

King George VI Varieties

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Part 13—The 1946 Victory Issue for the Crown Colonies

(Continued from May)

A Herculean Task

The hand-written entries in the Plate Issue Register, held in the British Library, bear witness to the activity surrounding the production of the Crown Agents Victory Issue. A brief summary will illustrate the effort involved. The first plate, for the British Solomon Islands 1½d., was issued to De La Rue on 29 May 1946. The last plate with the Houses of Parliament design, for the Gold Coast 2d., was returned to the safe-keeping of the Crown Agents on 3 September. The curtain finally came down only a day after it was issued: the stamps were on sale 41 days later. The first stamps to be despatched, commencing on 17 June, were for the British Solomon Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Fiji and Pitcairn Islands. Gambia was the first colony to see its stamps in use on 6 August and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands the last on 16 December 1946. Just over 95 million stamps with the Houses of Parliament design, were despatched by De La Rue, in sheets of 60, between 17 June and 20 November. In addition, and in the same period, some 4 million overprinted stamps for the two Aden States and Zanzibar left the Company together with over 2 million featuring the unique design for Hong Kong. Even though some 36 million stamps were retained for the Crown Agents Bureau (390,000 of each value) plus a sprinkling for GPO specimens and the Royal Collection, the balance of 65 million helped to replenish the depleted stocks in the colonies, particularly as the lower value in each pair was for the inland letter rate. Another way to judge the matter is to consider the amount of paper used. A stack of 100 sheets is only an inch high, but if all the sheets despatched by De La Rue had been stacked in this fashion they would have reached a height of 1400 feet, and this without the wax interleaving sheets, or even blotting paper, ordered by many of the colonies—could this be a new question for 'Trivial Pursuits'?

The Houses of Parliament Series

Plate Numbers. In Part 12 mention was made of the use of the letters A or B with the plate number under Row 10/5. This usually indicates that a large single working plate was used comprising two panels of 60 impressions marked either A1/B1 or 1A/1B. The printer's sheets of 120 were then guillotined into post office sheets of 60. It appears from the Register that, with only a few exceptions, orders in excess of 15,000 sheets (of 60) were printed in this manner i.e. '120 set'. This method did, of course, speed up production. However, it would have been uneconomic to have used '120 set' plates for

the many smaller orders, besides which high grade steel needed to make the plates was in short supply. Seven values, for five colonies, have an A1 plate number, but were '60 set'. Marcus Faux has suggested that this could have been because the person preparing the plates was following 'Standing Instructions'—the great majority of the '60 set' plates do, however, only show the figure '1'.

133,500 sheets of the Ceylon 6c. were ordered. This was more than twice the size of any other order and two '120 set' plates were used, A1/B1 and IIA/IIB, the latter are very hard to find and it is believed that they were sent to Ceylon, as examples seen marked IIA are badly toned. The Register also records that only Plate No. 2 was used for the Falkland Islands 3d.—there is no mention of Plate 1. However, GSM reported the existence of both. I have seen numerous examples of Plate 1, but have yet to see Plate 2, perhaps a reader can offer some help. The Trinidad and Tobago 3c. occurs with A1/B1 and also 1, but only the former is recorded in the Register—another small mystery to be resolved. A full list of plate and current numbers (under R10/1) will be included at the end of Part 14 together with the number of sheets despatched.

Shades. Contemporary editions of GSM noted the existence of shades when comparing sheets of the same value, but with different Plate Numbers i.e. '120 set'. Shade differences can also be found between sheets '60 set'. The only possible 'Reprints' were for the three colonies previously mentioned. The remaining values were most probably the result of an individual continuous printing run. Marcus Faux, who was the Deputy Chief Inspector of Stamps for the Crown Agents at the time, has suggested that shades could have occurred because large orders, such as those for Jamaica and Kenya, would have taken some time to print, either overlapping a weekend or requiring a replenishment of ink. Furthermore, he has suggested that, at the 'make-ready' stage, the printing plate might have been fractionally 'backed-up', either more or less on one half of a '120 set' plate, thus slightly affecting the density of the colour transferred to the paper. He has also explained that whenever possible a colour was kept to one printing machine, thus saving time and helping to keep colours uniform. Nevertheless, this technique did result in inevitable ink replenishment from time to time when a printing run lasted several days and this, together with the change of plates and the need to 'make-ready' when this happened, all helped to cause minor variations in shade.

