

King George VI Varieties

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Part 11—Bahamas

Most of the 1938 Bahamas definitives were surface printed by De La Rue and feature the King's head. They provide philatelic interest, not only because of plate flaws but also because they offer a fine range of shades as well as different papers. On the other hand, the three beautiful pictorial values (4d., 6d. and 8d.) recess-engraved by Waterlow, are good examples of printing regularity, while the 2s. and 3s. from Bradbury Wilkinson although appearing in distinctive shades do not offer any varieties, except when they and the rest of the issue were locally overprinted for the 1942 Landfall of Columbus set. The intriguing overprint varieties that then occurred hold their own fascination and will be described later in this series.

For the moment the rather dull looking stamps from De La Rue will take the stage. They were a continuation of the Bahamas 'King's Head' Key Plate design used for KGV, but simplified by the omission of the crown and the word postage. Two plates were used—the head plate carried the whole design except for the value, which was printed from a separate duty plate for each denomination. This can be confirmed by examining a random selection of values when it will be seen that whereas 'BAHAMAS' is always perfectly centred, the position of the value varies frequently. Furthermore, on the single colour stamps there is often a variation of shade between the value and the rest of the design. In addition, the use of two distinct colours for the main design and the value on the 1s., 5s. and £1 offers further evidence that two plates were used. The presence of two jubilee lines for the 1½d., 2d., 3d. and 10d. may cause some confusion. The matter was crisply dealt with in the October 1942 edition of *GSM* (i.e. before the 10d. was issued) when it was noted that, amongst the latest release of the current key-types, some values had two jubilee lines and others only one, the variations depend on whether the duty plate had one or not. The 1½d., 2d. and 3d. had two jubilee lines. It is worth noting in further support of this comment that the two jubilee lines on the three values vary in position relative to each other and sometimes merge into one broad band, when this happens the position of the value is always affected. It is surprising that the presence of double jubilee lines was not the subject of comment before 1942, but in the flood of new issues at the start of the reign such detail probably passed unnoticed. In sum, the Head Plate flaws will be common to all values and Duty Plate

The sheets were printed with a left and right pane divided by a gutter. Each pane consists of ten horizontal rows of six stamps. Head plate numbers occur over R1/2 on the left pane and under R10/5 on the right. HP 1

was used for the bulk of the issue with unnumbered duty plates. HP 2 came into use for the 1d. and 1½d. on 15 August 1951, the 10d., 1s. and 5s. on 1 February 1952, the ½d. on 18 February 1952 and the 3d. on 12 February 1953. A Duty Plate numbered 1 also came into use for the 10d. released on 1 February 1952 and is located alongside HP 2.

