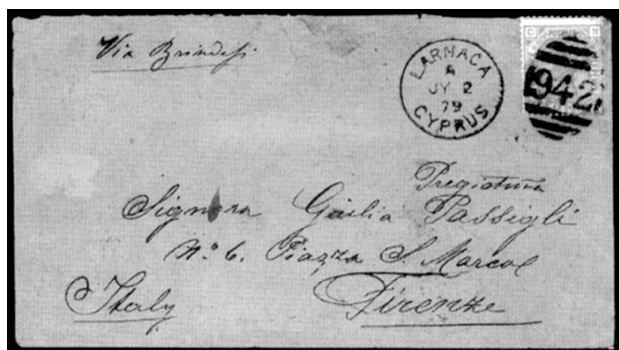


100 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

Cyprus

by P. L. Pemberton (From Mekeel's Weekly, August 17, 1907)

By the treaty of Berlin, 1878, Cyprus came under the British Crown. During the two years between that date and the introduction of English stamps surcharged "Cyprus" in 1880, ordinary unsurcharged stamps of Great Britain were used. The following are the obliterations which were in use: 942, (Larnaca); 969, (Nicosia); 974, (Baffo); 975, (Famagusta); 981, (Limassol); 982, (Kyrenia); D.47, (Polymedia); D.48, (Head Quarters Camp); 098, (Platres). All are uncommon, some exceedingly so, this is partly accounted for by the fact that the letters sent through Alexandria were frequently not postmarked in the island but obliterated at Alexandria instead.



1880 cover used to Italy with "Larnaca Cyprus JY 2 79 c.d.s." and GB 2-1/2p stamp tied by "942" numeral cancel.

ISSUE OF APRIL 1st, 1880.



Cyprus 1880 1/2p, Sc. 1

Five values of British stamps were overprinted in black with the word "Cyprus" 16 - 1/2



1880 1 shilling, Sc. 6

mm. long by 2-1/2 mm. high. On the sixth value, viz.—the 1/2d, the overprint was 13 mm. long by 3 mm. high. Although the 2-1/2d stamp of Great Britain was changed in February, 1880, from lilac-rose to blue, it was the former color which was used for Cyprus. The lower values are found in various plate numbers. The overprint was evenly printed and appears on the lower half of the stamp just across the neck of the Queen and it is nearly always straight and well centred though not invariably so. Forged overprints generally slant more or less.

The 1/2d is found on plates 12, 15 and 19. The last of these is very scarce. I have a used specimen of plate 15 in which the overprint not only slants downwards from right to left, but is so badly centered that parts of the word "Cyprus" appear at either side of the design. Altogether, 143 sheets, each containing 480 stamps, were printed.

The 1d is found on plates 174, 181, 184, 193, 196, 201, 205, 208, 215, 216, 217, 218 and 220. Of these, the ones in ital-

ics are exceedingly rare, especially 193 and 196, which were not known until they were found among the remainders, and of which it is doubtful whether any were ever actually issued over the counter of the post office. Errors or varieties of surcharge are surprisingly scarce and include plate 208 with double overprint and the same plate without overprint. The latter is known in a pair with the normal; without the latter, of course, it would be of no value....

The remainders of the 1d, 2-1/2d, 4d, 6d and 1sh, which were left over when the issue was replaced, in 1881, by the De la Rue set, were afterwards sold to Stanley Gibbons. The stock of the 1d and 2-1/2d was very large, which accounts for their present low price, but there were not so many of the higher values. I have never seen an account of the actual numbers. The 1/2d on the other hand, ran short early in 1881 and the 1d stamps were surcharged locally with the words HALFPENNY in Egyptian capitals below the word "Cyprus" and over the old value. This surcharge measured 18 to 18-1/2 mm. in length and was found to be too long, for unless very carefully printed, it was impossible to get the whole of the surcharge on one stamp. This provisional was produced by lithography, a process very rarely employed for surcharging. This type is found on the following plate Nos.: 174, 181, 201, 205, 208, 215, 216, 217, 218 and 220.

It is said that the stone used for the 18 mm. surcharge got damaged, and consequently a handstamp, in similar type, but measuring only 16 to 16-1/2 mm., was used for a short time. This surcharge is found only on three plates, viz., 201, 216 and 218, the last mentioned being exceedingly rare.

The handstamp just described was only used pending the laying down of another lithographic stone. This was ready in May, 1881. The surcharge from it measured only 13 mm. The plate-numbers known are 201, 205, 215, 217 and 218.

The surcharge in this type is known double on plates 205 and



Left to right, Half-Penny overprints measuring 18mm (Sc. 8), 16mm (Sc. 9) and 13mm with triple overprint (Sc. 10e)



Plate 218 sheet margin pair of 1880 1p with double overprint, Sc. 2b

215, triple on 205, 215, 217 and 218, and quadruple on 215. Some of these are obtainable as they were found among the remainders, though the triple surcharges now command a very high price, and the quadruple is of the greatest rarity. This surcharge is also known placed vertically.