Varieties

Perforation varieties and dates of issue will not be given as they are readily available in catalogues. Plate numbers will be quoted if A or B plates were used.

Aden. The 1½s. from Plate A1 can be found in two shades of carmine. Although numbered A it was the only plate and is one of the seven exceptions to the general rule that an A indicates the existence of B i.e. '120 set'. There is a variety at R7/1, where the upright stroke of the 'D' of 'ADEN' extends through the inner top frame line (Fig. 1). The *Commonwealth* catalogue lists the 2½s. with an inverted watermark. An unattributed and undated advertisement states that *four have only come to light so far (they were in a marginal block of four)*.

Barbados. The 1½d. occurs in two shades of red-orange. A flaw on R5/2 just below the flag at the stern of the launch appears to make a second 'flag' (Fig. 2). This has been listed by *Commonwealth* as 'The Double Flag'. Two, apparently deliberate, scratch marks occur in the margin alongside R8/1 on sheets in the darker shade of red-orange. Two marked shades of brown occur on the 3d. A printer's mark in the form of two crosses and a dash can be found in the top right margin on sheets in the lighter shade. A flaw in the sky to the left of the King's head shows on R10/4 from sheets in this shade (Fig. 3a). When described in *Stamp Mirror* on 8 April 1950 it was called 'The Flying Kite Variety'.

Bermuda. In 1950 *Stamp Mirror* noted 'The Falling Bomb Variety' on R5/3 of the 1½d. from Plate 1B stating that, *It is to the right of the right-hand pinnacle of the Main Tower—an example has not come my way.*

British Honduras. The *Stamp Mirror* also stated that on R2/1 of the 5c. there was only one nostril on the King's nose—that on the right is defined by a dot, the other being blank. I have yet to find it.

British Solomon Islands. A flaw resembles a 'Flag' on the foremast of the launch on R8/2 of the 1½d. (Fig. 4).

Cayman Islands. In June 1953 F. Bentley Kettle drew attention in *Stamp Collecting* to a very nice variety on R8/3 of the 1½d. from Plate A1 (Fig. 5). He said, *No magnifier is needed to see this re-entry, the horizontal frame lines over and under 'IS' of 'ISLANDS' being clearly thickened. With a glass, duplication of the shading lines of the letters 'IS' can be seen and also*

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the doubling of the horizontal bottom frame lines. Considering that Victory stamps are something of a drug on the market, this variety is surprisingly hard to find. The final remark is equally true in 1989. *Commonwealth* lists the variety, but unfortunately gives an inaccurate position. The 3d. value also caught Kettle's eye and he noted that R2/1 from Plate A1, has a stop after the year of the date (Fig. 3b). It is also listed by *Commonwealth*. A contemporary edition of *Stamp Mirror* described Two buoys in the river between the launch and the top left corner of the POSTAGE AND REVENUE panel on R2/5 from Plate B1 (Fig. 3c). Seven years earlier GSM had remarked that the 3d. from Plate A1 is a much lighter shade of orange than B1.

Ceylon. There is another nice variety on the 6c. from Plate A1 at R8/2. It has been called 'The Flagstaff', but 'The Falling Stone' is a more descriptive title (Fig. 3d). *Stamp Mirror* reported An extended tail to the second stop under 'TH' of '8TH' occurring on R6/6 from Plate B1 of the same value. In February 1947 GSM stated that sheets of the 15c. from Plate B1 were much deeper brown than those from A1. *Commonwealth* lists reddish-brown as well as brown. To my eye A1 is reddish-brown and B1 is dark brown.