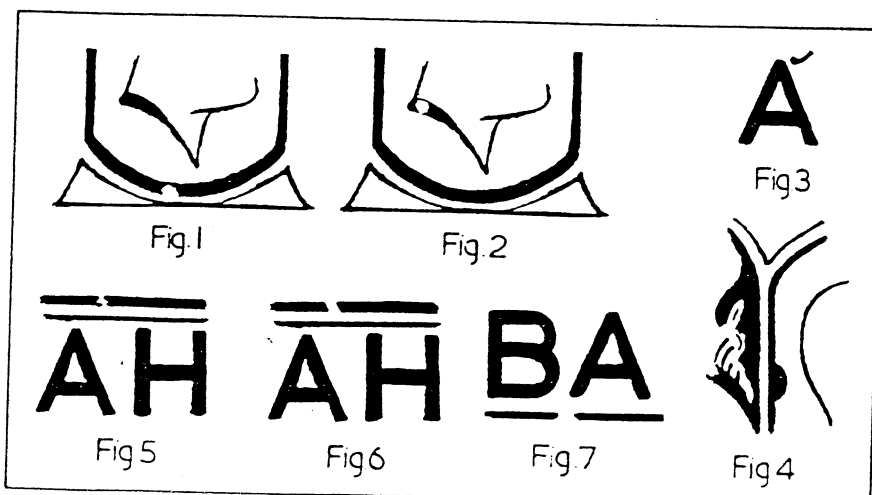
Plate Flaws on Head Plate 1

There are, at least, nine plate flaws on HP 1. Two are very easy to spot on the stamp, but not so easy to find in dealers' stocks. The first is a white mark in the frame surrounding the head of the King just below the base of his neck. It occurs on R10/4, right pane (Fig. 1). It has been reported on the early printings of all values, except for the 1½d. although the mark has been seen on the 1½d. issued in September 1942. It has not, however, been seen on the 10d. released on 18 November 1946. This leads to the conclusion that a correction to the plate was made before this. It is worth noting that the conventional lower left plate block of four stamps neatly misses the stamp with this good variety. Single copies are, therefore, more likely to be found. The second flaw is similar. A white dot appears in the shaded portion at the base of the King's neck on R3/1 RP (Fig. 2). This dot occurs on printings of the 1d. pale grey, 1½d., 2d. scarlet and dull scarlet, 2½d. blue, 2½d. violet, 3d. blue, 10d. and 1s. A curious point to note is that the 'dot' never appears with the 'white mark' on the same pane. If one is present the other is absent. Careful scrutiny with a glass reveals that they could have been made deliberately as some sort of aid for the printers. Indeed, the 'white mark' on R10/4 is so obvious that it is difficult to believe that an inspector would have allowed it to continue unless it served a useful purpose.

The third and fourth head plate flaws were noted by Henry Phillips in the February 1959 edition of *Stamp Magazine*. They also occur on the right pane, but as yet have only been recorded on the ½d. (probably from the 1946 release). A tick-shaped mark occurs to the right of the top of the first 'A' of 'BAHAMAS' on R1/5 (Fig. 3). On R2/6 there is a bulge on the thick frame surrounding the head of the King on the left side (Fig. 4). Both can be seen with the naked eye without difficulty.

The fifth flaw is on R7/4 of the right pane, where there is a break in the outer frame line above 'AH' of 'BAHAMAS'. Various states exist. For example, the 1938 2½d. blue shows an irregular break (Fig. 5), but the 1943 2½d. violet shows barely a trace. On the other hand, the 1942 ½d. blue-green used for the Landfall issue can be found with either a very narrow or a wide break. Later printings of the 1d. grey, 3d. blue and 10d. yellow-orange all show, what should be considered, the standard variety (Fig. 6). It is worth noting that the 1951 2d. green has a perfect frame line. The adjacent stamp at R7/5 carries a clean break in the frame line below 'BA' (Fig. 7). Judging from my own examples this flaw occurred on the initial 1938 printing and continued, at least, until the 1951 2d. green.

The remaining three head plate flaws all occur on the left pane. On R10/1 damage affects the lower left corner of the frame on early printings giving a rounded appearance (Fig. 8). Examples can also be found where a sliver of metal is breaking away from the corner (Fig. 9). Some time after July 1945 a repair strengthened, not only the corner, but also the outside edge of the left outer frame line from the corner to a point level with the King's ear (Fig. 10). It is easy to see as the vertical line extends below the bottom hori-



zontal frame line. The next flaw is on R1/1. The top left corner on early printings, except for the 1½d., show signs of metal deterioration. Little specks of white appear within the heavy frame line, probably resulting from heavy pitting in the raised metal. These become larger until a wide irregular break appears (Fig. 11). The 1d. grey and 2d. scarlet used for the Landfall issue provide excellent examples. The flaw is still evident on the 1943 2½d. pale violet, but only a tiny crack is just discernible on the 1945 1½d. which indicates that corrective action was taken. The third flaw on the left pane, and ninth in all, can be found on R9/4. A very small nick in the underside of the second frame line below the 'H' of 'BAHAMAS' on very early printings quickly develops into a clear break (Fig. 12).

Duty Plate Flaws

The words of the value on the duty plates were susceptible to damage because, not only were they fragile, but only four plates had jubilee lines to give the letters extra protection. In consequence all kinds of minor deformities exist on some of the values. Only a short selection of the more noticeable will be described and they are from values that still crop up at auction in sheet or pane form. Not surprisingly it is the low values such as the ½d. and 1d. that appear together with the 2d. and 2½d. The surcharged 2½d. blue can also be found and I suspect that speculators may have been involved in the early days as the *Nassau Daily Tribune* dated 17 December 1940 did report that the post office stock of twenty-four thousand 2½d. stamps had been overprinted with a large 3d. and were on sale. This step had been taken as the foreign letter rate had increased from 2½d. to 3d. on 28 November 1940.

