

CIRCULAR DATESTAMPS 1989-2014

In 1991 P Ibbotson published “The Postal History and Stamps – Mauritius”, then the most extensive and comprehensive but incomplete study of Mauritian philately. In 1995 after several visits to Mauritius, whilst a member of the Mauritius Philatelic Society and after meeting some very knowledgeable local philatelists, he updated his 1991 book with “Revisions and Additions”. The most significant addition was the importance of the railways in Mauritius postal history and this is one aspect which has yet to be completed.

In his first work, the chapter on “Circular Datestamps 1894 – 1989” classifies these datestamps in four distinct groups namely Type A introduced in 1894, Type B introduced in 1900, Type C as from 1909 and Type D as from 1939. Types A, B and C are single circle circular datestamps whereas Type D is a double circle circular datestamp. The Type D double circle cds are 27mm in diameter (however some recent Type D cds postmarks measure 26mm in diameter) with the time, date month and year in three lines within the inner circle. The standard Type D cds has the post office name in the upper part with Mauritius in the lower part. Heavy slugs or thin lines separate the nameplace from the island’s name. There are however various sub types such as the Rodrigues and Agalega double circle cds and the numerals at base cds amongst others.

At the beginning of 1990 the double circle cds in use at all designated post office counters of Mauritius and Rodrigues were the Type D datestamps except for Rose Belle and Terre Rouge post offices where Type C single circle were still utilised. By mid-1993 however all the datestamps at all post offices as well as other services and sections have been regularised with the exclusive usage of Type D double circle cds. There was no exception to this rule in Mauritius and Rodrigues until 2005.



Type C single circle cds in use in 1990/91

The examination of a collection of 134 covers made between August 1989 and March 1990 at the 101 post offices and postal agencies, 98 in Mauritius and 3 in Rodrigues, as listed in the Posts and Telegraphs Department annual report of December 1989 produced this result:

Mauritius		
Type C	Nameplace at top Mauritius at base	2
Type D	Nameplace at top Mauritius at base with lines	92
Type D	Nameplace at top Mauritius at base with slugs	25
Type D	Nameplace and Mauritius in upper part with numeral at base	13
Rodrigues		
Type D	Nameplace at top Rodrigues at base with lines	1
Type D	No nameplace Rodrigues at top with lines	1
Type D	No nameplace Rodrigues at top with one slug	1
Type D	Nameplace and Rodrigues at top with one line at bottom	2

The four Rodrigues types are all different.



Rodrigues Type D double circle cds

Whilst the collection is not a complete collection of all datestamps in use at all the post offices counters of Mauritius and Rodrigues it is an accurate record of the migration from single circle Type C to the double circle Type D between early 1990 up to 2005. The collection also excluded major Type D subtypes and what P Ibbotson describes as “idiosyncrasies of Mauritius”.

The numerals at base Type D cds are generally in use at the bigger post offices such as Port Louis, Curepipe, Vacoas, Quatre Bornes, Beau

Bassin. In the case of Quatre Bornes and Port Louis numerals 1 to 10 have been recorded. In Port Louis two different number 3 and in Vacoas two number 6 have been recorded. Smaller post offices such as Forest Side, Reduit, Grand Bay also use numbered cds. It is not uncommon to see more recent numbered datestamps today introduced at smaller post offices with the numeral not necessarily at the base.

The Society has paid particular attention to the evolution of postmarks and postal markings of Mauritius since 1989. During the last 25 years, the Society monitored not only the introduction of new datestamps but also the quality of the impressions as well as other 'idiosyncrasies of Mauritius' in its newsletters.

In a 24 page 2007 monograph titled "Mauritius – A Brief introduction to the Mauritius Government Railways, Barred Oval Numeral Cancellers and Double Circle Circular Datestamps of Mauritius" by Mico Antoine and Patrick Kwan Cheung, ten pages were devoted to the Type D datestamps. Extracts are reproduced here.

[The Mesnil post office opened on 14 March 2005. This office was supplied with two single circle circular datestamps measuring 30mm in diameter supplied by Reiner of Germany. The two digit date, month and year are separated from the two digit hour by a thin slug in one straight line in the centre of the device. The name of the post office is at the top with the numeral (1 and 2) and Mauritius at base without any lines at sides.



Mesnil single circle cds

Boulevard Pitot, Monneron Hill and Waterfront post offices which are all located in Port Louis use Type D cds without the city's name. Vallée Pitot which was closed in 1993 was another example.

