ships in the bay were still blazing furiously. The commander of the "Esk," finding that nothing could be done, made off with all speed for St. Lucia.

As soon as the news reached the Royal Mail Company's Superintendent at Barbados he placed the "Solent" at the disposal of the Government, and the steamer immediately began to load food and medical supplies. The "Solent" sailed on May 10th with the Colonial Secretary of Barbados, several foreign consuls, doctors, nurses and a field hospital outfit on board. She called first at Fort de France in Martinique and then proceeded to St. Pierre, arriving there in the morning of May 12th. All the vessels in the bay were either burned out or had foundered. The wharves had disappeared and a landing was made on the beach from the ship's boats.

Captain H. Davies, Commander of the "Solent," describes in his official report the scene which met the eyes of the relief party on landing.

"The scene of utter ruin and desolation is indescribable; the whole of the countryside was a desert of uniform grey from the thick coating of ash, dotted with the stumps of charred trees which two days previously had been green plantations and rich tropical growth. The town was in ruins, not a single building escaped. The streets were piled six feet in debris, lava, stones and ashes, and nothing but the bare shells of the houses remained, the upper part of most having fallen to the ground. Everything that would burn was reduced to fine ash, and the lighthouse, statuary and iron buildings hurled to the ground. The avenues of large trees shading the sea front had been torn up by the roots, and hurled some distance on the beach, and only the trunks and thick branches remained, coated with lava. Bodies and limbs, roasted and charred, were numerous, singly and in groups, lying face down as if in the act of running, death having been instantaneous. These were near the beach, as in the streets all were buried in the debris and the stench everywhere was unbearable. Not a sign of life was visible of any kind and many fires were raging in lumber yards and rum stores.

"Most of the streets were impassible, the debris being still hot, and the mark of fire upon everything. We visited the places where had stood the cathedral,

Colonial Bank, Cable Office, Royal Mail Agency, hotel and other public buildings. Finding there was nothing to be done as no life existed, I returned to Fort de France and discharged the foodstuffs, and left at 6.30 p.m. to take up the mail route on Monday. During the afternoon the French cruiser "Suchet" brought in two thousand refugees from the north end of the island, the Danish cruiser "Valkyrie" six hundred, and the French telegraph steamer eight hundred. The captain of the French cruiser was very grateful for the food we had brought, as there was nothing in the town. The medical assistance was not required as there were no survivors."

Captain Davies and his party had been unable to penetrate sufficiently far into the ruins, however, to find the one survivor. He was later discovered in one of the cells of the prison, whose thick stone walls had withstood the force of the eruption. The rescued man died two days later as a result of his terrifying experience.

At this juncture it would be of interest to give details relating to the three intercolonial steamers "Eden," "Esk" and "Solent":-

"Eden." 2145 gross registered tonnage, iron screw steamer. Built by Barrow, S.B. Co., Barrow, in 1882 and was taken out of the fleet in 1909.

"Esk." 2145 gross registered tonnage, iron screw steamer. Built by Barrow S.,B. Co., Barrow, in 1822 and was taken out of the fleet in 1910.

"Solent." 1908 gross registered tonnage, iron screw steamer. Built by Oswald, Mordaunt & Co., Southampton, in 1878 and was taken out of the fleet in 1909.

There was also a fourth ship named "Tyne" which was a small vessel built in 1891 for a West Indian local service which was found unprofitable because there was no Government subsidy. This ship was sold by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in 1897.

Early in 1905 the renewal of the West Indian Mail Contract came up for consideration and became one of the principal topics in both the London and Colonial Press. At a critical moment, and before the closing date for tenders, the Governor of Barbados unfortunately announced the amount of subsidy which the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company was asking for the renewal of its contract. When the Colonial Office announced that the new contract had been provisionally granted to Elder Dempster & Company, there was great indignation, both in England and in the islands.

Sir Alfred Jones, Chairman of Elder Dempster & Company, was not very popular in the West Indies. The Imperial Direct Line, a subsidiary of the old Elder Dempster Company, received a subsidy of £40,000 per annum for its service between Avonmouth and Jamaica, but it did not fulfil all the conditions

LEEWARD ISLANDS (Cont.)

of its contract. In particular, it allied itself with those very American interests whose competition it was intended to combat. Sir Alfred Jones's bid for the entire West Indian mail contract was, therefore, viewed with the greatest suspicion.

This circumstance, and the premature disclosure of the Royal Mail figure, caused several of the West Indian Legislatures to pass Resolutions in favour of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company which had served them for so long and so well. The West Indian Colonies contributed collectively about one-fourth of the subsidy, and in the absence of their consent the Colonial Office was forced to withdraw its decision. The contract was now allowed to lapse and for the first time in sixty-five years the West Indian islands found themselves without a subsidised mail service.