Half-Penny. There are two noteworthy varieties on the left pane. The first is 'The Thin L' on R9/4. It appeared on the 1942 printing of the ½d. green and continued on the brown-purple stamp issued in 1952 from HP 2 (Fig. 13). The second is on R9/6 where the base of the 'E' and 'N' show signs of damage on both colours (Fig. 14). These two varieties prove that the unnumbered duty plate remained in use with the new head plate. On the right pane a nick occurs in the top of the right leg of the first 'N' on R1/5 (Fig. 15) and the second 'N' on R2/3 (Fig. 16). At R9/6 the foot of the left vertical of the first 'N' is cut away and can be found in two slightly different states (Fig. 17). The inconsistency was probably caused by variations in inking.

One Penny Grey. On the left pane there is damage to the lower left side of the 'O' on R5/6 (Fig. 18) and a large break occurs in the top of 'P' on R7/1 (Fig. 19). The right pane carries a prominent variety on R1/6 as the 'Y' is badly distorted on early printings (Fig. 20). On later printings the letter, although complete, is much thinner and slightly askew, indicating a replacement (Fig. 21). At R8/4 the right leg of the 'N' of 'ONE' is shortened (Fig. 22) and on R8/6 the bottom horizontal of the 'E' of 'PENNY' is damaged and a little longer than normal (Fig. 23).

Two Pence. Pride of place must go to the 'Short T' on the 2d. grey and the 2d. scarlet on R3/6 Right Pane (Fig. 24). It has just been granted catalogue status in Part 1 as S.G. 152a and 152ba—thirty seven years after it was described by C.P. Rang in GSM (February 1951) as, *Quite a nice little variety and worth*

collecting. The illustration in the catalogue is from a 2d. scarlet—the vertical shaft on the 2d. grey and that was seven years ago when a dealer offered me a mint copy for £70—8400 times face value! I had to decline and he disposed of the stamp within a week. I mention this as I believe there are only a few examples about and any reader who has a copy, or perhaps discovers a copy in his collection, is most fortunate. F. Bentley Kettle, a well known protagonist of KGVI varieties in the 1950s reported in *Stamp Collecting* that he possessed, *five red printings and one green, all showing the variety in successive stages of development. Unlike most varieties this one becomes less apparent with each printing, the leg 'growing' longer year by year and in later years showing 'middle aged spread'*. He also put forward an interesting explanation for the existence of the flaw suggesting that the foot of the stem had been accidentally crushed leaving the foot of the 'T' depressed and spread. Thus, because typography or letterpress was the method of printing only the uncrushed surface of the 'T' printed on the paper. However, with use, the undamaged surface was worn down and slowly more of the 'crushed' part of the stem came into contact with the paper as the overall depth of the undamaged section diminished. It is surprising that Kettle did not mention the slight deformity affecting the bottom edge of the 'O' which continues on the 2d. green when the 'T' is only slightly shortened, but still exhibiting 'middle aged spread' (Fig. 25).

Whenever possible it is as well to collect varieties in positional blocks. Full margined upper right corner blocks from the right pane (including R3/6) provide an indisputable answer should anyone wish to assemble the full range of states of the 'Short T' mentioned by Kettle. I stress this as late printings of the 2d. scarlet followed by the 2d. green contain several stamps which can be mistaken for R3/6 when viewed as single copies or in unpositioned blocks. Fortunately as the variety has been known for so long positional blocks are available now and again.

The 'TWO PENCE' Printed Double. It is fair to say that any KGVI used stamp with a catalogue price of £1800 must be rare. S.G. 152b is in this category. I have seen a photograph with all the letters clearly doubled. This is in marked contrast to the slight doubling to the top of the letters encountered on the bottom row of the 2d. (Fig. 26). This type of printing defect could have been caused by the edge of a sheet being curled slightly on the rotating cylinder as it came into contact with the plate passing underneath. On the other hand, the movement of the plate below the inking rollers could, in some circumstances, cause ink to ooze over the edge of the upraised design. If the plate was not thoroughly cleaned a build-up of dried ink could eventually print in its own right. I believe the latter suggestion is more likely as examples are reasonably easy to find. Whatever the reason I trust that I have not shattered the hopes of anyone who believed that such stamps were S.G. 152b.

