

# KING GEORGE VI VARIETIES

## Part 17—South Africa

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### Prologue—A Digression

A Pedley's letter in *GSM* (May 1990) about the expense of collecting new issues today turned my mind back to 1948. It so happens that one of the two commemorative issues released in South Africa during that year, which will feature in this article, was a 3d. value to mark the Silver Wedding of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Mention of that event offers the opportunity to digress and summarise some of the views expressed at the time about the costly omnibus issue authorised by the Crown Agents for the Crown Colonies.

In April 1948 the Great Britain 2½d. and £1 and equivalent overprints were issued and in South and South West Africa the 3d. appeared. Older readers will probably recall the furore that then followed an announcement by the Crown Agents that a Colonial Silver Wedding issue, consisting of one low and one high value, would be issued for each of 47 colonies with a total face value of over £30. There was also an ominous warning that, 'Any additions to the list will be announced later'. Within a short time details of 11 extra sets to Malaya were publicised. The news about this potential flood of high values came, not only, at a time when many collectors could remember buying the Colonial 1935 Silver Jubilee, 1937 Coronation and 1946 Victory omnibus sets at new issue rates on a combined face value of under £10, but also when the need for a GB £1 was being questioned.

'An Empire Racket' was the headline in *GSM* (1 May 1948) over a hard-hitting editorial concerning the announcement. It left little to the imagination of the magazine's readers about the views of the two editors—Stanley Phillips and C P Rang. They pointed out that this 'appalling step' had been taken without consultation with philatelic organisations and forecast that it would provide a splendid medium for illegal exports, while any immediate financial return from the legal export of stamps to hard-currency countries, providing that collectors there were not nauseated by the racket and did buy them, would be far outweighed by the eventual loss, caused by the world-wide realisation that the stamps of the British Empire were regarded as a means of raising money. A separate insert addressed to customers wishing to order the series included the remark that, 'we should much prefer that the whole trade should boycott the stamps, but fear that this is not likely'. All this may well bemuse the younger collector today—after all £30 for an omnibus set for 47 countries may not be considered outrageous in 1990. But to put the monetary side into perspective Phillips and Rang were writing when £10 was a good weekly wage, while an Aircraftman 2, the most junior rank in the Royal Air Force, had to do his best as a collector on 4s. (20p) a day!



'The Silver Wedding Battle' was the headline for the editorial in the July *GSM* which reported that the BPA and PTS had sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies setting out their objections to the proposed issue and that, at the Philatelic Congress in Bournemouth, a motion which deprecated the issue of high value stamps and urged the Colonial Office to reduce the face value of the series, had been passed by a large majority. The Royal Philatelic Society had also suggested this measure. Meanwhile Stanley Gibbons had sent out 10,000 circulars seeking the views of their customers, some of whom had already expressed themselves in very strong terms in letters published in *GSM*. 2016 replies were received with 1720 entirely opposed to the inclusion of high values. A large proportion urged their exclusion from the catalogue, a step, which Stanley Gibbons disclosed, had been considered at an early stage. However, it had been decided that as the stamps, though in many cases unnecessary for postal purposes, were going to be used in the normal course, they had no option but to include them in the catalogue, bearing in mind that there was enough dictatorship at the time and the company had no right to tell customers what they should collect.

In August, *GSM* reported that Stanley Gibbons had received a letter stating that, 'The Secretary of State for the Colonies sees no sufficient reason why Colonial Governments should not celebrate this important occasion in the same manner as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom'. The letter also included the comment that if any changes in the values of the Colonial stamps were to be introduced at this advanced stage in their production there would be a serious delay in their issue, which it was felt should take place not later than the end of 1948. This matter of delay was also given as the reason why the high value stamps could not be surcharged with lower values as had been suggested. The editorial reaction in *GSM* was that a mistake had been made, but having started production it would have been difficult to abandon the issue or to alter denominations although the results of the original action would be so serious that one or other should have been taken whatever the difficulties. They noted that the British £1

stamp and its overprinted equivalents had already provided a medium for widespread illegal exports and were selling at a heavy discount abroad. They forecast that this would happen to the Colonial high values. This mention of illegal export of stamps may seem far fetched in 1990, but in 1948 all kinds of controls were in force, not only affecting currency, but more mundane items. For example, a short paragraph on the back page of many editions of *GSM* explained regretfully that as the maximum number of copies permitted by the Paper Control were being printed, new subscribers would not be accepted and their name would be placed on a waiting list.