A 1973 Type D cds of Mahebourg Muaritus at top and the numeral 2 at base had the country misspelt Muaritus instead of Mauritius; it was

immediately withdrawn but some covers were made by a postal clerk.

This was the last recorded datestamp error until the last quarter of 2006 when two new Rediut Type D cds with the name of the post office misspelt were put into use at Reduit post office until they were replaced by new corrected Reduit datestamps in April 2007.



'REDIUT 1' and corrected 'REDUIT 1' cds

In the early 1990s a double circle circular datestamp reading Grand Baie was used in Grand Bay for a short time. The Postmaster General considered this new appellation a misspelling since all the other Grand Bay cds until then bore the official designated English name of the village of Grand Bay. In October 1993 the Grand Baie 1 datestamp was withdrawn and two Grand Bay cds numbered 1 and 2 were introduced on the same day.



Grand Baie and Grand Bay Type D cds

Several Port Louis Counter Type D cds were introduced at the Dumas Street main post office in Port Louis. These are the first cds identifying the main Port Louis post office as Counter and they are used almost exclusively in the Bulk Mail enclosure. The Port Louis Counter datestamps were introduced in the third quarter of 2006 and the earliest date seen so far is 19 December 2006 on year-end greetings covers from the Ministry of Tourism posted at the Bulk Mail enclosure.

Prior to these cds registration mark rubber handstamps incorporated Counter in their designations as in 'PORT LOUIS GPO COUNTER F' and the letter C in 'GPOC' stands for Counter on the current WebRiposte computer labels.

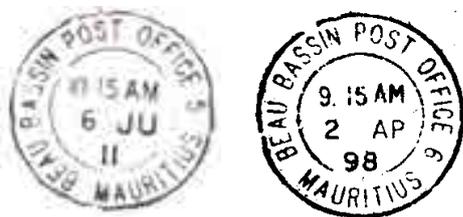
The Society's map of post offices lists the Dumas Street post office simply as Port Louis.



Port Louis Counter and Port Louis Delivery cds

Type D "Delivery" datestamps were reintroduced in the Port Louis Delivery Section as from 8 December 2006 more than 50 years after they were withdrawn in 1954. Numbered 2 and 3, they have been seen on incoming international mail as well as on inland mail from Rodrigues. They had also been seen on Mauritian inland mail that appear to have missed the postal clerk's canceller at the office of posting on items that transit through the Port Louis Delivery Section.

Many Type D cds are anything but standard. For example the Parcel Post Office cds in Port Louis does not have the town's place. On two Beau Bassin cds with numerals, Beau Bassin Post Office 5 Mauritius and Beau Bassin Post Office 6 Mauritius respectively (using up the whole of the circle), the position of the designation is not even uniform. The Mobile Post Office at top with Mauritius at base is used on the special mail van that runs between Mahébourg and Grand River South East serving villages along the road.



Beau Bassin Post Office 5 and Beau Bassin Post Office 6 cds

Two exceptional services however must be considered namely the Philatelic Bureau and the Mauritius Postal Museum. All the four special cancelling devices, two from the Philatelic Bureau (1 or 2) and two from the Postal Museum (Pillar Box and Museum Portal) are used on mail posted or serviced at the two venues.



Mauritius Postal Museum and Philatelic Service double circle cds

The four devices are double circle circular datestamps and are 33 mm in diameter. They all have the date, month and year in a straight line without the time. The Philatelic Bureau cds have Port Louis at the top with Mauritius at the base with lines on the sides. The two Postal Museum datestamps read Mauritius Postal Museum with Port Louis at the base. The postal museum cds went into service on 10 March 1995 when the museum was inaugurated and the Philatelic Bureau cds were first used on 15 July 1993.]

Locally Manufactured Circular Datestamps

The two double circle circular datestamps in use at Flic en Flac as from 28 July 2003 are new types of cancelling devices manufactured in Mauritius by Metal Cast Ltd. These devices have turned out to be unpopular with the postal officers as they are cumbersome. The head has to be screwed on and off several times a day and a retaining side screw has also got to be manipulated to keep the head in position.

More than one of the 11 post offices that have been supplied with them up to the end of October 2003 are simply not using them – Solferino for example has never used its Metal Cast cds on commercial mail.

The 11 post offices supplied with these datestamps are: Laventure, Flic en Flac (2), Goodlands, Montagne Longue (2), D'Epinay, Vacoas (2), Grand Baie, Saint Pierre, Midlands, Solferino and Agalega. The numeral (2) denotes the number of supplied datestamps.