2½d. (1 July 1943 Release—Pale Violet). There is only one minor variety on the left pane—the bottom horizontal of the 'E' is chipped on R3/5 (Fig. 27). On the right pane the large '2' has a serrated bottom edge on R3/5 (Fig. 28), a nick on R8/5 (Fig. 29) and a flat top on R8/6 (Fig. 30). The large '2' on R10/5 is a completely different style to any other on the sheet (Fig. 31). Not one of these defects occur on the earlier 2½d. blue and I cannot comment on the July 1945 release.

A Glimpse of Yesteryear

The procedures for distributing stamps in the early 1950s were somewhat different from today, when philatelic bureaux promote their products so enthusiastically. An item by Kendalian in *Stamp Magazine* published on 25 September 1952 concerning the Bahamas ½d. (S.G. 149b) is, therefore, illuminating. Kendalian noted that, *There was an interesting circumstance attached to the first issue of the ½d. stamp in its present colour. It is general for the Crown Agents to release a new stamp in London about the same time, more often than not on the same day, as the stamp is placed on sale in the pertinent colony. In this instance, however, whilst the ½d. purple appeared in the Bahamas as early as 18 February, the Crown Agents did not release them until 8 May, and then a peculiar thing was noticed. In Bahamas the left panes were released, and in London the right panes were released. Those who got their supplies from the Crown Agents got a nice little variety as well, for the thin 'L' in 'HALF' (R9/4 right pane) still persists. Altogether a good item.* See below

Printings

At the start of this article mention was made of the shades to be found on the stamps printed by De La Rue. Describing shade is always difficult as it depends so much on the colour sense of an individual—that is why plate flaws are so appealing, they are present or absent and there is no argument! However, using the criteria used for my own collection the following notes may be of help to others. Colour descriptions used in Part 1 and the *Commonwealth* catalogues are included to illustrate how they can vary for the same stamp. Reports about new issues from contemporary issues of GSM are also included as they frequently described shades that did not rate inclusion in Part 1. For the sake of brevity paper variations are restricted to the minimum and changes of gum are omitted.

½d. 11 March 1938, Bluish-green (S.G.)—Green (CW), used for coils and Landfall issue. September 1942, Blue-green (CW), used for Landfall. 11 December 1946, Myrtle green (S.G.)—Deep green (CW). 18 February 1952 Head Plate 2, Brown-purple (S.G.)—Claret (CW). 25 September 1952 HP 2, Deeper rosier-claret. GSM November 1952 noted it as *rosier brown-purple*.

1d. 11 March 1938, Carmine (S.G.)—Rose-carmine (CW), used for coils. 17 September 1941, Grey (S.G.)—Pale grey (CW), used for Landfall. September 1942, Slate-grey, used for Landfall. July 1945, slightly duller than the slate-grey of 1942. 11 December 1946, paler than before, the watermark shows clearly. 19 April 1948, deeper than 1946, distinctly dull appearance. 27 June 1950, Pearl-grey (CW). 15 August 1951 Head Plate 2, still in pearl-grey range, but paler. GSM October 1951 described it as *more bluish-grey than June 1950*. 12 February 1953 HP 2, GSM April 1953 called it *paler grey than August 1951*.

1½d. 19 April 1938, Red-brown (S.G. and CW), used for Landfall. September 1942, Deep red-brown. July 1945, Brown. 19 April 1948 Pale red-brown (S.G. and CW)—GSM June 1948 called it *paler brown*. 15 August 1951 Head Plate 2, GSM October 1951 said *more pinkish than pale brown shade of last release*. 30 October 1953 HP 2, similar to 1951.

2d. 19 April 1938, Grey (S.G.)—Pale grey (CW). 17 September 1941, Scarlet (S.G.)—Rose-carmine (CW), used for Landfall. September 1942, slightly duller than 1941 with

* The quote from Kendalian is as written, but, of course, there was an error - it should have been R9/4 left pane. S.S.M. February 1989

see below *

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less carmine, used for Landfall. July 1945, Carmine less intrusive, but deeper in shade and brighter than 1942. 11 December 1946, two shades, Deep scarlet and Dull scarlet. 19 April 1948 Dull scarlet (CW), GSM June 1948 reported it as *duller scarlet*. 1 May 1951, Green (S.G.)—Yellow-green (CW) and Green and Yellow-green (CW), the CW shades are not nearly as marked as others that are not listed.