Finally, in the September *GSM* a short editorial looked to the future suggesting that it seemed unlikely that, even though the Silver Wedding issue would appear, the Colonial Office would repeat its mistake because of the strength of feeling expressed by so many. In the following month orders were being accepted for the complete Colonial set at £47. The advertisement reiterated the view that the issue was an imposition on philatelists and warned that after the last set was issued Stanley Gibbons would not maintain stocks of the high values and would not be buyers of them. In the event, although the bulk of the issue appeared in later 1948 and early 1949 the Pitcairn Islands and Gilbert and Ellice Islands did not release their stamps until August and 29 August 1949. This spread did help sales and where the high cost inhibited collectors many chose to buy either just the low values or those up to 5s. Cecil Rose, in his amusing autobiography *Ten Under Cat*, when considering the demand for post-war omnibus issues noted that whereas he had sold 4,300,000 of the 1946 Victory issue only 450,000 Silver Wedding stamps passed through this hands—a fact he attributed to the number of high values in the latter.

The last sombre words in this saga are taken from comment by the RPS published in the October *GSM*—'...we certainly cannot recommend the purchase of these stamps to the serious philatelist. In fact, we see no reason why any collector should consider his collection necessarily incomplete because these stamps are not included'. 1948 was an interesting Philatelic Year.

### The 3d. Silver Wedding

Fortunately for the King George VI variety collector only a few minor flaws affecting the low values on the Crown Agents set have been identified (see *GSM* February 1990). More fruitful areas of interest have, therefore, to be sought elsewhere and the 3d. value issued by South Africa to commemorate the Silver Wedding fills the bill. The design and imaginative use of silver and blue makes a pleasing change

*Continued on page 79*



Fig.1

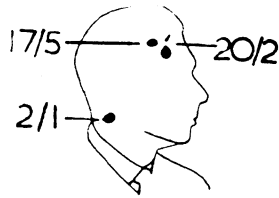


Fig.2

Silwerbruilof

Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7

from the standardised design of the CA low values and the damage to the pocket caused by the high values. The silver areas were printed from Interior Cylinder No 48, with Exterior Cylinder No 6923 printing the dark blue. The sheets of 120 (20 rows of 6) were printed at the Government Printing Works in Pretoria and, as usual, the stamps alternate in English and Afrikaans. Sheets were overprinted for use in South West Africa. The *Commonwealth* catalogue notes that 5,070,000 pairs were issued, including those overprinted.

### Varieties

Thirteen constant varieties can be identified. Row 1/1 features the first—a blue dash after 'POSTAGE' in the left tablet (Fig 1). Underneath, at R2/1, a blue mark occurs at the back of the King's neck (Fig 2). The word 'SILQERBRUILOF' on R8/3 has a stroke of colour through 'RU' (Fig 3) and a blue spot can be found in the south-east corner of the right frame line on R9/4 (Fig 4). An easily seen re-touch affects the centre of the right frame lines on R14/5 (Fig 5) and a white arc appears between the heads of the King and Queen on R15/3. The adjacent stamp, R15/4, has a blue flaw in the centre of the right hand frame lines (Fig 6). On R16/5 the hyphen between 'SUID' and 'AFRIKA' is broken and shows as two dots (Fig 7) and on R17/1 a large blue flaw covers the upper lip of the Queen. The fifth stamp on the same row features a large spot on the King's temple (Fig 2) while the Queen has a faint line through her eye. Another large and a smaller spot disfigure the King's forehead on R20/2 (Fig 2) and lastly a smudged dark blue line shows, just to the right of the top of the King's head under 'SILWERBRUILOF' on R20/3.

### The 1½d. Natal Settlers

The 1½d. Natal Settlers Centenary stamp was issued on 2 May 1948, only six days after the 3d. Silver-Wedding. Both stamps were with-

drawn from sale on 30 June 1948. *Commonwealth* states that 29,976,740 pairs of the 1½d. were issued in sheets of 120 (20 rows of 6). With so many issued in such a short time it is not surprising that there seem to be plenty about today. Variety hunting is, therefore, reasonably easy and even at full catalogue (15p per pair) there will not be any need to take out a second mortgage!

