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John J. Walsh, Editor



## Thom 5 Line Overprints Black Overprints

By the EDITOR.

When the Provisional Government of Ireland contracted for its first provisional issue of postage stamps, the work of overprinting was divided between Messrs Dollard Ltd. and Messrs Alex Thom & Co., both of Dublin. The first issue was released February 17, 1922. Both the Dollard and Thom prints were in black ink. Thom printed four of the values, 1 1/2d, 2d, 6d and 1/- (Scott Nos. 15-18; Gibbons Nos. 10-15).

Sometime in June 1922, Thom was assigned the task of overprinting all of the values, including those formerly done by Messrs. Dollard. The reason for the change is not clear. Dollard's contract was terminated on June 12th, 1922 (1) without explanation. Thom's plant was located some distance from the area of Dublin occupied by the I.R.A. which was engaged in civil strife with the Provisional Government. Dollard was located in the vicinity of the Four Courts building which had been seized by the I.R.A. in April 1922. Dollard's plant was evacuated during the shelling of the Four Courts in late June 1922. (2)

Quite apart from the reason for the change to Thom, the postal authorities had not been satisfied with the black overprint of either Dollard or Thom. They complained that it was not distinguishable enough for the postal officers to detect the use of unoverprinted British stamps on the mail. (3)

When Thom took over the overprinting of all values on or about June 12, 1922 it used its own distinctive type (with full stop) rather than the Dollard type for the values thru 1/-. For the 2/6, 5/- and 10/- values, it used the Dollard type (distinguishable by the measurement between the h and E of Eireann). At the same time (June 1922), Thom was experimenting with various inks. Apparently, a few sheets of the former Dollard values of 1/2d, 1d, 3d, 10d and 5/- were overprinted in the same shade of dull black or what some call dull grey-black (4) used on the original issue of February 17, 1922.

Then trial printings were made on certain values with a blue-black ink to be distinctive from the cancelling black. These experimental inks were not satisfactory and were not distinct enough, so Thom finally developed a "bronze-blue" ink which was both clear and outstanding. This ink was finally chosen and resulted in what we call generally the "blue-black" issue of July-November 1922.

(1) Kohl's Handbuch. Zervas translation. Collector's Club Philatelist April 1941, page 135

(2) William Ward. Mekeel's Magazine. November 23, 1936

(3) Messrs Dollard converted to red ink on its 2 1/2d, 4d and 9d values in April 1922 for the same reason.

(4) Robson Lowe Encyclopedia. Vol. 2 1952

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MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 1968-69 NOW DUE  
Please Save Postage Expense By  
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"I'd like to be among the first to note the contribution which Mr. M. P. Giffney is making to EPS and its members in supplying the postal stationery offered in the April - June issue. This is a very wonderful service, and I hope that the gratitude of our members can be made apparent to Mr. Giffney in some way."  
Aug. 13, 1968 James J. Doheny

THOM "BLACK" OVERPRINTS (continued)

The black proofs and the experimental sheets got into circulation in the summer of 1922 and "from this trial, most of the cataloguers have fallen into an error of dubbing all the non-black inks as 'blue-black'." (5)

While the intensity of the ink finally chosen varies in degree during its extended use, it is always shiny, a distinct lustre dark blue, whereas the experimental trial blue blacks are dull and look like what they are - blue-black (5). If these overprints are compared with a true bronze-blue overprint they look black, but when compared with the early blacks which were in a dull grey-black ink - they appear to be bronze-blue, but not to the same strength as the really bronze-blue overprints. (6)

In summary, while the dull experimental blue-blacks should not be confused with the rare black trial proofs (7) they are collectible varieties, distinguishable from the subsequent shiny blue-blacks, or if you prefer accuracy, bronze-blues.

EXPERIMENTAL SHEETS RELEASED

During the time when Thom was experimenting with its inks, a shortage occurred in the post office supplies of certain values of stamps formerly supplied by Dollard. Thom was called upon to supply whatever values it had available and it is logical to assume that the requisitions included the few proof sheets in black as well as the experimental sheets in dull blue-black. They were perfectly usable sheets of stamps.

Any attempt to designate these sheets as a separate issue is virtually impossible because of the intermixing of these sheets with subsequent deliveries of the shiny blue-blacks in the post office stores. When the printers made deliveries to the Comptroller, the sheets were placed on top of the pile in each value and as requisitions were received from the various post offices, they would be filled from the top of the pile. As an example, the shortage of the 1d value in the autumn of 1922 was remedied by sheets of the Dollard overprint which were at the bottom of the pile. This was long after they were current on the post office counters. (8)

Meredith gives the following dates of issue: 1/2d black (end of July, 1922) 1/2d blue-black (August 23, 1922). 1d black and blue-black (July 20, 1922). 3d black and blue-black (July 11, 1922).

