

## Some Interesting Covers from St. Helena

By Ernest Roberts

The following six covers are presented in reverse chronological order of mailing with the intent of interpreting and confirming, with some speculation, the postal rates for letters from St. Helena to various destinations of the world. With one exception these postal transmissions use the badge of colony stamps for the required postage.

The recent publication of "The George V Badge Stamps of St. Helena and Ascension" by the West Africa Study Circle will precipitate long happy hours being spent by those with significant accumulations of these issues searching for the flaws, major, minor, secondary and transient. Appendix iv of this publication provides the relevant postal rates for the time that the badge stamps were in use. This allows for a far less demanding study of these of covers from the King George V period. All postage rates quoted below are from this appendix.

The first cover, see **Figure 1**, was addressed to a Mr. A James in Malta. For postage from St. Helena to Malta the cover bears a total of 2d in badge stamps. These are two of the ½d denomination and one of one penny. This is the correct amount for up to one ounce to a British territory.



Fig. 1

The lower of the two halfpenny stamps exhibits the broken main mast flaw.

The arrival mark, **Figure 2**, on the reverse side of the cover is of Valletta, Malta and dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1937.



Fig. 2

Unfortunately the cancellations applied to the stamps of St. Helena cannot be read. The initial King George VI stamps were two months away, the coronation issue being released on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

At the top center of the envelope is the instruction "To be forwarded". The initial address appears to be, as well as may be read under the obliterating wavy lines, c/o A C English Esq., Real Knights of Malta, c/o G.P.O., Malta. There is no forwarding address apparent suggesting that this had been erased sometime during the life of the cover. The 1½d stamp of Malta, SG No.196, would take care of the cost of forwarding the letter. This is cancelled with a double ring postmark with the words "PAQUEBOT KNIGHT of MALTA" between the two circles, and is dated 9th March 1937.

Covers of the same time period addressed to London from Malta bear a similar stamp and the same cancellation indicating that the 1½d rate would have been sufficient to take any missive from Malta to any other British area. It is reasonable to conclude that overseas mail from Malta was transported aboard the "Knight of Malta" where the postal process was completed. The closest mainland European country to Malta is Italy and one can guess that, wherever the "Knight of Malta" docked, mail would be able to travel, at least to London, by rail and a ferry ride.

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Incidentally, the "Real Knights of Malta", claims to have been known at one time as the "Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta".

The cover, **Figure 3**, shows Mexico as the destination. The stamps are three 1½d Silver Jubilee stamps and a 3d badge stamp.

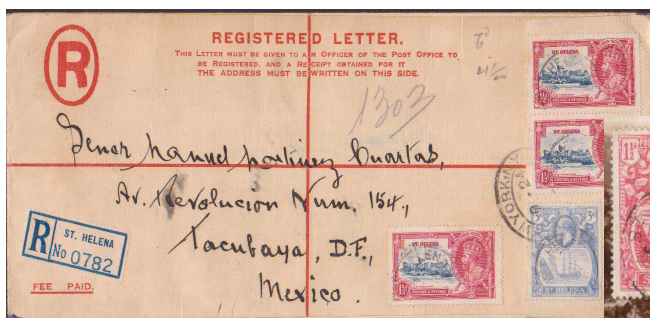


Fig. 3

The postal markings on the reverse of the cover, **Figure 4**, indicate that the letter arrived in Tacubaya, D. F. on 30th September 1935 having passed through New York on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the same month. The St.



Fig. 4

Helena cancellations cannot be read. The total postage applied might show that when the registration fee of 3d is deducted he remaining 4½d allows up to two ounces in weight. However in the bottom left corner of the face of the envelope are the words FEE PAID. If this accounts for the registration fee of 3d then the weight of the contents and envelope would be four ounces. This is certainly a great deal of paper, but something more dense than paper might have been enclosed.

The postal stationery envelope is certainly capable of bearing that weight and volume, measuring ten inches by four and being made from paper with cloth reinforcement on the inside.

