



LONDON CHIEF OFFICE
KING EDWARD STREET
LONDON E C 1
TELEPHONE 01 432 3851

PRICE
6d.

JOUBERT'S
DIADEMS
(Enlarged)



G.B. 1855



CEYLON 1857



INDIA 1859



JAMAICA 1857

THE DE LA RUE SURFACE PRINTED POSTAGE STAMPS 1855 - 1867

Thomas De La Rue, the founder of the firm that bears his name was born in Guernsey in 1793: he came from Huguenot stock. As a young man of 20 he established a printing office in the Island and in 1818 moved to London where he soon became known as a printer of playing cards by a new direct letterpress printing method. Until then playing cards were produced by hand stencilling and the colouring added by water colour. Thomas De La Rue's inventiveness won him the grant in 1832 from King William IV of Royal Letters Patent for the printing of playing cards by his typographical process.

Armed with this experience De La Rue signed a contract in 1853 for the printing of the Inland Revenue Fiscal stamps - an event which was to lead to the firm printing Britain's first surface printed postage stamps in 1855. From 1855 to 1880 the De La Rue British postage stamp contract was limited to the production of stamps for denominations in excess of twopence. The lower value stamps from 1840-1880 were printed by the line engraved process by Perkins, Bacon & Co. From 1880 to 1913 the House of De La Rue printed all the U.K. stamps. (The story covering the period 1868-1913 will be told in a subsequent exhibition in the Museum).

De La Rue's success in the home market was paralleled by the contract they won him to print stamps for overseas Postal administrations. The pioneer work of Perkins, Bacon & Co. and of the House of De La Rue in this regard laid the foundation of our export trade in stamps. This trade now runs at the rate of eighteen thousand million stamps a year earning us £1,340,000 in overseas currency. The business today is in the hands of three firms, De La Rue, Bradbury-Wilkinsons and Harrisons - all of whom have made notable contributions to philatelic history.

The engraver whose portrait of the young Queen Victoria enriched the Inland Revenue stamp of 1853 the De La Rue postage stamps of this country and many Dominion and Colonial



General Colonial
Issues 1859



General Colonial
Issues 1862



India Fiscals
1861 - Postal 1865



British Honduras
1865

issues printed by De La Rue throughout the Queen's long reign was Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferté, JOUBERT, as he was known, was a refugee artist from post Napoleonic France who came to this country in 1840 having exhibited at the Paris Salon that year. His superlative craftsmanship soon won him recognition in Britain. The Society of Arts awarded him two silver medals in 1847 and such well known Academicians as William Etty and E. J. Poynter entrusted him with the engraving of their works. Joubert also exhibited his own work at the Royal Academy on many occasions.

Thomas De La Rue's son Warren (1815-1889) the senior partner in his father's business was a scientist, inventor and man of diligence and enterprise. He was to become a Fellow of the Royal Society and secretary of the Royal Institution. To him was entrusted the business of printing the letterpress stamps.

Joubert's original die cut in relief and in reverse on a steel plate was transferred by pressure to lead blocks each of which was the size of the stamp: the required number of impressions were locked in a frame and the whole placed in an electro-chemical bath which deposited a thin layer of copper. This 'electro-type' was backed by type metal and became the printing plate. Any required number of plates could be produced from a master. The actual printing, unlike that for line engraved, was a dry process. This facilitated the accurate use of perforation combs and permitted the use of fugitive inks making it virtually impossible to remove cancellation marks without detection.

The development of these classic British surface printed stamps, printed by De La Rue and incorporating Joubert's Royal Portrait is the theme of the Museum's current exhibition. Almost all the items displayed are drawn from the Reginald M. Phillips collection which is exceptionally rich in unique material illustrating the early history of De La Rue's philatelic achievement.

Visitors will see die proofs of the Inland Revenue Draft or receipt stamp of 1853 together with Imprimatur and other examples of these stamps including the 1d. brown tête-bêche, the only Victorian stamp showing this variety.

The postage stamps of 1855, which did not have corner letters, are similarly illustrated by die proofs, imprimatur stamps and other examples. Adjoining the Phillips' collection imprimatures is the Registration sheet of the fourpenny carmine from which the Phillips imprimatures were cut during the 19th Century. In the opinion of experts De La Rue's have never produced stamps of greater elegance.

