

CHRISTMAS ISLAND  
AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

By

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS CIRCLE

OF THE

ROYAL SYDNEY PILATELIC CLUB

---

---

CHRISTMAS ISLAND  
AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

By

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS CIRCLE

OF THE

ROYAL SYDNEY PILATELIC CLUB

With an introduction by

J. WHITSED DOVEY, F.R.P.S.L.

MELBOURNE

THE HAWTHORN PRESS

1953

"CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY"

*is the second of a series of monographs concerning  
the stamps of Australia and the Pacific Islands  
to be published at regular intervals by  
The Hawthorn Press*

*The edition is limited to 300 copies*

No 1: South-West Pacific Islands

No 2: Christmas Island and Its Postal History

## INTRODUCTION

The stamps of the Pacific Islands have long been prime favourites, particularly with Australian collectors. There is an aura of romance about the South Seas with its voyages of discovery, tropic islands, waving palms and colourful personalities; even if the history of many island groups has its darker side. Apart from the stamps listed in the standard catalogue there is a special fascination in those issues which served local needs where no government service existed, and in this field the stamps of Christmas Island, which form the subject of this monograph, are of particular interest to philatelists, so little having been known about them until recent years.

The Pacific Island Circle ("Pixies") of the Royal Sydney Philatelic Club was founded in 1941 by the late J.F. Hambly, the father of Pacific Islands collecting in Australia, and Mr Romney Gibbons, the present convener, to bring together a limited number of specialists for intensive study of the stamps of the various island groups. Members meet monthly for dinner before adjourning for discussion of particular problems and the Circle makes a feature of entertaining interstate and overseas visitors interested in Pacific Islands stamps. The Circle has given displays annually at the meetings of the Sydney Club for many years, also occasional displays at meetings of other societies. The members have published their researches on the stamps of Aitutaki, British Solomon Islands, and Chatham Islands, in addition to the present work, and are now engaged on Cook Islands. Other questions concerning specific stamps and covers are brought up from time to time and the group aims at functioning as a Court of Appeal on philatelic matters concerning the Pacific Islands.

One of the problems facing the Circle in the study of the issues of Christmas Island has been the scarcity of material, only the last issue being comparatively easy to find, and it is hoped that the publicity now given to these stamps will bring further stamps and covers to light. From the material available, however, the Circle has made a careful study of the method of printing, the use made of the stamps and the cancellations employed; while the record of the use of the stamps of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands there since 1939 and the use of U.S.A. stamps by the Army Post Office during the war rounds off the philatelic history of this outpost of Empire.

Combination covers showing these local stamps used with the stamps of the U.S.A. or the French Oceanic Settlements have a wide appeal and the interest of subject collectors is catered for by the picture of the *Ysabel May* and the red-tailed Tropic Bird or Bosun Bird on all the local stamps.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

It is hoped that this monograph dealing with stamps which, although only known to a limited circle of collectors, have actually served genuine postal needs since 1918, will open up a new field for Pacific Islands specialists, and Christmas Island being located at one of the staging posts of trans-Pacific flight is likely to come more and more into the news.

J. WHITSED DOVEY, F.R.P.S.L.  
*President, The Royal Sydney Philatelic Club*

# CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

## I. GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL

Christmas Island is situated in the Pacific, just north of the equator, 1.59° North latitude and 157,30° West longitude, and about 164 miles south-east by east of Fanning Island. It is about 100 miles in circumference, surrounding one of the largest lagoons in the Pacific. It was discovered by Captain Cook, who sighted it on 24 December 1777, and remained there until 2 January of the following year, during which time he was occupied in observing an eclipse and catching turtle, which abounded on the island. The date of the discovery by Captain Cook accounts for the island's name.