ISSUE OF JULY 1st, 1881.

It was found most inconvenient to have stamps with values expressed in a currency which was not in use in the island, and it is no wonder therefore that arrangements were very quickly made with Messrs. De la Rue for a set of stamps with values in piastres. These were first issued in July, 1881, and consisted of 1/2, 1, 2, 4 and 6 piastres.



1881 6 pi, Sc. 15

The body of the design was from one of the stock plates, which had been used for Antigua and Nevis, and which was afterwards used for Turks Islands, St. Lucia and Natal. The name and value were printed at a second operation and are not always quite in register, though the printing was so carefully done that the utmost variation does not amount to more than 1/2 mm. The colors were all very delicate tints. The 1/2pi emerald-green is a particularly fugitive color, and if damped will change to blue. The watermark is Crown CC.

Either at the same time, or just before, the issue of the new type, a stamp of 30 paras was issued, formed by surcharging the 1d with "30 PARAS," measuring 14-1/2 mm. long. This is found on four different plates, viz., 201, 216, 217 and 220. All these are scarce, especially 217. Plates 216 and 220 are known with double surcharge, one inverted, the latter being at the top of the stamp. There is also a minor variety in which the "3" is so badly formed as to look like an "8," thus appearing to read "80 paras." This provisional became exhausted before the arrival of the new stamp of 30 paras, which had been ordered from London, and so the 1 pi carmine-rose was surcharged in a type similar to the last but somewhat larger, measuring 16 mm. This had a very short life, being issued on May 22nd and withdrawn June 7th, 1882. It is not very scarce, however. It is sometimes found used and bearing the postmaster's initials in M.S.S. "J.A.B." and sometimes also with the handstamped overprint "Postal Surcharge". These, I believe, were of the nature of Unpaid Letter Stamps, as I shall explain later.



1881 30pa with double overprint, one inverted

THE 1886 SURCHARGES CA AND CC.

For the specialist this group of stamps presents an almost unexplored field for operations. I know of no studied account of their history and when the facts which are known are collected and compared, it would seem that the lists appearing in the catalogues should be re-arranged. It was not many months after the issue of the 1/2 piastre, CC, that it was found expedient to surcharge this value with "1/2" on either side of the stamp, to prevent confusion, by artificial light, with the 2 piastres blue. This on account of the peculiar tendency of the pigment in which the 1/2pi was printed to change into a bluish tint, as already mentioned. The overprinting was done in the island and from an examination of the surcharges it seems certain that they were reproduced by lithography as in the case of the earlier surcharges.

Though all the surcharges on a sheet present the same general characteristics, a close examination of an entire pane will shew that each stamp in a horizontal row differs very slightly, and that all in a vertical row are the same, or so nearly so that the differences may be accounted for by wear of the stone or by dirt. This points to the probability of the stone having been laid down from a row of six pairs of fractions reproduced ten times in horizontal rows. Whether the original designs were drawn by hand or taken from type it is difficult to say, but the former hypothesis appears the more likely. The differences are too minute to describe in full, but the stamps in the sixth, or last, vertical row can at once be recognised by the short thick fraction bar to the left hand "1/2". The fraction bars to the left are shorter than those to the right on every stamp on the sheet, but in this row they do not extend so far as the rounded part of the "2." On the two bottom stamps of the first vertical row the "1" is prolonged into the fraction bar, but these may not be constant on every sheet. The larger surcharge on the CC paper, though catalogued under the date 1882, were, I believe, not issued until 1886, for reasons which I will give later on.



1884 1/2pi with short, thick left fraction bar, Sc. 18 var.

There is considerable mystery about the history of the surcharges after the issue of the "CA" paper. The 1/2pi CA, was first chronicled by *The Philatelic Record* for April, 1883, this was without surcharge, and it was described as being in a darker shade of green than formerly. This value, on CA paper with the local surcharge, had, however, appeared before this, though I can find no record of it in the philatelic papers of the time. It was, however, printed in a shade of blue green, more nearly resembling the emerald green of the CC issue than the dull green of the unsurcharged CA stamps. I have a specimen postmarked Limassol (?) 19, 1882. For two or three years the surcharged and unsurcharged stamps appear to have been used concurrently. In the August *Philatelic Record* for 1886 we find the first mention of the large surcharge, and from the wording of the notice it is obvious that this was quite new to collectors at that date.