2½d. 11 March 1938, Blue (S.G. and CW), used for Landfall and the surcharged 3d. There are shades from dull to bright blue. 1 July 1943, Violet (S.G.)—Pale violet (CW). July 1945 Violet (CW). (The CW shades are fully justified.)

3d. 19 April 1938, Violet (S.G.)—Pale violet (CW) 1943 Blue (S.G. and CW), a different shade of blue from the 3d. printed for the Landfall issue, which is richer and brighter. 19 April 1948, Bright blue (CW), GSM June 1948 noted brighter blue. 1 February 1952, Scarlet (S.G.)—Rose-carmine (CW). 12 February 1953 Head Plate 2, GSM April 1953 noted *paler scarlet*.

10d. 18 November 1946, Yellow-orange (S.G.)—Orange (CW). 1 February 1952 Head Plate 2 and Duty Plate 1, GSM April 1952 reported *paler yellow-orange*. 30 October 1953 HP 2 and DP 1, GSM December 1953 said *deeper yellow-orange*. (Note. The original intention was to print the 10d. in rose.)

1s. 15 September 1938, Black and carmine (S.G. and CW), chalk paper. 1941–42, Grey and scarlet (CW), chalk. This printing was used largely for the Landfall issue and is hard to find unoverprinted. September 1942 Black and carmine (CW) May 1943, Deep black and carmine. 6 March 1944, Grey and scarlet (CW), the scarlet verges towards crimson and the stamp is very susceptible to rubbing. 19 April 1948, Dull grey and crimson (CW), chalk. GSM June 1948 said black not so intense, to my eye there is a brownish tinge. 1 February 1952 Head Plate 2, chalk. GSM April 1952 described it as *deeper than April 1948, but still retaining some of the greyish effect*. 30 October 1953, HP 2, chalk. GSM December 1953 noted it as *greyer black*.

5s. 19 April 1938, Lilac and blue (S.G.)—Pale lilac and blue (CW), chalk. 1942, Lilac and blue (CW), chalk. Mainly used for Landfall. September 1942, Purple and blue (S.G.)—Purple-lilac and blue (CW), also used for Landfall. March 1944, Paler and duller purple and paler blue. 11 December 1946, Reddish-purple and deep blue. GSM noted *value tablet deeper blue than before*. 19 April 1948, Deep purple and bright blue (S.G.)—Deep purple and deep blue (CW), chalk. 15 August 1951 Red-purple and bright blue (CW), chalk. GSM October 1951 said *paler than last printing of S.G. 156b*. 1 February 1952 Head Plate 2, Deeper red-purple and bright blue, chalk. 12 February 1953, HP 2, chalk, GSM April 1953 noted, *not quite so deep purple as February 1952*.

£1. 15 September 1938, Green and black (S.G. and CW), chalk. Used for Landfall. May 1943, Blue-green and black (S.G.)—Green and black (CW with a release date of 13 April 1943). Used for Landfall. March 1944 Blue-green and black (The blue element in the shade is not as strong as 1943).

Part 12 of this series will appear in the May 1989 GSM and will be devoted to the 1946 Victory series issued for the Crown Colonies.



Fig 8



Fig.9

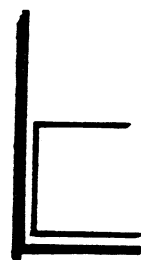


Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12



Fig.13



Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16

Fig.17



Fig.18

Fig.19

Fig.20

Fig.21

Fig.22

Fig.23



Fig.24

Fig.25

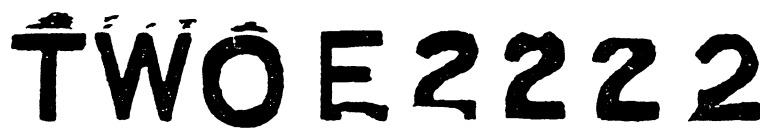


Fig.26

Fig.27

Fig.28

Fig.29

Fig.30

Fig.31