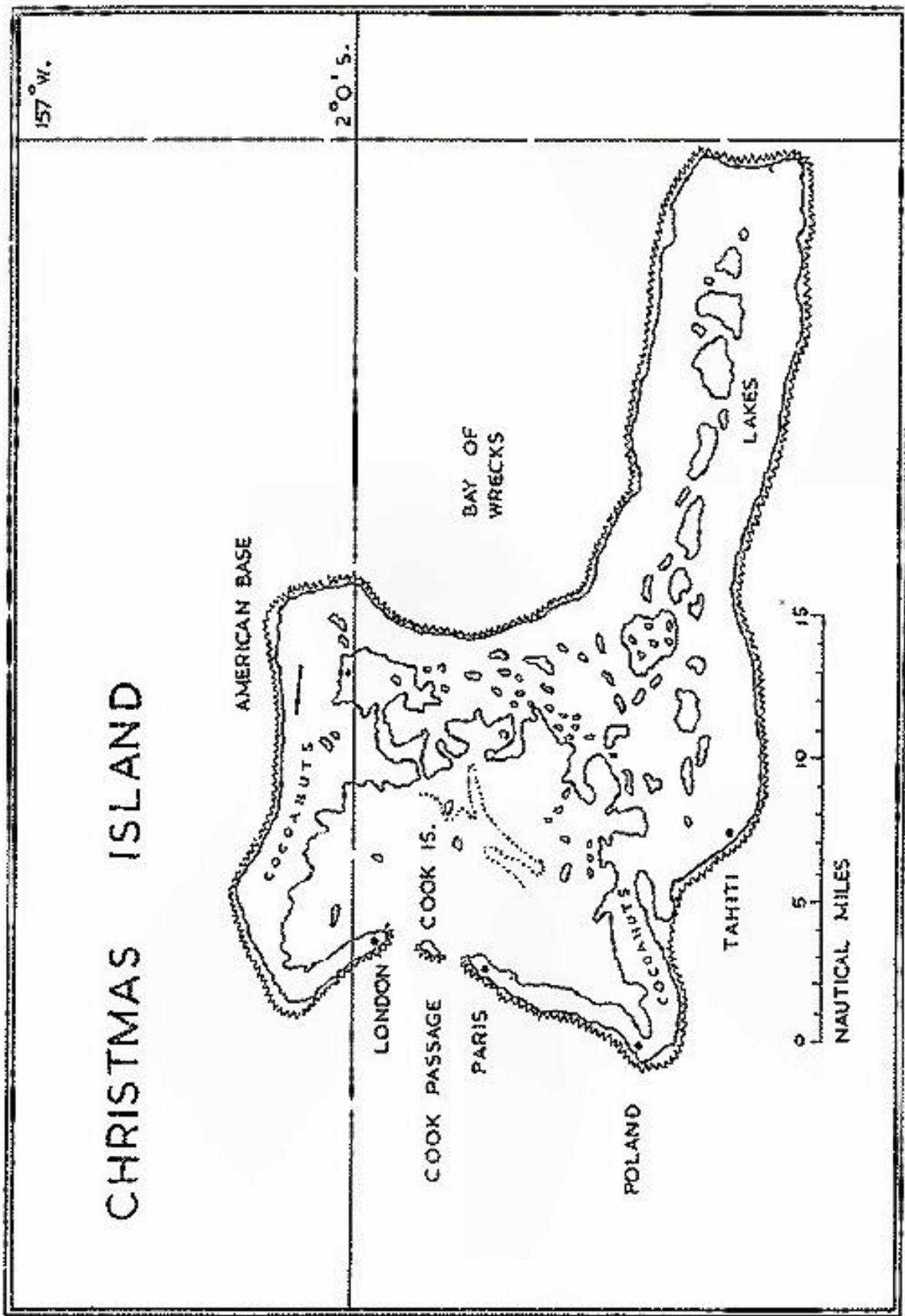
In 1902 the British Government leased the island for a term of 99 years to Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd. who planted certain areas with coconut palms. In December 1913 the lease was transferred to "Father" Emmanuel Rougier, who registered a Company in London styled Central Pacific Coconut Plantations Ltd. In a book, published in 1914, Rougier states, "the intention is to populate the island with colonists and workers of all nationalities and colours."

The colonisation scheme failed and for years the plantations were worked by imported Tahitian labour, controlled by Rougier, who had his headquarters in Tahiti. About 1200 acres were under coconuts but periodic droughts caused the production of copra to be low. Rougier died in 1932 but operations were continued by his nephew until the end of 1939, when the personnel of Central Pacific Coconut Plantations Ltd were withdrawn. During this period the following vessels were registered as owned by Rougier and presumably maintained periodic communications with the island.

- 1925-31 - *Roy Somers*, schooner, 315 tons
- 1932-35 - *Marechal Foch*, three masted schooner, 383 tons
- 1935-39 - *Tooya*, twin-screw motor vessel, 597 tons.

The advance of aviation brought the island into prominence as a potential seaplane base and in February 1937 a British warship visited the island and landed an official British representative to maintain a daily radio weather service. By an Order in Council, dated 31 July 1918, Christmas Island had been incorporated

# CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY



## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

into the Gilbert and Ellice Island Colony, but it was not until February 1939 that a branch of the Colony's Post Office was opened there. At this period representatives of the Public Works Department of New Zealand made surveys for both air-strips and a sea-plane base, a long stone jetty being built for the later project.

