

LES ILES NORMANDES

COKER'S DRAWINGS FOR JETHOU'S 1961 BIRDS DEFINITIVES

André Dufresne

Editor's Note: some illustrations of complete sheets have been omitted from this printed version due to space limitations. These are viewable on the online version. Some image sizes have been adjusted to fit.

Soon after issuing his first stamps for Jethou, Captain Cliff decided to issue another definitive set showing birds of the island to replace the first issue. Again, he commissioned Charles Coker and asked him to prepare the designs. According to Backman and Forrester (1981), Coker was "no authority on birds" but they report that this set turned out to be one of his favourites. For this issue we also have a few preliminary sketches and "near final" designs, plus quite a number of colour trials.

The lower value of the set is a one penny value showing a sparrow hawk. Coker's preliminary sketch in pencil shows a



Figure 1

LES ILES NORMANDES

sparrow hawk facing left with a 4d face value (*Figure 1 above*). The overall size of the paper is 170 x 115 mm. He eventually reworked his drawing for colour separation, positioning the bird and outlining the crest and the corners of the design (*Figure 2*). The design size is 250 x 165 mm. This design, maybe



Figure 2

coincidentally, is very similar to a proposed design produced around 1963 (*Figure 3*) for stamps for the Emirate of Fujaira



Figure 3

LES ILES NORMANDES



Figure 4

designer's name is given simply as "Arthur".

The "almost final" design is shown in Figure 6. The size of the design is 115 x 87 mm, and we can still see

(Figure 4) and for the Emirate of Audhali (Figure 5), both of which remained unissued. They were commissioned by the Lebanese firm of Baroody and the



Figure 5

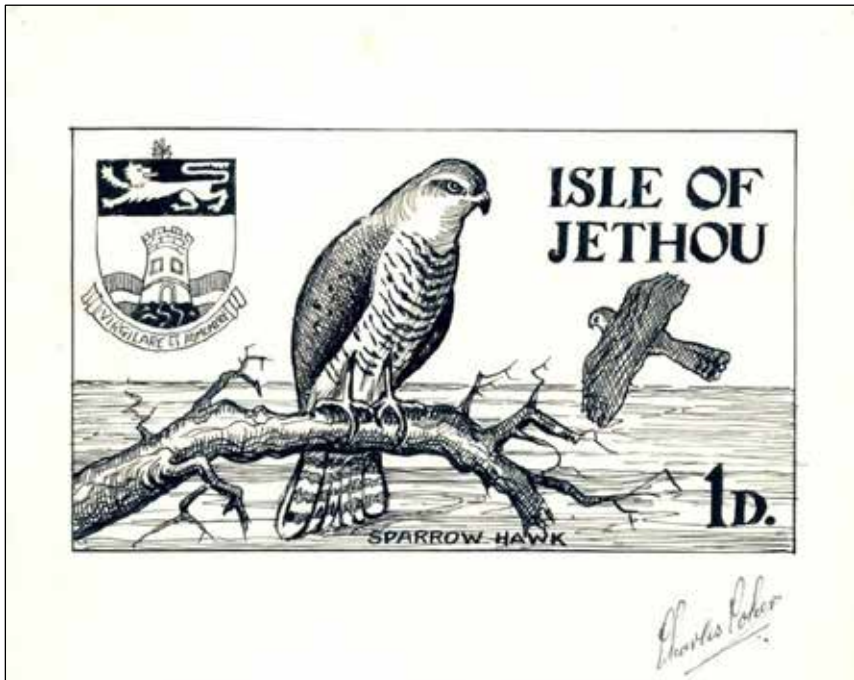


Figure 6

LES ILES NORMANDES

pencil marks that were not totally erased. The most striking differences between this design and the issued stamp is the smaller bird flying towards the left whereas on the issued stamp it is flying to the right. Furthermore, there was an error in Jethou's motto below the crest which reads VIRGILARE ET ADMONERE (To watch and warn) with an extraneous "r" but the printed version shows the correct motto reading VIGILARE. There are other differences such as the shape of the waves and the absence of a white background around the value.

Choosing the final colours proved to be difficult for Captain Cliff due to the fact that the stamps were printed only in two colours, and not in natural colours. The printer chosen for this issue was Guernsey Lithoprint and it appears to have been their first venture into stamp production. Because these stamps were the first Jethou stamps to be perforated, Captain Cliff required full sheets of colour trials, both perforated and imperforate (*Figures 7 and 8*). The collection includes a full sheet of each colour trial, both perforated and imperforate.