It is interesting that while the 1/2d and 3d dull black proof printings are usually priced in the catalogues both mint and used, the 1d, 10d and 5/- values are priced only mint in Gibbons. (9)

(5) William Ward. Mekeels Magazine. March 8, 1937

(6) F.R.A. McCormick. Stamp Collecting. February 3, 1923

(7) "After three years of special dealing, I feel I should offer one warning to our members. 99% of all the supposed dull black overprints I have seen have had obvious traces of blue in them under 40X magnification. I sincerely believe that method of holding the stamp up to bright sunlight to catch the blue reflection or lack of same to be highly subjective. I feel that if a stamp obviously shows blue ink under magnification it should not be called a dull black ink". Letter from John B. Sherman to the Editor May 1968.

(8) William Ward. "The Reissued Irish Dollards" Mekeel's Magazine. December 28th 1936. See also Stamp Collecting September 12, 1931, page 640 wherein the same author reported that he had visited the Controller's stock in Dublin on one occasion and noticed at the bottom of the 2 1/2d Thom value sheets, old Dollard carmine sheets in the same value. "Supplies had come and gone without the bottom sheets being exhausted."

(9) "I have serious doubts about the existence of Scott No. 37a (Gibbons #45a, the 5/- dull black). All the copies I have seen have either been #13 (5/- Dollard) with 21mm overprint (Short 3rd line) or #37 with a dull blue-black overprint whose blue ink fairly hits you in the eye under 40X magnification" J.E. Sherman

## New Issue Notes and News.



The Irish Post Office issued a special stamp on 26th August 1968, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. The design of the stamp depicting the exterior of the Cathedral is based on a photograph by J.J. Bambury.

Donal Mor O'Brien the last King of Munster built St. Mary's Cathedral on the site of his own palace in 1168. The tower of the Cathedral, over-

looking the river Shannon is one of Limerick's landmarks.

The stamps were recess printed by Messrs Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. Ltd., on paper watermarked E in sheets of 120 stamps. Two values: 5d. (20,000,000) in blue and 10d. (1,000,000) in olive green. Perforations 15 x 15.

### FORTHCOMING COMMEMORATIVE ISSUES

The special stamp commemorating the birth of Countess Markievicz in the 3d and 1s.5d. values and that for James Connolly which will be in the 6d and 1sh denominations will both be issued on Monday 23rd September. Photogravure printed.

International Year for Human Rights will be honoured by a stamp issue in the 5d and 7d values, on Monday 4th November. Photogravure printed.

### NEW DEFINITIVE ISSUE DATES ANNOUNCED BY IRELAND

Arrangements are in the final stages for the initial issue of the new Irish definitive postage stamps, designs for which were announced last year. Four denominations of the full series of sixteen values will be issued on Monday, 14th October, 1968. The stamps will be in the 2d, 8d, 2s.6d and 10s. values and will each portray one of the four basic designs to be used throughout the complete series.

The rest of the definitive stamps will be issued on the following dates:-

24th February, 1969 : 3d, 6d, 7d, and 5s. values

31st March, 1969 : 4d, 5d, 10d, and 1s. values

9th June, 1969 : 1/2d, 1d, 9d, and 1s.5d values

Printing is being carried out in photogravure by the Stamping Branch of Revenue Commissioners, Dublin Castle. Consultations were held over the past few months between the Post Office, the Stamp Design Advisory Committee, the Director of Stamping and the artist on the selection of colours for the different denominations. The new designs replace the entire series of definitive stamps at present in use, including the air-mail stamps issued in 1948.

### POSTAL STATIONERY

The following new items of postal stationery have been reported in the Irish Philatelic Circle News, May 1968:

(a) 1968: 5d envelope. Bright Violet. Typographed (whiter paper). There are also three shades of ink for the 5d stamp since its first appearance a year ago: (1) blackish violet, (2) violet, and (3) bright violet.

(b) 1968: Registered envelope, large size K ( 11 1/2" x 6" ) with Bright Green 1s. 5d. embossed stamp.

The inscription on the back has been corrected to read: "registration fee of 1s,0d." The flap is reshaped and has four straight edges instead of the rounded corners and the paper is almost white.

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### Current Philatelic Literature

"The Machine Cancellations of Sligo 1951-1967" Michael Leonard. Irish Philately. Journal of the Irish Philatelic Circle. September 1967 pp.59-60

"The Postal Arrangements for the Irish Contingents with U.N.O. in the Congo 1960-1964" A.T. Sedgley. Irish Philately. December 1967 pp. 70-76

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