During World War II the U.S. Army built an air-base at the north-east of the island and an American Army Post Office functioned there from 11/2/42 until it closed in September 1948. The civil Post Office ceased to operate during the war period, but re-opened in December 1948. During the war period and after, the plantations were worked by imported Gilbertese, but in 1952 it was decided that the District Officer for the area should move his residence from Fanning to Christmas Island and that Gilbertese families should be settled on the plantations.

## II. THE LOCAL STAMPS

There is no evidence that any postal organisation existed on Christmas Island until Rougier's arrival. Before then any letters must have been sent by vessels chartered by Levers or by chance opportunity.

Rougier's Company, however, was responsible for the existence of certain local stamps, which may have originated in connection with his colonisation scheme. The late Fred J. Melville, in his *Phantom Philately*, summed up the position as known to him by stating that letters and packets carried by the Company's vessel "have to bear the Christmas Island stamp, the face value of which is denoted as 5 cents, and according to what port the ship puts in to, it is the equivalent value of 5 cents American, 25 centimes French or 2½d in British money. The stamp is cancelled by the Co's agent and, on reaching the port, the Captain affixes the necessary stamps of the country at which he arrives, to ensure the letter or packet being carried to its ultimate destination. The labels thus serve to ensure the transport of letters to the first connection with an official British, French or United States post, and to reimburse the Company for its expense in transit and in affixing the necessary postage stamps at the port of arrival."

It may be noted that the above extract only covers letters requiring to be forwarded through an official postal organisation; articles carried to destinations by the Company required only the local stamp to be affixed.

As to arrangements for inward mail, apart from a paragraph in *Stamp Collecting* of 15 October 1921, stating that most of the inward mail passed through Tahiti and that the local stamp was attached en route, we have no evidence on this aspect.

This stamp is first mentioned in the philatelic press in the *Collectionneur de Timbres Poste* of July 1916, but the first evidence of their use we have been able to trace is confined to the following five covers:

Date	Addressed to
11/1/18	Mademoiselle Alice Rougier de Rochigoude, Kaiiau, C.I.
21/1/18	Zenira Lane (?) Motutatu, C.I.
14/2/18	Mlle Mthe Pugeaut, C.I.
21/2/18	Joe B. English, Manager, Kaiiau, C.I.
31/3/18	Joe B. English, Tarawa, C.I.

All the above have the stamp postmarked with the cancellation referred to later as Type 2, with inscription CHRISTMAS ISLAND - LOOCAL POST.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

From a map in Rougier's book, which shows the island at the time it was being worked by Levers, Kaihau was the settlement on the southern point of the only entrance to the lagoon, called Cook's passage, which settlement was renamed "Paris" by Rougier at a later date. Mototatu is shown on this map as an island in the lagoon. Tarawa cannot be identified, but it may have been the settlement which is marked but un-named on the north head of the entrance, which place was later called "London" by Rougier - a name which may have been suggested because it was across the channel from Paris, where he had his residence on the island in earlier days.

Presumably the persons to whom the letters were addressed were members of the party of colonists who arrived with Rougier at the island at some date prior to January 1918. For some reason all these inhabitants left the island in about July 1918, with the exception of Mr Joseph B. English and two companions from Tahiti. These three perforce remained until October 1919 when H.M.S. *New Zealand*, with Admiral and Lady Jellicoe on board, happened to touch there on a cruise. The party was rescued and taken to Fanning Island, from where English's story was cabled, which was to the effect that Rougier had undertaken to send a ship to relieve them within forty days. In 1916 the Company had acquired an auxiliary schooner called *Ysabel May*, of 135 tons, and registered it at Tahiti, but this (the only vessel owned by the Company) was sold to a French firm at Tahiti prior to being destroyed by fire off Huahine (Society Islands) on 25 October 1918.

The above evidence would appear to indicate the possibility that a local postal service did actually operate in early 1918.

The earliest example seen of a cover sent overseas is a registered one with the printed address, "Fred Reinhard, Philatelite, Berne (Switzerland)," bearing a local stamp cancelled with the large "Palm Tree" obliterator (Type 1). The two Oceanic Settlements stamps thereon, totalling 50 centimes, are cancelled with the Papeete (Tahiti) date-stamp of 11 October 1918. It is backstamped at San Francisco and New York. This cover is obviously "philatelic" and it is interesting to note that the date is approximately three months after the departure of the "colonists" from Christmas Island. Whether the cover ever saw Christmas Island or whether the local Christmas Island stamp was attached and cancelled at Papeete is a matter for conjecture.

