

## CYPRUS 1880 - 1881

### The Provisional Overprinted Issue

The strategic positioning of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, proved to be a major source of attraction for numerous conquerors and rulers throughout its turbulent history. This influence can be seen if one examines the postal history of the island. The Lusignians (1192-1489) followed by the Venetians (1489-1571) which were in turn succeeded by the Ottoman Empire for a span of just over 300 years (1571-1878) during which the Austrian post office played a key role. The English took over Cyprus from the Ottomans in 1878 and a more organised postal system came into effect which was similar to the ones of the other colonies at the time. British stamps were used widely with numerical barred cancellations to distinguish the various geographical areas.

The major change in Cyprus' postal history occurred under British rule when the decision was taken to pass the postal administration to the local government in 1879, something which did not materialized however until April 1st, 1880. Initially a selection of the plates of the stamps (six in total) that were in use at the time were overprinted with the word "CYPRUS" thus giving birth to Cyprus' first issue. Being a colony, the Island followed suit along with the rest of the British Empire in the production of the subsequent issues replacing the monarchs head in the key plate with the one who was at the throne at the time. The denominations of the stamps however, was the one that most suited the needs of the local administration.

This collection aims to present the stamps and their usage of the first provisional overprinted issue. The six stamps involved as well as their errors, varieties and postal usage, is examined in detail. The one penny stamp was further surcharges with HALF-PENNY (three types) and "30 PARAS" to accommodate the postal needs at the time. These four stamps are also examined in detail.

Where applicable references to sources of information will be given but the major source has been the WTF Castle's 3rd edition book "Cyprus stamps and postal history 1351 - 1986" as well as numerous auction catalogues and other collections. A second publication with useful information regarding the overprinted issue has been "Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Volume 1 Queen Victoria - Specialised stamp catalogue 13th Edition." Useful information was also found in studying the Royal Collection at ST. James's Palace, the Taplin Collection as well as the Crown Agencies and Crown Colonies record books located at the British Library in London. Information regarding the De La Rue issues was studied at the British Postal Museum in London at the Mount Pleasant post office depot.

The study on the ½d provisional overprint double overprint variety is presented here as a new study never before analysed and explained in detail as to how it originated.

The exhibit is presented in increasing denomination value for the first six stamps. The surcharges of the 1d denomination are shown in chronological order of issue and the last eight pages of the exhibit show examples of forgeries. Unfortunately this issue has been forged to a significant extend as these stamps are of the greatest important for Cyprus and Commonwealth philately. Cyprus was the only country to adopt these stamps and overprint them for use.

Conventions used:

- Dark area indicates the position of the variety within a multiple.
- Items of great significance and rarity are indicated with a red border.

