

**Bermuda Prague Covers**  
**Original Correspondence**

THE COMMONWEALTH STAMP COMPANY

STAMP DEALERS & PUBLISHERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Sir L.Threlford, 11 Chelsea Embankment

28 Sept 1952

Dear Sir,

We are enclosing the stamps you have kindly purchased & we have filed your letter & if we come across any of the items which interest you we will be glad to let you know.

We have a cover (very few can exist used of this particular printing, for only a few went to Czecho-Slovakia for some reason we have never been able to discover) of the 12/6 'yellow' in the first printing,& the price is £8.

It was from this & one or two more covers, similar that we first learned that the Post Office (which is very exact) was apparently not right in the date of issue which it had given us. Genuinely postally used copies of the first 'yellow' printing must be so rare that is possible that not more than 20 exist. That is dated before the post-office obtained & put supplies on sale, mixed up with other stamps of the second printing.

The story regarding the cover with the 12/6d S.G. 120 b is quite interesting; it appears that a consignment of 12/6d values was sent direct to the Customs and Excise department in Bermuda for use as poll tax stamp. A clerk in the department noticed the unusual shade and used a few of them on covers. (The cover you have is one of these). As this particular delivery was never sold at the Post Office this shade must be very scarce indeed used, and a rarity mint, as we have only ever seen one copy in the unused state.

4 Oct. 1952

Dear Sir,

Please excuse lack of letter heading, but being Saturday I am staying home & attending there to a pile of correspondence which has mounted up this week.

The story you give is interesting, but here are the facts as I know them.

First of all there are two printings of Bermuda 15b, & until we got things sorted out that fact caused a lot of confusion.

We sent to the Colony & obtained a supply of the second printing. The Colonial Postmaster Kindly gave us the date when placed on sale.

Later a friend went over to see another friend (H. Ragg, Hayes & Co. now retired) & to his surprise found eight or ten covers (like the one we sent you) dated before the date the postmaster had given. We wrote to the PM. & he insisted that his date was correct. We wrote to a dealer in Bermuda & the true situation came out. The treasury in Bermuda holds stocks of stamps, & not only sells to the Post Office, but the shipping companies etc.

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They are not particular whether they give out later or earlier stocks & apparently before the post office got their supply of 'yellow' some had been handed over to a private firm (The 12/6d is mostly used for tax purposes) & one of the employees (who may or may not have noticed the shade) had addressed a few covers to a philatelist in Prague, who in turn to liquidate a debt, had sent them to Mr Ragg.

The post office evidently got a stock of both printings at the same time (mint copies about show they had stock, though the first, as the cover, is much rarer than the second) & they of course looked upon both printings as one lot, for the difference is too slight for them to notice, which is the reason why both are classed as 15b, but the stamp on the cover is the first printing & of course No 15b.

Your cover would undoubtedly come from the same source as the one we sent & at a guess we would say it came perhaps from Bridger & Kay, who we would also guess came from that friend of ours who visited Mr Ragg & found the small stock, the value of which at the time was not realized, & it is a sore point with the latter when he thinks what he got for them.

10 Oct 1952

We note you consulted Gibbons before purchasing your block. They had not even heard of the item until a considerable time after it was off sale, but if you got from Bridger & Kay, it would certainly be all right for we know where they got theirs from.

There were certainly two printings, the first being slightly paler & though we got many hundreds of copies from the P.O. (we distributed through our new issue service perhaps half the total quantity which exists) we got none of the first printing, though we have seen a few copies which did come from the P.O. Used before the P.O. put on sale (like your cover) must be excessively rare.

We have spoken since we wrote you, to the party who got these covers from Prague, & as we suspected the story you retold was quite a fairy yarn. What we told you were actual facts.

We are glad that cover went to a pukka collector of Bermuda.

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**BWISC Bulletin 199 December 2003**

Follow up to the article in Bulletin 184, March 2000

Going through my correspondence received in 1952, I find letters from F.E. Metcalfe, Editor of the C.W. Catalogue. He details letters from the Bermuda Post Office – it turns out, that supplies of 12/6d stamps were sent direct from the Treasury in Bermuda to the Customs & Excise Dept., mainly for use as a Poll Tax stamp but also to Shipping Companies. A supply of the first (slightly paler) printing stamps was sent in 1946 (before the regular Lemon shade was issued at Post offices!) – some of these were used on cover by an employee in the shipping company to his philatelist friend in Prague – i.e. the arrival of the CW15bb shade!! A well-known collector at the time, Bentley Kettle, made the discovery.