The next example we know of is addressed to Sydney, and the Oceanic Settlements stamps are cancelled at Papeete on 1 February 1921. The 5c Christmas Island stamp is uncanceled, but the cover appears genuine.

From this date onwards, until the use of local stamps ceased in 1938, the covers we have examined appear at intervals, generally with stamps of the Oceanic Settlements, but occasionally with U.S.A. stamps, and we know of only one example with stamps of Great Britain.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

An interesting Picture Post Card seen was posted at Christmas Island by a Mr. Archer who called at the island in 1925. It is addressed to his daughter in England and, in manuscript, is written, "Will you share this with the others as I could only get one, the stamps and postcards are very rare, the only white man in Christmas Island does not keep many and as he did not know we were coming could not get any more for us. He only has a mail every six months...."

The local stamp is cancelled with Type 2 and both it and the 2c. U.S. stamp are struck with the Honolulu date-stamp only three days after the date on the card. Presumably the vessel, on which Mr. Archer called, carried this Post Card to Hawaii.

In 1925, owing to currency depreciation, the denomination of the stamp was raised to 10 cents, at which value it remained.

We have seen a number of covers, each bearing one local stamp cancelled with the Christmas Island postmark (Type 3) on Christmas Day 1937. On some covers are a galaxy of Oceanic Settlements stamps, postmarked Papeete 1 February 1938, on others a 1d. Western Samoa cancelled at Apia on 10 March 1938, and again on others a 1d. Cook Island cancelled at Rarotonga on 29 April or on 23 June 1938. All are similarly addressed to a P.O. Box at Sydney. These are said to have been carried on a trading voyage to those various ports. Further investigation is desirable.

### III. THE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF THE LOCAL STAMPS

The design, as well as the existence, of the local stamps probably had its origin in "Father" Rougier's fertile brain. It is certainly picturesque, not to say gaudy! Printed in five colours, the stamp shows a yacht, presumably the *Ysabel May*, arriving at its anchorage off a coconut studded island and being welcomed by flocks of seabirds. In the background a golden-red sun is either rising in the east or sinking in the west, according to fancy. In the foreground is a very blue ocean. The value "5", cents being understood, is in each corner and reading round the design is the description. CENTRAL PACIFIC - COCOANUT PLANTATIONS. LTD. - MAIL BOAT SERVICE - CHRISTMAS ISLAND.

Where and by whom the stamps were printed are problems which still require solution, and we welcome any information on these prints. There is no doubt, however, that they were printed by a form of chromolithography and that the "parent" stones for the main portions of the design consisted of blocks of four stamps arranged thus:

1	2
3	4

Each of these four stamps shows a "primary" flaw, which will be found on all issues, as follows:

- No. 1. Red vertical dash cutting bottom right sun-ray.
- No. 2. Blue dot behind mainsail opposite the "L" of "CENTRAL", bottom red frame line is thin at right.
- No. 3. Blue dot on the white crest of surf, 1.75 mm to left of and in line with, the head of the bird.
- No. 4. Blue cross in sky behind mainsail opposite the "A" of "PACIFIC".

The make-up of the last (the 4th) issue consisted of two sets of transfers placed side by side with a gutter separating them, thus making a sheet of eight stamps in two panes of four. The make-up of the earlier issues is not yet finally determined, but will be discussed under each issue.

It only remains to add that the stamps are printed on unwatermarked paper of varying qualities and are perforated by single-line machines. There are no marginal markings.

## IV. LOCAL STAMPS: FIRST ISSUE

As mentioned previously, the existence of the stamp was first announced in July 1916. It must, therefore, have been printed after January 1914, when the company was formed, and before June 1916. Even though World War I was raging, it seems unlikely that its existence would have passed unnoticed by the philatelic press for long. We have already stated that the first date of use known to us is on a local cover dated 11 January 1918.

The stamps are perforated  $12\frac{1}{2}$  (single line) which at once distinguishes this issue from all subsequent ones, which are perforated  $11\frac{1}{2}$ . The margin between the design and the perforation is frequently abnormally wide on one or two sides, as if no particular care was taken to keep the outside lines of perforation on the sheet at an even distance, so that the whole stamp is frequently larger than those of subsequent issue.