Figure 7

LES ILES NORMANDES



Figure 8

The artist's drawings for the 3 pence and the 1 shilling 6 pence values are on the same sheet (*Figure 9 on following page*) which measures overall 177 x 252 mm. Each design measures 150 x 87 mm and here again unerased crayon marks can still be seen. This 3d. design is very similar to the final stamp, the most noticeable differences being the shape of the waves, the placement of the name of the bird which ended up in the lower left corner on the issued stamp, the absence of the white background around the value and the ubiquitous letter "R" in the motto. The fact that the printing was limited to two colours

LES ILES NORMANDES

makes it impossible to determine whether the bird shown on the stamp is the lesser or greater black-backed gull because,

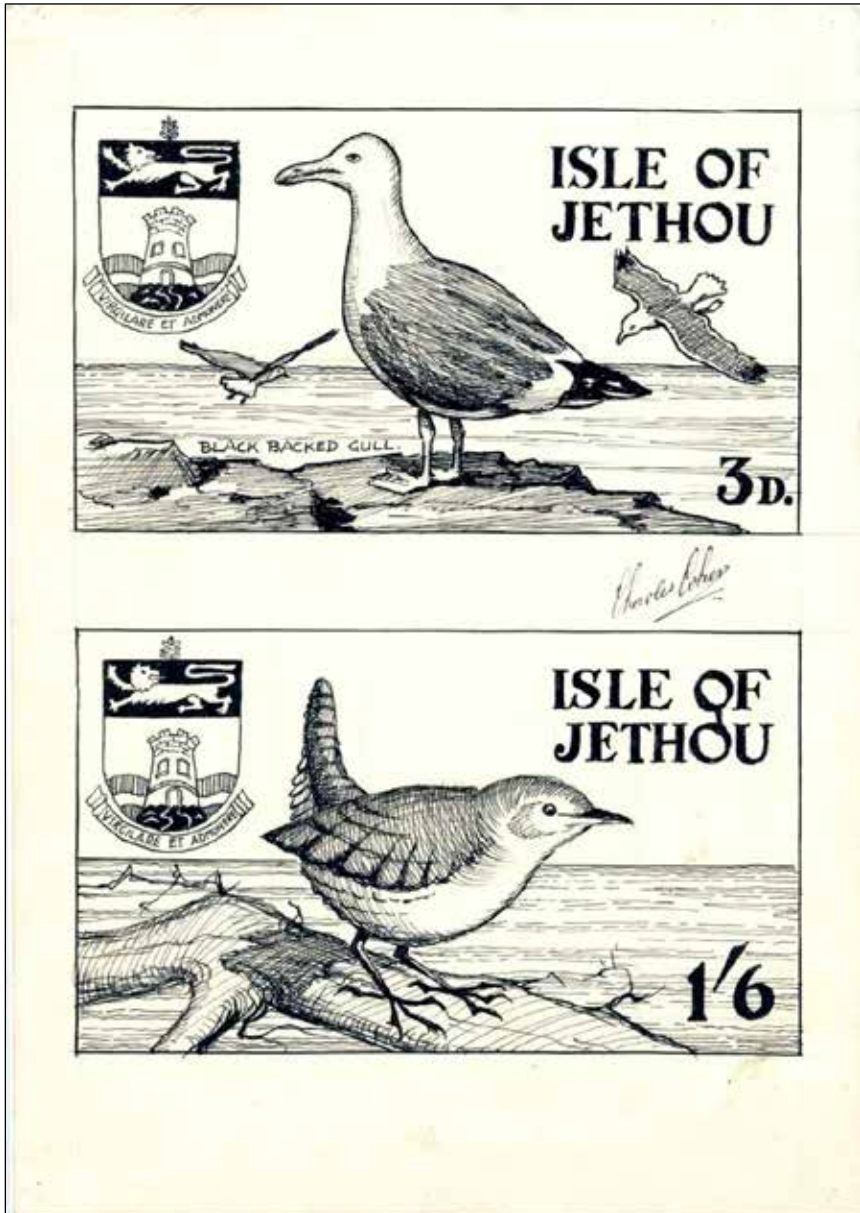


Figure 9

LES ILES NORMANDES

apart from its size, the distinguishing feature is that the lesser has yellow legs and the greater has pink legs, a colour that does not show on the stamp. Here again both perforated and imperforate colour trials were submitted to Captain Cliff (*Figure 10 below and Figure 13 on next page. See website for figures 11 and 12*), and we can see on Figure 12 his comment "*Reduce colour*", whereas Figure 13 is probably printer's waste.