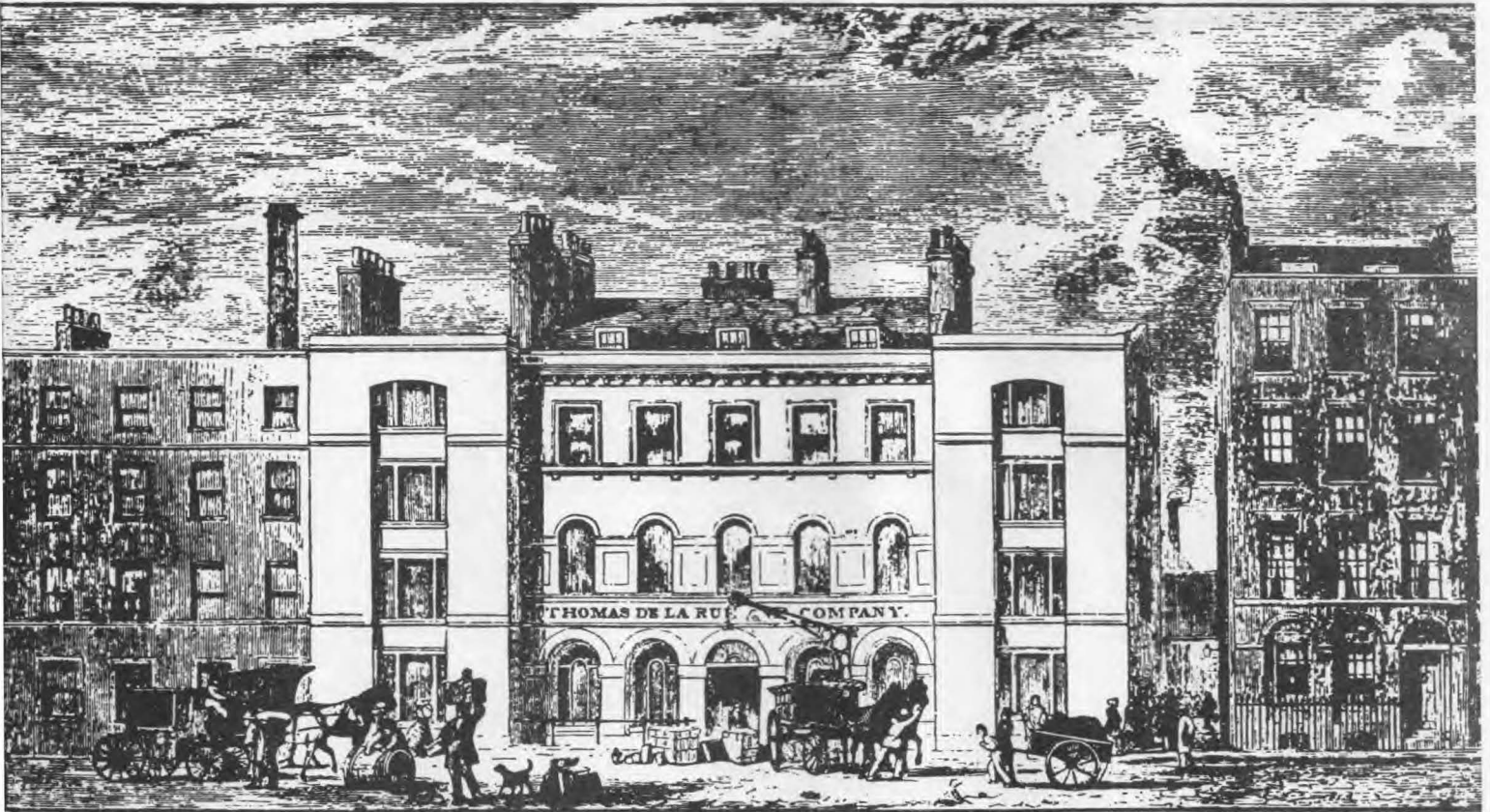
In 1862 there was an official insistence on the reinstatement of the corner letters - an act that did much to diminish the simple dignity of the original design. Joubert did as he was told making the letters as small and inconspicuous as possible. Die proofs and many examples of these stamps, imprimatures as well as used and unused examples are shown.

Joubert's naivety in making the letters small did not find acceptance in official circles and three years later large corner letters and the plate numbers were added to the stamps of each denomination - an aesthetic disaster.

The entire range of these early surface printed stamps from the fourpenny of 1855 to the five shilling design of 1867 illustrate the virtuosity of both the portraitist and printer.

One of the great rarities amongst the many rarities displayed is the Registration sheet Plate 5 of the ninepenny straw of 1866 (from the Post Office collection) and imprimatur and unusual stamps from the same plate from the Phillips' collection.

These Plate 5 ninepenny straw stamps are of particular interest as only five sheets were printed.



The Works at Bunhill Row, from a catalogue of 1856

Except for the crane the buildings were unchanged in 1940. The house on the right, occupied by Thomas De La Rue when he moved to Bunhill Row in 1834, was used subsequently as the Offices of the Chairman and Managing Director. The connecting bridge with the Works still remained.