The make-up of the sheets is uncertain. The largest pieces that we have seen are blocks of four stamps (unfortunately without margins). In the absence of secondary flaws we should be inclined to believe that the sheets consisted of four stamps, in two rows of two. It may be as well here, however, to mention an article that appeared in an American paper, *Roessler's Stamp News*, at the end of 1920. The original article we have not been able to inspect, but an extract therefrom is to be found in the *American Philatelic Record* of January 1921 (Vol. III, p. 278). In this extract it is stated concerning the local stamp that "eight stamps constitute a sheet (2 x 4). A few are known part perforated."

Roessler was an American stamp dealer who imported a number of covers (and probably unused stamps) from the island during the 'twenties, and, if correctly quoted, was presumably speaking from certain knowledge. On the other hand, if correct, it is curious that, among the blocks and pairs that we have examined, we have never seen any combination of primary flaws such as 2 : 1, or 4 : 3. Here, therefore, we must leave the problem for the present. We may add that we have never seen any of the part-perforated stamps referred to in the extract quoted above, nor any other mention of them.

There is some variation in the shades of colour to be found, ranging from deep to light.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

This issue probably remained in use until some time in 1924. We have a cover, bearing the local stamp, which passed through the post office at Papeete, Tahiti, on 1 February 1921. We have another cover, bearing, in addition to the local stamp, a copy of the United States 24c. air mail stamp (S.G. 830) which passed through the post office at San Francisco. Unfortunately the last figure of the year date is indecipherable, but the date (December 192?) can not be earlier than December 1923, because the 24c air mail stamp was not placed on sale until 21 August 1923.

*Issue of 1915 (?)*

No Wmk. Perf. 12½.

5 (c) blue, orange, red, green and black.

## V. LOCAL STAMPS: SECOND ISSUE

A change in perforation to 11½ (single line) marks this issue. The earliest copy we have seen is 30 June 1924, on a cover addressed to Rapa, which we illustrate. Presumably Rapa is the island of that name which lies far to the south-east of the Society Group. It will be seen that the cover bears only the local stamp, cancelled by the "local" cancellation. The explanation of why it reached its destination without passing through an official post office may be that the natives of Rapa were fine seamen, favoured by inter-island vessels, and Rougier's ship may have gone there to recruit a new crew.

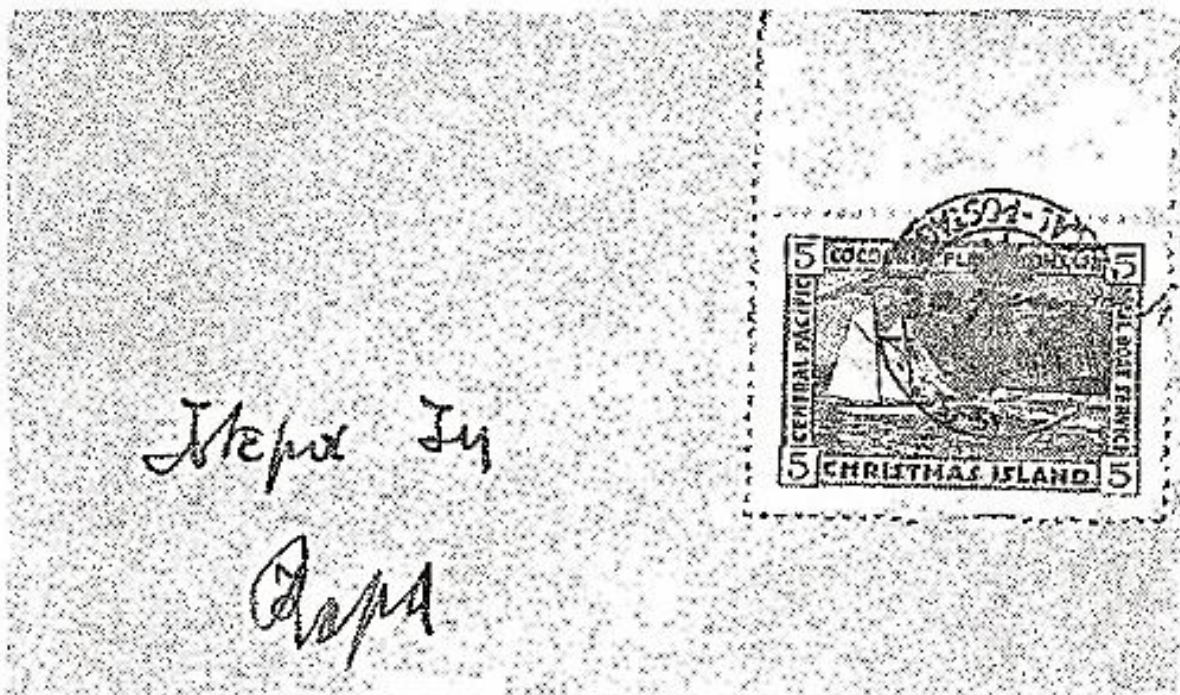
Besides the change in perforation, the stamps appear to be an entirely new printing. The colours are generally paler than those of the previous issue, and their execution, in many respects which are difficult to define, appears to be inferior.