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**BWISC Bulletin 184 March 2000**  
**Allan Leverton**

1946/47 The Lemon shade on non-chalk paper, CW 15BB. The stamp is known Mint, but most copies are on covers reg. to "Prague" 18/JUN/47 (reg. Nos. 6735 - 6744 are known).

The background to this shade is not known for sure. However, it would appear that the supply has been held in Bermuda for some time hence the paper became slightly toned.

It is almost certain these stamps were for "poll tax" use - and it is possible some were stuck on forms, but not cancelled and later used, by a person unknown, on covers. The 12s/6d rate is too high, but if the stamp has to be saleable it had to be 'used' as a philatelic item. These were offered in UK through the original Commonwealth Stamp Company in Liverpool.

We purchased several for £15 or £25 each as the "Lemon", but when we checked they were obviously from a different printing. We had a Mint Block of this shade at the time which was sold to a prominent Bermuda collector (Sir Lacon Thelford) in U. K. When he died the collection was sold by H.R. Harmer about 1953/54. In the recent Ludington auction the write up is of great interest

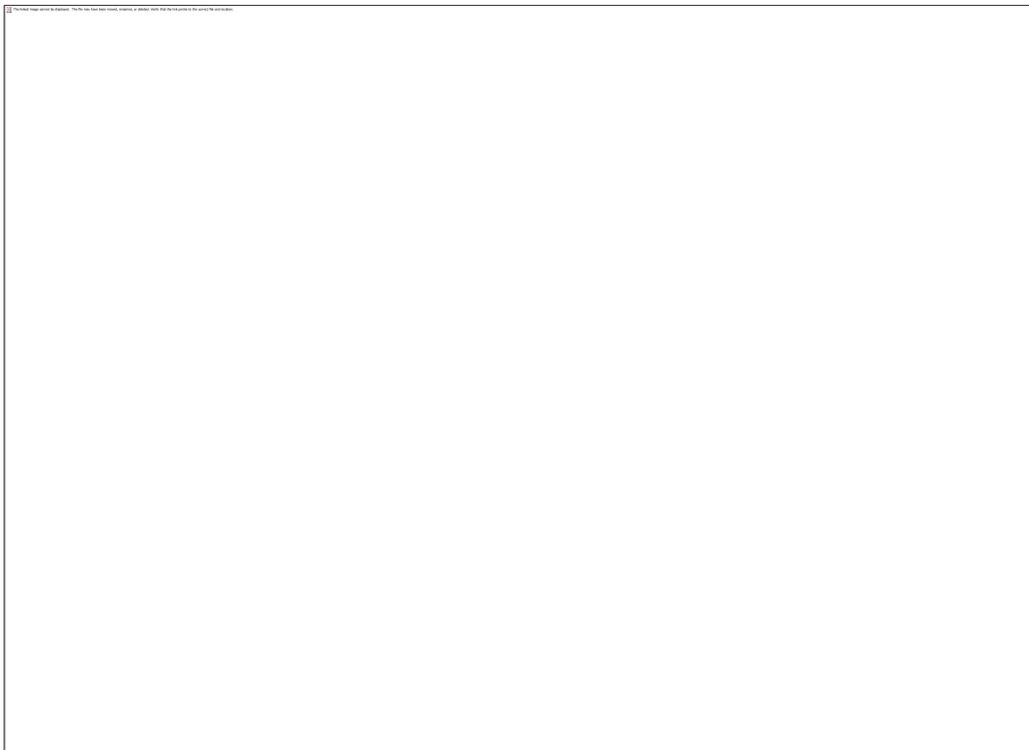
Notes from a page in Ludington Collection

12s.6d. Gray and Yellow on Plain Unsurfaced Paper (CW. No. 15bb).

Like the 1938-1940 printings, the yellow ink has a heavy iron content. The yellow ink on the 1942-1946 printings on substitute paper has practically no iron, but is heavy in strontium, not found on the stamp below.

The 1939 and/or 1940 printings were on sale at the Hamilton P.O. in 1946 and it seems likely that one or more sheets, without chalk surfacing, and with the frame yellower than usual, went on sale in 1947. Note that the paper is similarly toned indicating a long period of storage in Bermuda.

With B.P.A. Cert. Ex Ludington. Signed W.E. Lea. A.M. Leverton, J. Webb



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Any further information would be gratefully received .

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