Figure 10

The 6d value is my favourite because I also collect puffins on stamps. The artist's design shares the same sheet as the 1-shilling design (*Figure 14 on page 37*), the overall size of the sheet being 177 x 252 mm and that of each design is 150 x 87 mm. There are no obvious crayon marks except for the

indication "*x 4*" at the top meaning that the artist's design was four times the size of the issued stamp. Again, the major differences between the original drawing and the final stamp

LES ILES NORMANDES



Figure 13

being the shape of the waves, the emplacement of the word "puffin" which was dropped to the lower left corner on the issued stamp, the absence of the white background around the value and the ubiquitous "R" in the motto. On the original drawing, we can see the outline of an island between the crest and the puffin, possibly Guernsey, which does not show on the final design. I have fewer colour trials of this value (*Figures 15 on page 38 and Figure 16 on website*) and again Captain Cliff's comment appears in the upper margin of Figure 16: "*Reduce colour*".

LES ILES NORMANDES

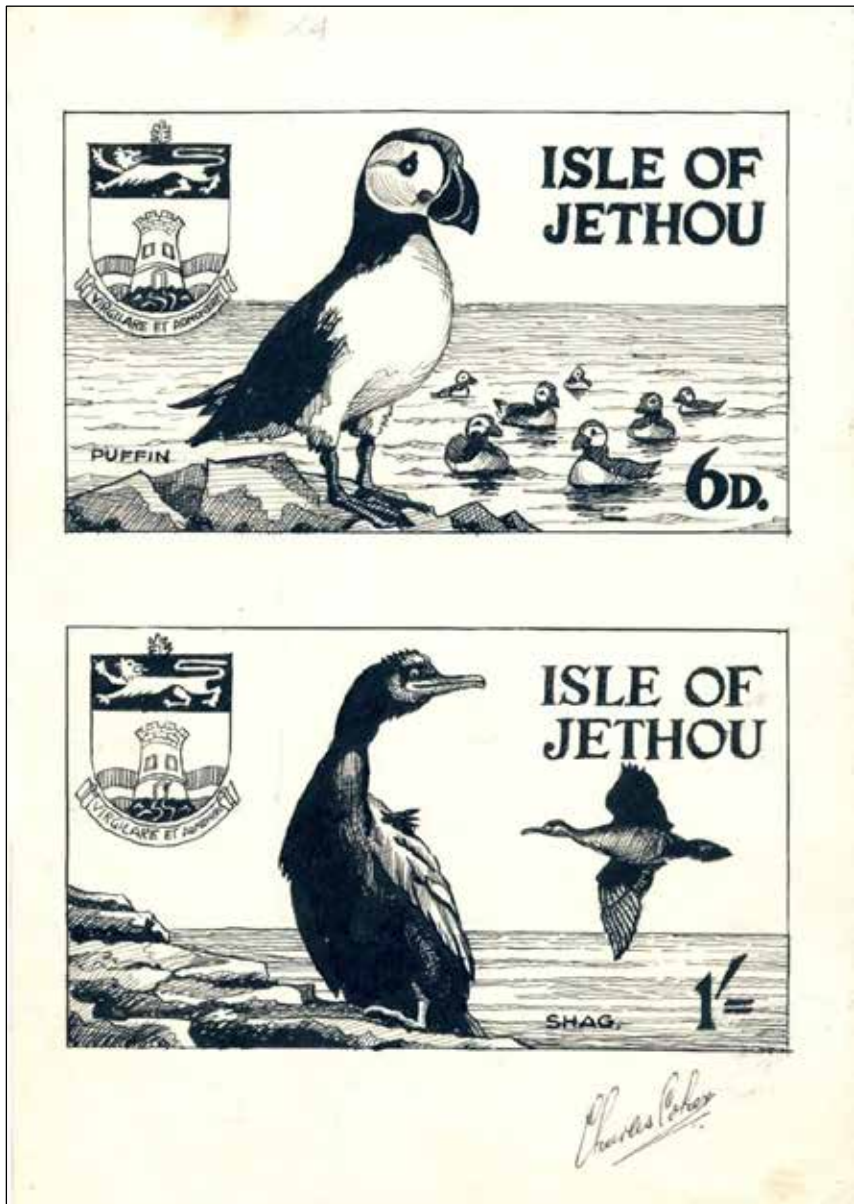


Figure 14

LES ILES NORMANDES



Figure 15

Due to the stamp being printed in only two colours, the puffin's beak lost its yellow band. We saw above that the 1-shilling value's original design was on the same sheet as the 6 pence stamp (*Figure 14 on previous page*), so the same comments apply to both. It

shows a shag and the bird's name was dropped down to the left corner. In Charles Coker's design for the figure of value, there are two horizontal bars to the right of the numeral "1" but only one on the issued stamp and the value is smaller on the issued stamp. Various colour trials, both perforated and imperforate, exist in full sheets (*Figures 17 on next page and Figures 18 and 19 on website*), not all being shown here. Captain Cliff's comment "*This strength*" can be read in the upper margin of *Figure 19*. The most interesting items in this collection are the trials, proofs and a special printing of the 1 shilling 6 pence value. We saw that the original drawing for this value was on the same sheet as the 3d. value (*Figure 9*) but on the original drawing the bird's name does not appear. The word "Wren" appears in the lower left corner of the issued stamp. Otherwise, the same comments as for the 1-shilling value apply. Perforated and imperforate trials