Nothing can be recorded of the size of the sheet, unused copies of this stamp being exceedingly scarce (although used copies are fairly common) and pairs and blocks unknown to us.

The latest dated copy (on a local cover) that we have seen is 10 October 1925, and the stamp was probably not in use for more than two years, which accounts for its scarcity.

*Issue of 1924*  
No Wmk. Perf. 11½  
5 (c) blue, yellow, red, gree and black

CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY



## VI. LOCAL STAMPS: THIRD ISSUE

In 1926 the denomination of the stamps was altered to 10 cents. The figure "10" replaces the "5" in each of the four corners and the inscription "10 CENTS" appears over the sky at the top of the stamp. The earliest cover that we have seen bearing this stamp is postmarked at Papeete on 27 April 1926.

We are satisfied that the sheet formation consisted of a block of four stamps, in two rows of two. We have seen several such blocks with sufficiently wide margins all around to indicate that they were not panes of larger sheets (as in the next issue). In addition, each of the four units of the sheet can be identified (apart from the primary flaws) by secondary flaws or other characteristics, and as all the copies of this issue that we have examined conform to these tests, we think that there is no doubt that our conclusion is correct.

The distinguishing features of each of the four stamps are as follows:

- No. 1. A doubling of the upper frame line on the left hand side above and to the left of the left-hand top "10."
- No. 2. A red dot above the "NS" of "PLANTATIONS" and a thickening of the blue outer frame line above the right-hand top "10". A red dot between the frame lines over the "LA" of PLANTATIONS."
- No. 3. The bottom left-hand "10" is set low in the value table, and the figure "1" of the bottom right-hand "10" has a short serif.
- No. 4. Both the figures "1" of "10" in the bottom corners have short serifs.

It may be noted that in this issue an additional primary flaw makes its appearance on No. 3, in the form of a red smudge below the left wing tip of the bird in the foreground.

In this stamp the colour of the sea is definitely ultramarine as compared with the blue of former issues. Paper and perforation are as in the second issue.

Presumably the stamp remained in use until the end of 1934, when the fourth issue made its appearance. Unfortunately, however, we have seen very few covers of this period, and the latest dated copy is on a cover which passed through Papeete on 30 May 1927. There is thus a gap of over seven years unaccounted for, and we should welcome information from any readers who have copies on covers used between 1927 and 1935. It is possible that during part of the period the use of the stamps was temporarily abandoned.

*Issue of 1926*

No Wmk. Perf. 11½

10c ultramarine, orange, red, green and black

## VII. LOCAL STAMPS: FOURTH ISSUE

A new issue of the 10c. stamp in changed colours appeared on 25 December 1934, and we have seen covers dated on that day (Christmas Day being a very appropriate date!). The colour of the figures in the corner and of the inscription "10 CENTS" at the top of the stamp is changed from red to greenish blue, and the sea is in the same tint, in place of the former blue or ultramarine.

The stamps are printed in sheets of eight, consisting of two horizontal panes of four stamps each, in two rows of two, with a gutter (22.5 mm. wide) between them. In addition to the primary flaws, which are, of course, repeated on each pane, there are secondary flaws by which each unit on the sheet can be distinguished, as follows:

### Left pane

- |        |                                       |
|--------|---------------------------------------|
| No. 1. | This stamp is normal.                 |
| No. 2. | Red dot over "A" of "COCOANUT."       |
| No. 3. | Red dot below "AT" of "PLANTATIONS."  |
| No. 4. | Two blue dots in sky behind mainsail. |

### Right pane

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| No. 1. | Red dot between "U" and "I" of "COCOANUT."                          |
| No. 2. | Red dot in sky opposite second "I" of "PACIFIC."                    |
| No. 3. | Red dot above "AN" of "ISLAND."                                     |
| No. 4. | One blue dot in sky behind mainsail; red dot after "D" of "ISLAND." |

The stamps are printed on a very thick super-calendered paper. The perforation, 11½, is the same as in the last two issues. Sheets are relatively common.