Type D 'Metal Cast' cds

From the beginning of 2005 to the end of 2014 many Type D double circle cds were introduced some with very thin outer rings that in fact gave a measurement of 26mm instead of the regular 27mm diameter. The introduction of these Type D cds were chronicled in the Society newsletters as follows:-

2006 - 2007

26mm Port Louis Delivery with numeral at top and Mauritius at base

26mm Port Louis Counter with numeral at top and Mauritius at base

26mm Rediut (misspelt) with numeral on top and Mauritius at base (6th October 2006 to April 2007)

26mm Reduit (corrected) April 2007

26mm Flic en Flac and Flic en Flac 1 at top, Mauritius at base (December 2006) replacing two Metal Cast cds

26mm Port Louis Sorting 1 and 2 top Mauritius at base.

Other new 26mm cds: Floreal 1, Port Louis Eastern 1, Solferino 2, Grand Bay 4, Plaine des Papayes 2, Bambous 2. Bel Air 2, Camp de Masque 1, Petite Riviere 1, Port Louis Centre 4, Port Louis Registered 1, Quartier Militaire 1, Surinam 1.

All the 2007 26mm 'other new' Type D cds are with office name and numeral at top, Mauritius at base.

2008

26mm Office of Exchange 1, 2, 3 at top Mauritius at base, no name place, Introduced after the transfer of the Office of Exchange from Sir S Ramgoolam International Airport to Port Louis.

2011

26mm La Flora (01 June 2011)

26mm Glen-Park, Glen-Park 1 and Glen-Park 2 (17 December 2011). Nameplace with hyphen.

27mm Pailles 1 (03 November 2011)

27mm Trou aux Biches (09 December 2011)

27mm Ebene (05 December 2011)

All newly opened or re-opened post offices with nameplace and numeral at top Mauritius at base.



Type D cds introduced in 2011

2012

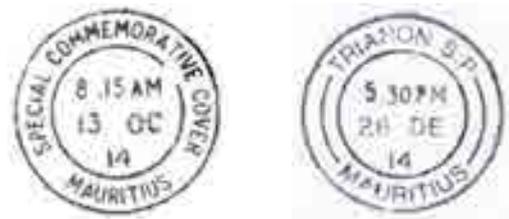
27mm Mobile Post Office 2 at top Mauritius at base. New service as from 5th December 2012.

27mm "First Day of Issue" at top Mauritius at base (04 April 2012)

27mm "Special Commemorative Cover" at top Mauritius at base (13 October 2012)

2014

27mm Trianon SP at top Mauritius at base (06 October 2014)



*Special Commemorative Cover
and Trianon S.P cds*

Several sub-types of the standard Type D 27mm cds have been introduced during the period 2005 to 2014. Many of these are not the counter type such as Port Louis Delivery, Port Louis Sorting, Office of Exchange, First Day of Issue and Special Commemorative Cover. The new Type D cds of Trianon post office incorporate the letters SP not for Special Performance as for the Boeing 747 aircraft but Shopping Park for its rented location. After

Trianon SP and hyphenated Glen-Park other idiosyncrasies can be expected.

N.B. The recorded 26mm Type D cds may well mutate into 27mm. It could be that after being banged around the outer circle will flatten out and become one millimetre thicker.

Other Datestamps

Datestamps other than the Type D double circle cds of Mauritius have been introduced during the last 25 years. After having achieved complete harmonisation from mid-1993 up to 2005, notwithstanding the offshore Agalega Post Office single circle cds of 2002, Mauritius Post began to complicate matters.

On mainland Mauritius the first single circle to be re-introduced was at the Mesnil post office. Two 30mm cancellers, ordered from Germany with numeral 1 and 2 and the nameplace in the upper part and Mauritius at base and the date/month/year and time in a straight line were put to use.

Five years later in 2010 after the closure of the Roche Bois and Crève Coeur postal agencies in a cost-cutting exercise another postal agency was opened at Albion on 16th December 2010. A 27mm single circle datestamp with Albion Postal Agency in the upper half and Mauritius at base with the time/date and year in three lines was introduced. This is the first time a 'postal agency' has been so designated on a Mauritius datestamp.