The picture post card, **Figure 5**, that is addressed to Belgium bears the 1½d rate to a foreign country. The St. Helena cancellation is dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 1933 with a receiving mark, **Figure 6**, showing that it arrived on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1933.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

The cover, **Figure 7** (page 9) shows clearly that it was mailed on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1932. It is addressed to Richmond, Virginia, USA. There are four stamps of the ½d value

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whereas the requirement for one ounce to a foreign country was 3d. This leaves a balance of one penny to be paid but the fee would be double that, 2d. This doesn't

The cover bearing three different denominations of the badge stamp, **Figure 9**, was mailed on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1928. This complies with the registration fee, 3d, and the rate for one ounce also 3d. The letter



Fig. 7

Fig. 8



Fig. 9

equate to the assessed fee of 20 centimes entered in pencil on the postage due mark. However, if the weight of the letter was greater than one ounce but less than two, the required postage would have been 4½d. In this case the underpayment would be 2½d resulting in a fee of 5d. Four times this value results in the twenty centimes that is shown in pencil on the envelope. There are no back stamps or arrival markings on the reverse side but there is a seal of wax, **Figure 8**, which would account for some additional weight.

was back stamped in London on the 10th September 1928 with arrival markings showing Chicago 20<sup>th</sup> September 1928, **Figure 10**.



Fig. 10

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The last cover is shown in **Figure 11** with the reverse side illustrated in **Figure 12**. It carries the 2½d stamp SG No. 64 and the 1/- stamp, SG No. 59, both of Edward VII. This was mailed on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1910, ten days after the death of Edward VII. The island had to wait another two years for its initial issue of George V stamps.

way to the market place over the past thirty years and these have attracted the attention of collectors. An article appearing in the British Caribbean Philatelic Journal of April 2012 considers the covers addressed to Mr. Prieth in depth and includes a photograph of Prieth as a youth that the author attributes to Wikipedia. He is also mentioned incidentally in the Bermuda Post of December 2005.

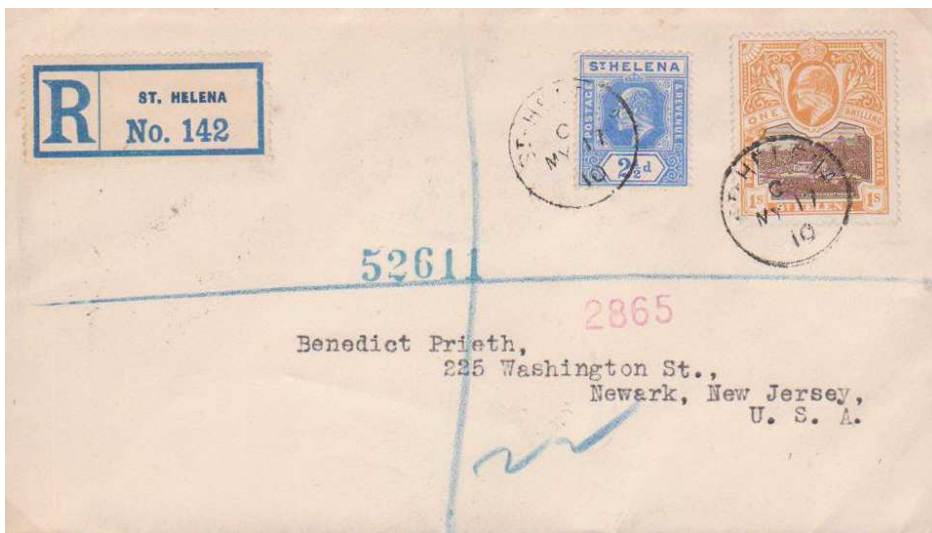


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

There are two different London registration marks one of which shows the 8<sup>th</sup> June. The registration mark for New York is for June 17<sup>th</sup> and the same for the arrival in Newark, New Jersey. The addressee, Benedict Prieth, was a collector who solicited stamps from many British areas. A multitude of covers addressed to him have found their

His obituary in *The Stamp Collector's Fortnightly* of November 1934 states that he was a life long collector and frequent contributor to the American philatelic press.

The total postage is one shilling and two pence half penny. This amount defies this writer's knowledge of postal rates and is out of the range of dates listed in the WASC's publication.

Transit markings are sparse on the registered mail considered above so routing details cannot be completely established. Checking arrival dates with those of departure from St. Helena it would appear that it took approximately one month for a letter to travel to England and ten days from there to cross the Atlantic. §