The latest cover that we have seen is dated 20 June 1938, and it is probable that the use of the stamps ceased about that date. G. N. Morris, in an article in the *Pacific Stamp Review* in August 1946, stated that "an inquiry made early in July 1938 disclosed that this issue was exhausted." We have seen a sheet "cancelled-to-order" with the postmark dated 13 January 1939, only a month before the Gilbert and Ellice Islands post office commenced to function, but we think that this sheet was probably sent over to the island to be cancelled and does not represent a legitimate use. Incidentally, this is the only example of "cancellation-to-order" that we have noted.

*Issue of 1934*  
No Wmk. Perf. 11½  
10c. greenish blue, yellow, red, gree and black

## VIII. LOCAL STAMPS: CANCELLATIONS

(1) This is the type generally found on covers carried for posting at the first port of call. Properly speaking it is not a cancellation stamp intended for the purpose, but merely an impression of the company's seal. It consists of two concentric circles measuring 39 mm. and 51,5 mm. respectively, between which are "CENTRAL PACIFIC COCOANUT PLANTATIONS, LTD." (above) and "CHRISTMAS ISD." (below). The whole of the center of the seal is filled up with the device of a coconut palm. It may be noted that its approximate date of issue can only be determined by the date affixed at the port of call where regular postage stamps were affixed. The earliest date of use that we have noted is on a cover postmarked at Papeete on 11 October 1918, this, of course, is franked with a 5c. stamp of the first issue. The latest date recorded is on a cover bearing a 10c. third issue, which passed through Papeete on 30 May 1927. The seal is generally struck in black, but we have a copy of the 5c. second issue, on which it is struck in purple.

The late Mr Guy Morris in an article in the *Pacific Stamp Review* of August 1946 states that this cancellation "was still on the island and is in a fair state of preservation in 1939, as I have a curious cover addressed to an airman in Fiji. It bears an oblong Paquebot mark, a 2d Fiji map stamp cancelled at Suva and an impression of the large postmark with the coconut tree. A chance meeting with an island official who was at Christmas at the time confirms that the cover did originate from there.."

(2) This consists of two concentric circles, interrupted across the centre, so that it resembles two horse-shoes placed base to base, with an interval between them intended for the date in manuscript or by rubber date-stamp. Between the circles are the inscription "CHRISTMAS ISLAND" (above) and "LOCAL POSTAGE" (below). In the arcs formed by the circles and the date-line appear subjects which are frequently so blurred as to be quite unrecognisable. Actually, in the upper arc there are four birds in flight and in the lower a coconut palm. In the cover addressed to Rapa it may be noted that the manuscript date is in French "30 Juin 1924". We have stated already that the earliest example of its use, known to us, is "Jan 11 1981" (rubber stamp) and the latest, franked with a 5c. second issue, is dated (AIS) "10 OCT 1925." All these are struck in black, but we have a 10c. third issue, off cover, struck in purple, no date visible.

Both the above cancellation stamps remained for years on the island and we are given to understand are now in poor condition.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

(3) A new type of postmark came into use with the appearance of the 10c. fourth issue, on 23 December 1934, and it is the only cancellation we have seen on the stamps of this issue. A single-lined circle 32.5 mm. diameter. "CHRISTMAS ISLAND" (above) "CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN" (below), and the date in three lines in the centre. The date is found in two forms: in

(a), in use until the end of 1937, the day of the month is placed below the month, e.g., "FEB-28-1936"; in

(b), in use during 1938, and also on the cancelled-to-order sheet referred to previously, the order is reversed, e.g., "20-JUN-1938".

Most of the examples of this cancellation we have seen are struck in purple, but on covers dated "DEC-25-1936" it is in blue-black. The cover we illustrate with this postmark was self-addressed by the addressee, who tells us that over two years elapsed between the time when he posted it to Christmas Island and its arrival back in England - an interesting side-light on mail conditions.

## IX. GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS POST OFFICE

As mentioned in the introduction, Christmas Island forms a part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, but no effort was made by the Colony to provide postal facilities on the island until early in 1939. On 14 February in that year a post office was opened and, except for the period between February 1942 and September 1948 (when the American Army Post Office was in operation), it has functioned regularly ever since. The stamps first employed comprised some of the George V issues of 1912-27, followed by later issues.

The cancellation, which has remained unchanged since the opening of the post office, consists of a single-lined circle, 29 mm, in diameter, with "POST OFFICE" flanked by small squares (above) and "CHRISTMAS ISLAND" (below). The date is in one line across the centre, e.g., "25 MAY 39". All examples we have seen are in black.