LES ILES NORMANDES

in various colours exist (Figure 20 on next page. See website for Figures 21 and 22), one of which indicates Captain Cliff's choice of the final colour: "Pale yellow" (Figure 21 - see web). What makes this value especially interesting is that we have a large size "proof" of the final design in unadopted colours (Figure 23 below), the sheet measuring 238 x 190 mm



Figure 17

overall, and the design 120 x 70 mm. This seems to be a special printing ordered by Captain Cliff to produce 200 copies of a special Christmas card in 1961. Each of them had this enlarged version of the 1/6 stamp line-perforated 11 attached to the front

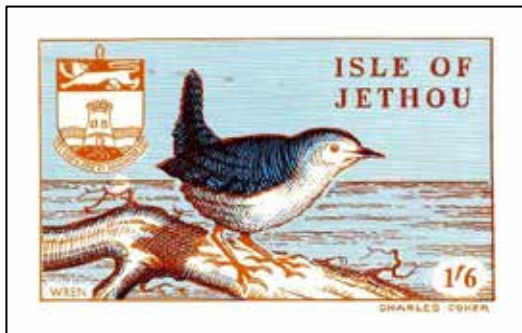


Figure 23

(Figure 24 – see website). A notation inside the card states "

Replica of Jethou colour trials, 1961". Although this jumbo size "stamp" was never available for postage, it is nevertheless

LES ILES NORMANDES



Figure 20

here but a sampling is shown in Figure 25. In *"The Smaller Channel Islands Catalogue"*, Backman and Forrester (1989) explained that *"To promote the first edition of the handbook *"The Postage Stamps of the Smaller Channel Islands"* in 1979, the original artwork for this issue was used to print a series of art cards, enclosed with each handbook. A stamp of the issued design was affixed to each card, and the card was then signed by the designer and numbered serially."* They were numbered haphazardly from 001 to 1,000 with 200 cards of each value being produced. A small number also exist unstamped,

an official postal souvenir item produced by Captain Cliff and as such, it should deserve a place in the catalogue. Various one-colour trials exist for each value of the Birds set, too numerous to show them all



Figure 25

LES ILES NORMANDES

unsigned and unnumbered, with or without the word "SPECIMEN" diagonally. A typical stamped and signed card is shown here (*Figure 26*) and although they make a nice complement to any collection of Jethou stamps, especially because they were signed by the designer, they remain private reproductions.

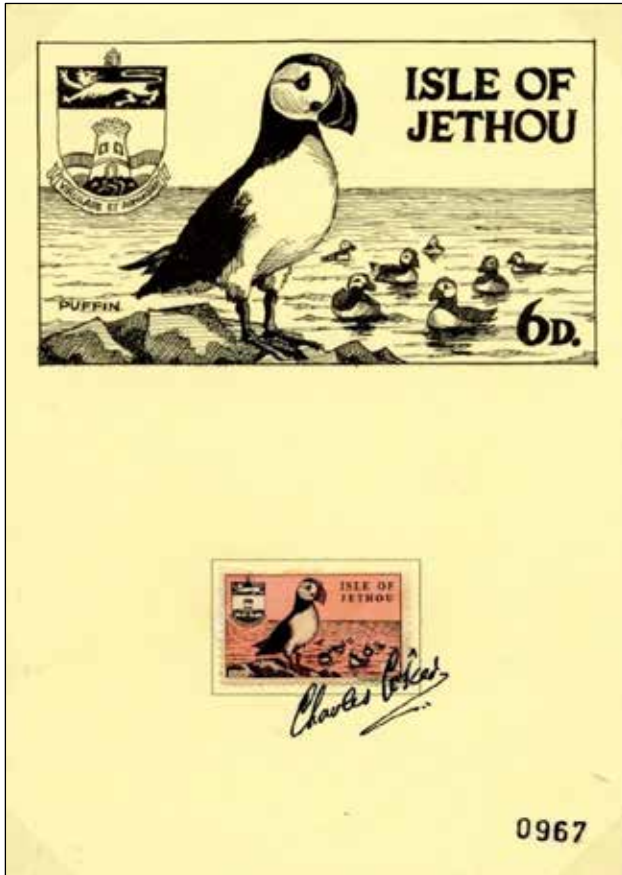


Figure 26

For full article including all the illustrations see:
<https://www.ciss.uk/journal-articles/cokers-drawings-for-jethous-1961-birds-definitives/>