The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company carried on without a subsidy, but revised its main route which was now extended from Colon in Panama to New York by way of Jamaica and Cuba. The "Solent" was withdrawn from the intercolonial mail service and was again painted white. In this guise she carried out a regular itinerary of cruises. This vessel was, therefore, the first Royal Mail Steam Packet Company steamer solely devoted to pleasure cruising.

From the summer of 1906, the "Eden" and "Esk" ran a restricted service, for they were costly to maintain on the full mail routes without a subsidy. This brought matters to a head. On the 1st June, 1907, a new contract *v/as* entered into for a fortnightly trans-Atlantic service with payment for the carriage of mails on a poundage basis. This was followed on the 29th August by a new intercolonial contract at £25,000 per annum.

In 1911 the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company received what was to prove its last contract for a trans-Atlantic mail service to the West Indies. It was for a period of five years with the very low subsidy of £63,000 per annum. The Government of Trinidad were the principal contributors under this new contract and they required the Company to transfer its headquarters from Barbados to their island, which now became the transfer station for the mails.

The Marine Superintendent, Captain W. H. Owen, accordingly took up residence in Port of Spain, Trinidad, where he quickly earned the same reputation for courtesy and geniality as he had long enjoyed at Barbados.

As mentioned previously, the "Solent" (which was the second ship of that name in the fleet, the first one having been withdrawn from the fleet in 1869), was the first Royal Mail steamer solely devoted to pleasure cruising and this

was in 1905. Although of less than 2,000 tons, she carried an orchestra and was elegantly fitted out. Her white hull set a fashion which has since been adopted as a "cruising colour" by many other steamship companies. The "Solent" made all her cruises in the West Indies, based on Barbados, where passengers on the mail steamers from Southampton and New York transferred to her. She was followed by another ship of the line, which was also painted white while on this service.

To pass on now to the manuscript markings on the covers which have been illustrated. The six covers are thought to have all emanated from Dominica, although certainly only two of them can be shown to have come from that island by virtue of the oval handstamps of the senders who were Dry Goods & General Merchants in both cases, such handstamps being in one instance on the front of the cover and in the other instance on the back of the cover. All these covers are addressed to Rylands & Sons Limited of Manchester, who at that time supplied merchants in the West Indian islands with all those necessities of life which had to be imported.

(To be continued.)

E. V. Toeg.

OBITUARY

Col. THOMAS SUTTON, O.B.E., F.S.A.

It is with great regret we have to record the passing of Col. Sutton on May 16th, 1969. His interests in B.W.I. were mainly concentrated on Cayman Islands and in addition he had useful collections of Denmark and Japan. I recall with pleasure the occasions when I visited him and the enthusiasm he displayed during our conversations. Our sincere sympathies are extended to his widow in her great loss.

P. T. Saunders

MISCELLANEA

Due to a printer's error the numbering of the pages of the June issue was incorrect. The pages should have been numbered 21 to 44 and not 1 to 24.

Whilst the June issue cannot be corrected, pagination of this issue commences at 45, which is the correct page number. Our apologies to members for this error.

SOFIA EXHIBITION, 1969

Congratulations to our member Mr. M. Ishihara on being awarded a silver medal for his collection of St. Vincent 1861-97.

MISCELLANEA (Cont.)

BULLETINS

Copies of most back issues are obtainable from the Hon. Secretary as follows:

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HON. SECRETARY'S PARAGRAPH

Dear Member,

Following the highly successful functions held to celebrate the centenary of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, presided over so ably by our Vice-President, W. A. Townsend, comes the news of the appointment of our other Vice-President, John B. Marriott, as Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collections at Buckingham Palace. Mr. Marriott's gold medal collection of Trinidad is well known and his book "The Philatelic History of Trinidad to 1862" which was published by our Circle in 1963 is the recognised standard work of that period. In addition he is to serve as a juror at Philympia, 1970, and we wish him every possible success in carrying out these important philatelic duties. Soon after this issue reaches you a 'Year to GO Dinner' will be held, which is to be the first social function of Philympia, 1970. Both the Chairman of the Executive and the General Manager will present reports on the progress made and outline the plans for the final year of preparation. My good friend, Stan Durnin, President of the British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group, has emphasised in the June issue of its journal the importance of the proposed joint meeting at Philympia and I look forward to receiving later this year some idea of the number of their members who will be coming over to attend. As soon as this information is available steps will be taken to finalise arrangements and members will be advised accordingly. I take this opportunity to mention that Mr. R. Radford has intimated that he is willing to take over the editorship of the Bulletin and is at present assisting our Hon. Editor with the production of the Bulletin.

On your behalf it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Dr. H. C. A. Harris (Hampshire), M. B. B. Hellings (Warwickshire), J. M. King (Surrey), D. G. N. Lloyd-Lowles (Buckinghamshire), J. Makin (Northamptonshire), E. B. Renshaw (Nottinghamshire), P. Sam (London), W. C. Tatham (U.S.A.) and E. H. Wilson (Spain).

P.T.S.

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