A mark was applied at first to registered mail consisting of a single-lined rectangle, 48mm. by 19 mm., with a large "R" at left and "CHRISTMAS ISLAND - G & F. I C - No ..." in three lines at right. The present mark consists of a rectangle, 48 mm. by 20 mm., with the inscription in three lines "G & F I C - CHRISTMAS - R No ....". We have seen only three struck in black.

## X. AMERICAN ARMY POST OFFICE

As already mentioned, American troops were stationed on Christmas Island during and after the Second World War. Army Post Office (A.P.O.) 915 opened there on 11 February 1942 and the first date-stamp was Type 4, with the lettering "AMERICAN BASE FORCES" (above) and "A.P.O. 915" (below). It was a common feature of all American Army postmarks used here that there were four parallel slots in the centre, which were designed to accommodate removable slugs indicating time, day, month and year. The time symbols generally consisted of "AM" an "PM" with no figures for the exact hour, and the whole four figures of the year appeared. As the slugs were loose, it follows that there could be no rigid rule for the sequence in which they were inserted in the slots - generally the month came above the day and the year at bottom, but the time sometimes appears first and on occasions between day and year. Not uncommonly the time is omitted, in which case the position of the vacant slot is apparent from the disposition of the slugs in the other three. In our illustration of Type 4, it is the fourth (bottom) slot which is void. Beyond recording these possibilities, we do not chronicle such minor varieties.



*Type 4*



*Type 5*

By an order issued on 4 July 1942, all A.P.O. numbers were to be removed from "cancels" (anglice -- date-stamps) and this was done at A.P.O. 915, a blank space appearing at the bottom after A.P.O. This order was rescinded on 10 March 1943, but obviously the number, which had been removed by filing or other mechanical means, could not be replaced in the original position. It might appear at first sight that the removal of the A.P.O. number makes it impossible to associate a given date-stamp with the A.P.O. at which it was struck. This is not so in the case of covers, as standard instructions were that the write must insert (in the space provided at the top left of the envelope) his name, number, rank and unit, followed by the A.P.O. number and "c/o Postmaster, San Francisco" if serving in the Pacific area.

## CHRISTMAS ISLAND AND ITS POSTAL HISTORY

From covers we have seen, it is evident that a new similarly-worded cancellation to that originally supplied must have reached Christmas Island before August 1943, and this continued in use until at least the middle of 1944.

As early as March 1945 a new type of date-stamp came into use. This shown as Type 5 and it will be seen that the inscription is changed to read, "U.S.ARMY POSTAL SERVICE" (above) with A.P.O." (below). It would seem that this was of a mass-produced "universal" type. Standard practice was to insert the number of the A.P.O. in the slot previously used for the time symbols, as is apparent from the illustration.

As far as we are aware, this postmark continued in use until the American Forces left the island in September 1948.

## XI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1914 - Rougier, Emmanuel *Ile Christmas*.
- 1916 - Anon. *Collectionneurs de Timbres Poste*, pp 207, 273
- 1916 - Ingram, D. Notes from the Old Country. *Australian Philatelist*, vol xxii, p. 55
- 1918 - Anon. *Collectionneurs de Timbres Poste*, 1917, p. 99
- 1919 - Anon. Cruise of H.M.S. "New Zealand".
- 1923 - Melville, F.J. Christmas Island. *Phantom Philately*.
- 1924 - Collins, R.J.G. *The Stamps of the Pacific Islands* (vol. I). Published for the Christchurch Philatelic Society by Verne, Collins & Co. 1. ed., Christchurch, New Zealand.
- 1935 - Gibbons, R. Christmas Island and its Mystery Stamps. *Australian Stamp Journal*, vol. xxv, p 148.
- 1939 - Anon. Christmas Island. *Australian Stamp Monthly*, vol. x, p. 216
- 1939 - Goldup, J.T. Outlying Gilberts. *Stamp Collecting*, 15 July 1939.
- 1942 - Grumbridge, Dr. J.L. Postal History of Gilbert and Ellice Islands. *American Philatelist*, November 1942.
- 1946 - Morris, G.N. Christmas Island. *Pacific Stamp Review*, August 1946
- 1951 - Tripp, A.J. *Locations and Assignments*. U.S. Army Post Offices. World War II

The present work is based on the series of articles written by the Circle, which appeared in *The Australian Stamp Journal* in 1947, and we desire to express our thanks to Messrs J.H. Smyth Pty Ltd for permission to use these.



Printed by

THE HAWTHORN PRESS

*Fine Printing*