The surcharge is found on the stamps watermarked CC, as well as on the CA. It seems hitherto to have been taken for granted that these surcharges were made by Messrs. De la Rue, (on account of their being so well and clearly printed) and that the CC stamps with the large surcharge were issued in 1882. It seems almost certain that the latter belief is erroneous, and the former has not been proved. I have seen several used copies of the CC stamp dated 1886, and none with any earlier cancellation. The same remark applies to the large surcharge on the CA stamps. Though the new surcharge was a great improvement on the old it was not quite up to the standard of Messrs. De la Rue's work, as the figures used were not all of the same fount, and, moreover, the printing was not invariably of the best. It was not until more than twenty years after these stamps were out of issue that these marked variations of type were recognized by collectors....In the normal variety the "1/2" is repeated on either side of the stamp in exactly the same type. In what is called variety I the figure "1" on



1886 1/2pi large surcharge, Ty. I, Sc. 27

the left is considerably larger than that on the right. In variety II the "1" on the right is a little shorter and thicker than the normal, is almost square at the top and has a short, thick, blunt serif. Mr. Oliver looked through a large number of these stamps and found that, judging by the proportion of the number of varieties found, to the total number of those looked through, that the first variety might have occurred four times on each pane, and the second once only. The figures "2" also vary somewhat on some specimens. These varieties are all found on the CC as well as the CA stamps, though they are not catalogued by Gibbons on the former.

There was another setting of the surcharge, in which the figures were placed closer together, the distance between them measuring 6 mm. only instead of 8 mm. as before. In this setting, which is much rarer than the other, the odd type was replaced and there are no varieties to be found.

There is a very rare stamp, which, I think, should be listed with this group, as an error without surcharge. This is the 1/2pi, wmk. Crown CA, in the color of the surcharged stamps...

ISSUE OF 1882-94, WMK. CROWN CA.



1886 1/2pi sheet margin imperforate plate proof, Sc. 19P

The first value to be issued on the new paper was the much-needed 30 paras, the date of its appearance being June, 1882. The other values were issued as the stock on the CC paper became exhausted, and in 1886 a new value, 12 piastres, was added to the set. These stamps, as first issued, were printed from the plate which is known to collectors as Die I. The colors were similar to those used on the CC stamps, but generally a little deeper. Of the 1/2pi "emerald" green, I have already spoken; for the rest, the shades do not vary in tone but in depth only. After a time the stamps were printed from Die II. I need not here describe the differences between the two dies as they are well known and may be found in any catalogue. Collectors should try and get copies with part of the margin bearing the plate No. The stamps of Die I may be found with plate numbers 1 or 2, but Die II is only found with plate 3, which is further distinguished by having the line round each pane. The colors of the stamps from the second die differ considerably from the earlier ones, and in the case of the 30 paras and 1, 2 and 4 piastres are much brighter. The 6 and 12pi. Die II., are scarcer used than unused, in fact I have never seen a satisfactory used copy of the 6pi, which is probably one of the rarest modern British Colonials in a used state.



1886 12pi with Specimen overprint, Sc. 22S

BI-COLORED ISSUE OF 1894-96.

There is little to be said about this issue, which differs from the preceding one in having the name and value printed in a color different from the body of the stamp. The set was further enlarged by the addition of three new values, viz:—9, 18 and 45 piastres. There are more or less 1894-96 45pi, Sc. 37



1895 large OHMS registered cover to the Curragh Camp, Ireland, with 30pa plate 3 block of four and 4pi, 9pi and 18pi singles, all cancelled by Larnaca/Jy.6.95 squared circle dates stamp marked shades of all values and when these and the plate numbers are procured the specialist may rest content.

THE KING'S HEAD ISSUE.

All values appeared in a new design, bearing the head of the King, in 1903. The watermark was changed shortly afterwards from single to multiple Crown and CA and some values are exceedingly scarce on the former, especially the 9, 18 and 45pi, of these the supplies on the first paper were very small, and the numbers of each which are said to have been printed are :— 9 piastres., 2,400 stamps; 18 piastres., 3,600 stamps; 45 piastres., 2,400 stamps. As nearly all the 9 piastres., and the greater number of the other two values, were bought by one firm of dealers, very few were actually issued in the ordinary way, and their market value cannot be a matter for great surprise. It should be noticed that the stamps of Cyprus do not bear the words "Postage and Revenue," and therefore we may presume that there will be no reason to print the current issue on "chalky" paper.



1903 45pi, Sc. 47

POSTAL FISCALS.

There is great doubt as to whether any of the Cyprus fiscals were ever authorized for use for postage, but many are known with postal obliterations. Many of these have no doubt been postmarked to order, but the majority of them were used in the Post Office in accounting for amounts collected on letters insufficiently prepaid. These were mostly overprinted with the words "POSTAL SURCHARGE" in two lines, which were impressed with a hand-stamp. Some of them were also initialled by the postmaster in ink "J. A. B." while others, again, were left unsurcharged and unsigned. These were not affixed to the letters, but were kept in the post office as a check on the accounts after being postmarked with the ordinary postal cancellation. Occasionally, ordinary postage stamps were also used for this purpose, either surcharged, or initialled, or both, and I believe that after the withdrawal of the 30 pa. on 1 piastres., on June 7th, 1882 (when the permanent type arrived) the remainder of the stock of that stamp was used in the same way. This would account for the number of initialled specimens one sees.



1881 6pi with J.A.B. initials and Larnaca c.d.s.