



## Wanderings of a Philatelist

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### VIII. BERMUDA.

**B**ERMUDA, or, to give the islands their correct name, the Bermudas, are a group of islands to the number of about three hundred, lying in mid-Atlantic, about 580 miles from the nearest land in North Carolina; only some fifteen of them are inhabited. The main island, Great Bermuda, is fourteen miles long from south-west to north-east, and a mile wide in most parts. It resembles in shape an open snap-hook, with its mouth towards the west, and the eye to the north-east. The extreme point is Ireland Island, with Boaz, Watford, and Somerset Islands to the south and west. We then come to the main island, which is divided into districts. First comes Sandys, with Southampton to the east of it, followed by Warwick and Paget. Across the bay from the latter is Pembroke, in which, at the angle of the hook, is Hamilton, the capital. To the north-east of these two again are Devonshire and Smith's. The latter forms the south-west shore of Harrington Sound, a land-locked lagoon, of which the south-east and north shores are formed by the district of Hamilton, or Bailey's Bay. To the north-east of the main island is a chain of islands, which encloses Castle Harbour. The first of these, joined to the other island by a causeway, is S. George's Island, with S. David's to the east, and a number of smaller islands completes the circle. The Great

Sound, in the curve of the open hook, has also a number of islands scattered about it. The thickest part of the island is across from the south of Paget to the north of Pembroke, close to Hamilton. I have perhaps gone rather fully into the configuration of the islands, as I have found no atlas that gives more than a mere thumbnail sketch of them. The two main towns are Hamilton, the present capital, and S. George's, the former one. On Ireland Island, to which are joined the other two islands of Boaz and Watford, are the dockyard and the R.N. establishment. The finest harbour is that of S. George's, which is able to accommodate a large fleet, but of which the entrance had to be blasted out before it was possible to use it very much, as it was too shallow.

The history of the islands is very peaceful, compared with that of the other West Indian islands (though it is not correct to speak of Bermuda as one of the West Indies). This arises from the fact that they lie a good deal north of the usual route followed by ships to the Spanish Main, and consequently were not so much in the public eye. They were first discovered by a Spaniard, named Bermudes, who was wrecked there in the early part of the sixteenth century—not a very pleasant way of discovery, it is true, but one that was a favourite one as far as concerns these islands, as the next person to find them was

Henry May, at the close of the same century, and in the same way; while in 1609 Sir George Somers was also wrecked there. It is to this latter that the islands owe their development, as well as their alternative name of the Somers Isles, as he established a settlement there, but died soon afterwards. However they were later granted to an offshoot of the Virginia Company, under which they made good progress. Since that time their history has been one of peaceful development, although the soil is not very good for agriculture taken as a whole. The islands owe their prosperity principally to the fact that they have become an important naval and coaling station, and owing to their strategic position in mid-Atlantic a strong garrison is maintained there. The iron floating dock depicted on the 1902 issue is capable of floating the largest battleship. All the islands are connected by bridges or causeways, with the exception of a small gap between Somerset and Watford Islands.



Before going on to speak of modern times, it may be interesting to say a few words as to the old cancellations that are to be found on the stamps of Bermuda. Pride of place must be given to the postmark, which in the earliest days was used as a frank, and is catalogued by Stanley Gibbons, Ltd. as No. 1 of Bermuda. I have this on a copy of the 4d. C C, so that it must have continued in use for some time after the introduction of stamps, though it is not often found. Next there is a

Besides these are to be found single-circle cancellations of Hamilton, S. George's, Ireland Island, and Mangrove Bay, occasionally in blue, but mostly in black (Fig. 2). These last were probably attached to the duplex numbered cancellations that are the next to be noticed. The numbers run from 1 to 18, or possibly further, and, although I have tried to trace the origin of them I have met with very little success, having only been able to find out about seven or eight of them. No. 1 was in use at Hamilton, No. 2 at S. George's, No. 3 at Ireland Island, while I believe that No. 4 was used at Mangrove Bay in the north of Somerset Island. The first three, and probably the other as well, had the name of the office attached in the usual duplex postmark manner. The difficulty with regard to the majority, if not all, of the rest lies in the following two facts. In the first place no records seem to have been kept to show which number was attached to which office (though this is not always the case), and, in spite of enquiries addressed to all the sub-offices, as well as to the head Post Office, very little information is to be had. In the second place, instead of the name of the office being attached to the number, in, I think, all cases, the date-stamp consists of the name "BERMUDA" at the top, and the letters "R.O." (Receiving Office) at the bottom, with the date in the centre (Fig. 3). I am indebted to the postmaster (or rather, postmistress) at S. George's West for this knowledge, as the old cancelling stamp is still in existence there, though not used, and I was sent some six copies on odd bits of paper as specimens. The only other numbers that I can definitely assign to offices are as follows: Nos. 12, Harrington Sound; 14, Bailey's Bay; 16, Devonshire North, and 18, S. George's West. I may add that at least the duplex cancellation at Hamilton was in use till quite recently, as I have a copy of the 3d. blue Script with this mark.



1



2



3



4

small capital "B" in an oval of eight parallel bars, of which the centre two are broken to admit the "B." It is somewhat similar to the cancellation to be found on the stamps of Bahamas, but the "B" is much smaller, being only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  mm. in height. Another early mark consists of a single circle, with "BERMUDA" at the top, "PAID" at the bottom, and the date in one line across the centre (Fig. 1).

The next type of postmark was one that consisted of two concentric circles, with the name round the top, "BERMUDA" at the base, and the date across the centre in three lines. This type also is still in use at Hamilton (Fig. 4). Some obsolete offices are to be found also in this type, e.g. Pembroke (with one of the points of the compass attached to it!), which is now not in use,

as Hamilton, the head office, is evidently considered to be close enough, it being in the district of Pembroke.

The modern type of cancellation is one of the most pleasing to be found anywhere, and has the advantage of not unduly obliterating the stamps to which it is applied. It consists of a single circle, with the name of the post office at the top, "BERMUDA" at the base, and the date across the centre in one line. There are at present nineteen offices in the islands, of which I give the names, starting from the west, and working towards the eye of the snap-hook, to which I have likened the group: Ireland Island, Mangrove Bay, Somerset Bridge (connecting Somerset and the main island), Southampton West, Southampton East, Warwick

West, Warwick East, Paget West, Paget East, Hamilton, Devonshire South, Devonshire North. Flatts (the name of a village in Smith's), Harrington Sound (presumably serving the part of the country to the south of the Sound), Crawl and Bailey's Bay (both in the district of Hamilton, as mentioned above), S. George's, S. George's West, and S. David's.

I may add that these were the offices three years ago, when I first started to investigate the subject, and that there may be fresh offices since—though it is not very likely. The time that has since elapsed has been taken up in trying to extract information as to the number-cancellations. Further investigation in this direction I leave to others.