In the same year POSTAGE PAID 1 and POSTAGE PAID 2 27mm single circle datestamps were introduced in Port Louis at the Bulk Mail Counter and at the Sorting Office. The time/date/year details are similar in arrangement to the Albion datestamp. There is no office designation and at base is found Mauritius Post, the name of the institution and not Mauritius the name of the mainland.



Single circle Albion and Postage Paid cds

Another single circle cds 28mm in diameter reading Mauritius Post at top with Postage Paid

at base without any office name was introduced at the Bulk Mail Counter for use on designated users mail only.

A 27mm single circle cds was put into use at Central Flacq post office. First seen on a cover dated 25.12.10 with the name place and the number 4 at top and Mauritius at base it is the only datestamp of this type recorded to date.



Single circle Central Flacq and Poste de Flacq cds

In January 2011 two new single circle cds 27mm in diameter with Poste de Flacq and the numerals 1 and 2 in the upper part and Mauritius in the lower part were sighted. Similar in other details to the Albion type with regard to the slots and dies positioning the two cds are used in the post office designated Flacq by Mauritius Post in its official listing at 2014.

More single circle cds may well have been put into use at other post offices in Mauritius. These, if they exist, may have escaped detection by the Society despite the due diligence given to the monitoring of postmarks. What is disturbing though is the indiscriminate uncontrolled and anarchical change from absolute harmonisation of double circle Type D datestamp achieved in 1993 has been undone by Mauritius Post within a decade. At the end of 2014 these new single circle datestamps have not been consigned to any group of the four types of circular datestamps of Mauritius.

Not falling into any group of datestamps types of Mauritius are three distinct cancelling devices recorded during the last 25 years.

A registered cover from Nouvelle France dated 27th November 2012 was cancelled with a device not seen before. A specimen strike was obtained in April 2014 and philatelic covers are known. This type of canceller is reportedly used in some post offices for application to non-postal documents such as utility bills and government services receipts only. No other commercial cover has yet turned up from any post office struck with this type of canceller.

A similar type of canceller with a distinctly different design was introduced for use on transactions at the Le Morne “agency” dubbed the “shuttle service”. The handstamp is however applied to registration slips of letters handed in at the Le Morne office, the postage stamps of which are subsequently cancelled with a regular double circle Type D cds at Chamarel post office. The Nouvelle France and Le Morne handstamps are 35mm in diameter.



Nouvelle France and Le Morne 35mm cancellers

During the period 1989-2014 only one temporary datestamp has been recorded. No other such datestamp is known. Following a suspicious break-in and the supposed theft of

the only Type D double cds at Sainte Croix post office a temporary rubber datestamp was used from 8th November 2004 to 3rd June 2005. Reading SAINTE-CROIX P.O. top with Mauritius at base with two stars at sides and the date in a straight line as shown. The postmark was struck in violet indelible ink only. □



Sainte Croix temporary double circle cds

Note: There is some repetition of the data contained in the above study of the circular datestamps of Mauritius. This is because the extracts from the 2007 Society monograph have been reproduced with very little editing. The 2007 to 2014 listing is extracted from various Society publications and the ‘Other Datestamps’ were added to produce a more or less complete chronology of data acquired by the Society from a local collector.

GOVERNMENT MAIL – FREE FRANKING PRIVILEGE

Free Franking Privilege enjoyed by Government Departments and Ministries was withdrawn as from 1st August 2003. The new system of postage caused some problems at its introduction before procedures were straightened out. This gave rise to some Government Departments using postage stamps on mail before the ‘Postage Due Invoice’ listing was adopted by the majority of Government Departments and Ministries.

Free Franking Privilege still exists for certain organisations but the whole system is under review as it is one of the most abused and misused privileges in Mauritius. Some NGOs, several socio-cultural organisations and most religious bodies will have their free franking privilege reassessed.

The ‘Postage Due Invoice’ is an A4 schedule of items handed over to a Postal Officer – ordinary inland mail, registered mail, express delivery letters and other items. The form, in triplicate, serially numbered, bears the name and signature of the authorised (Government) officer and the seal of the Ministry/ Department. The ‘Postage Due Invoice’ is ‘checked and found correct’ by the Postmaster and the dues are collected from the Ministries/Departments through the Ministry of Finance.

The ‘temporary measure’ was to be phased out as Ministries/Departments acquire franking meter machines. Some interesting ‘returned-for-postage’ covers, official covers with postage stamps affixed (e.g. Income Tax Returns free return postage) and other items have turned up during this transition period.

News Items 2003.3 of September 2003