Muscott's of Godalming noted the existence of varieties in their advertisements in contemporary philatelic magazines. However, before describing any of them it is worth noting that although claret is the allocated colour in 'Part 1', *Commonwealth* gives two—reddish chocolate and brown-claret. It is fair to simplify matters and say dark and pale claret. The shade difference is important as the dark claret sheets were printed from Cylinder No 29—the number is shown in the vertical margin in the bottom right corner—and the pale unnumbered sheets came from Cylinder No 7021. (*Commonwealth* says the reverse to be the case, but having examined many sheets, thanks to the kindness of J Sanders of Southampton, I am convinced this is a mistake.) As usual, arrows mark the centre of the four margins, however, the arrow in the bottom margin of sheets from Cylinder No 29 is slightly defective (Fig 8).

### Varieties Common to Both Cylinders

As a multi-positive plate was used some varieties are common to both cylinders. They all occur in the lower half of the sheet. On the 11th row there are three. R11/1 has what appears to be an extra line of rigging at the top right of the foremast, with the mark continuing into the sky (Fig 9). R11/2 has an extra streak of colour that leads upwards from the cloud to the frame line (Fig 10) and on R11/6 a very large spot appears attached to the foot of the 'S' of 'SUID' (Fig 11). A zigzag line behind the value on R13/2 is distinctive (Fig 12), while

on R14/2 a prominent sideways V mark is attached to the top of the main mast (Fig 13). A fine 'paying-off pennant' streams from the foremast on R17/5 (Fig 14).

### Varieties from Cylinder No 29

The most noticeable occurs on R9/5 where a short, thick diagonal line crosses between 'NATAL' and 'SETTLERS' (Fig 15). A much smaller flaw on R10/1 affects one of the tiny figures on the brow of the hill—the white background extends into the sixth figure from the left giving the appearance of a white garment (Fig 16). On some sheets a vertical line shows just to the right of this figure and bisects the figure sitting down (Fig 16). The foremast on R17/1 exhibits some poor seamanship as a large coil of rope is snaking down from the top yardarm (Fig 17), further along the row on the third stamp, a bracket-like mark appears in the sky directly below the hyphen between '1849' and '1949' (Fig 18). Unusual problems afflict the flag on the mainmast on R18/3 as it appears that it is prevented from flying freely by a rope attached to a corner (Fig 19). Finally, on R18/4 a large dot occurs under the '8' of '1849' (Fig 20).

### Varieties from Cylinder No 7021

A mark rather like a comet occurs over the 'R' of 'SETTLERS' on R2/4, with a good glass it is possible to see a dark circular blob with a fainter 'tail' extending upwards (Fig 21). The small '1' of '½d.' on R5/5 has a noticeably longer serif (Fig 22) and further down the sheet on R9/2 a small white dot appears in the middle of the large '1' (Fig 23). R10/3-4 are both associated with the next variety as a slanting line crosses the white border between them and passes through the right frame and adjacent vegetation in the design of R10/3 (Fig 24). Minor spots occur irregularly on many stamps, but the large one on R11/5, just below the 'ST' of 'POSTAGE', is constant (Fig 25).

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Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11

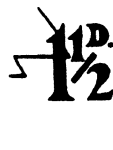


Fig.12



Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig.15



Fig.16



Fig.17

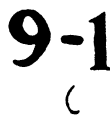


Fig.18



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 Fig.32 Fig.33 Fig.34 Fig.35 Fig.36