Cyprus. On the 1½p. there is a stop between the 1 and ½ in the right-hand value tablet at R7/1, Plate B1 (Fig. 6). Four other varieties exist on the 3p. First, at R2/6, there is a 'Buoy in the River' above the bows of the left-hand barge (Fig. 3e). Secondly, R3/5 has a large dot on the tip of the spire under 'U' of 'JUNE' (Fig. 3f). It has been called 'The Leaning Flagstaff' and I can only suggest that the flaw lengthened towards the end of the printing run. Thirdly, two short lines protruding from the left side of the 'C' of 'CYPRUS' have been recorded on R5/5 and finally on R9/4 there are two spots over the 'P' of 'CYPRUS'.

Dominica. There is a slight difference in the shade of carmine between sheets of the 1d. value with a 'W' scratched in the top left corner of the margin and those with a horizontal dash in the same position. These marks are most intriguing as the stamp was '60 set'. A 'flag' flies over the main tower on R4/3 (Fig. 3g). At R5/1 of the 3½d. two small dots show in the sky to the right of the main tower (Fig. 3h).

Falkland Islands. In December 1946 GSM commented that most of the sheets of the 3d. that had been examined were from Plate 1, but a few came from Plate 2. The latter being in a brighter shade of blue. The major re-entry on R8/5 from Plate 1 is well known and rates inclusion in the *Commonwealth* catalogue as well as appearing in specialist auctions. The stamp stands out from its neighbours because of its darker appearance caused by doubling of the shading lines on the face of the King, in the Houses of Parliament and in the shading lines of 'FALKLAND ISLANDS'. In addition, a plate flaw affects the crown over the medallion (Fig. 7). The imperfection is easy to spot and is the identifying feature, should unpositioned copies be examined. However, should a plate block of six fail to display the re-entry and plate flaw do not despair, a much scarcer piece has been found—the original state of the impression. It is worth noting that R8/6 always has a small flaw in the shape of a dot under 46 of the date (Fig. 3i). For anyone who has other positional blocks it is worth looking at R3/1, 5/2, 8/1 and 8/6 where there

will be slight duplication of the shading lines of 'FALKLAND ISLANDS'.

Falkland Island Dependencies. In November 1946 GSM noted that, Some sheets of the 1d. value have a missing horizontal perforation in the right-hand column above 'S' of 'DEPENDENCIES'.

Fiji. The 2½d. green provides the most expensive catalogued variety in the Victory series. S.G. 268a is described as Printed double, one albino. The *Commonwealth* catalogue states, Double print, one albino and in a footnote explains that, one sheet was discovered with double impression, one albino variety clearly visible from the back of the stamp. The *Stamp Mirror* went further stating, the stamps show traces of a previous impression, partly albino, underneath and slightly to the left of the design, the previous impression in black. It is difficult to follow this description and match partly albino with the previous impression in black. It is most probable that sheets were fed individually and it seems more likely, therefore,

that two sheets went through together and the bottom sheet was put through again when found blank. This accounts for the albino impression but not the remark about the previous impression is in black. Clarification would be most welcome as well as identification of the plate used. The 3d. value has three varieties. On R1/55 there is slight horizontal doubling in the sky adjacent to the head oval and very slight traces in the date (Fig. 3j). The second is on R6/4 where a plate scratch almost splits the stamp vertically in two, passing through the 'T' in '8TH' and the flag of the launch into the bottom margin (Fig. 3k) and into R7/4 (Fig. 3l). Lastly, a large spot or 'Buoy' can be found behind and on a level with the flag at the stern of the launch on R8/1 (Fig. 3m).

Part 14 will conclude the review of the remaining plate varieties and marginal marks to be found on the CA Victory Issue. A list of Plate and Current Numbers will be included for the Houses of Parliament series as well as details of the number of sheets despatched from De La Rue.