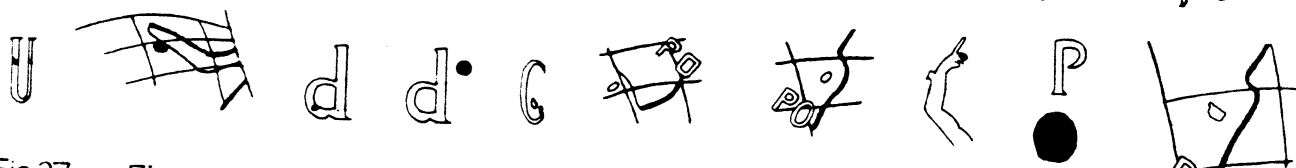


Fig.37 Fig.38 Fig.39 Fig.40 Fig.41 Fig.42 Fig.43 Fig.44 Fig.45

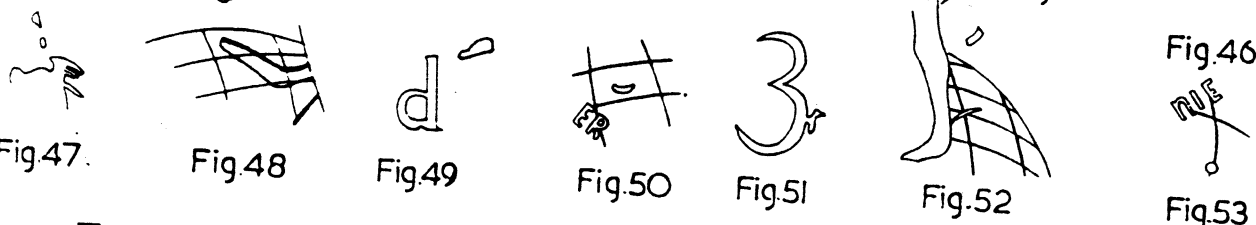


Fig.47 Fig.48 Fig.49 Fig.50 Fig.51 Fig.52 Fig.53

### The UPU Issue

The 1949 UPU series of three values (1/2d., 1 1/2d. and 3d.) is a fruitful source of varieties. Thirty-nine can be found and just over half are clearly visible without a glass. Some, although constant, are very small and will not be illustrated. Sheets were printed by rotogravure with six horizontal rows of stamps (i.e. ten pairs) and arrows indicate the centre of the margins. Two cylinders were used for the 1/2d.—31 and 60. *Commonwealth* mentions a shade difference, dark blue-green and deep blue-green respectively. A small green dot appears just below the arrow in the right margin on sheets from Cylinder No 60. Cylinder No 1 was used for the 1 1/2d. and No 25 for the 3d. *Commonwealth* notes the following number of pairs overprinted for South West Africa: 1/2d. 847,440, 1 1/2d. 847,380 and 3d. 607,980.

### Varieties on the 1/2d.

Three varieties are common to both cylinders. First, a dot under the 'T' of 'SOUTH' on R1/5 (Fig 26). Secondly, a semi-circular patch of light colour by the right edge on a level with the neck of Mercury on R4/19 (Fig 27). This is easy to see, but difficult to illustrate, as is the 'Halo' or light patch of colour which appears between the 'A' and 'F' of 'AFRICA' on R5/11 (Fig 28). Cylinder No 31 also has three, a white dot over the 'P' of 'WERELDPOSUNIE' on R4/13, a green spot on the 'C' of 'AFRICA' on R5/11 and two green dots on Mercury's upper leg on R5/18. In contrast Cylinder No 60 is more prolific. On R2/8 a white dash occurs to the left of the top of the 'S' of 'SOUTH' (Fig 29). A white dot shows near the left edge on R4/3 level with the face and exactly under the 'S' of 'SUID'. On R5/20 three dark spots break the lines of latitude and longitude on the globe at the lower right corner (Fig 30). In the sixth row the 12th stamp has a dot to the left of the right elbow and the 17th displays two dark spots superimposed on a white dash to the right of the 'L' of 'POSSEEL' (Fig 31).

### Varieties on the 1 1/2d.

Ten varieties can be identified. The first row has two—a dot in the top segment of the globe on R1/8 (Fig 32) and a broken 'U' of 'SOUTH' on R1/14 (Fig 33). There is a dot in the '2' of '1 1/2d.'

on R2/4 (Fig 34) and on R2/14 a 'Lake in Central Africa' comes into being (Fig 35) and a horizontal line crosses the large '1' of '1 1/2d.' (Fig 36). Another 'Halo' shows at the top of the 'U' of 'SOUTH' on R3/2, with the same letter being cut on R3/8 (Fig 37). A dark patch or 'city' appears on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea on R3/12 (Fig 38) and the left wrist of Mercury is sometimes flawed on R4/18. There is another dot in the 'd' of the value on R6/2 (Fig 39) and finally, on R6/10 there is a very dark blob of colour just to the right of the 'd' of '1 1/2d.' (Fig 40).

### Varieties on the 3d.

Sixteen stamps can be plated on the 3d. *Commonwealth* lists 'The "C" Variety' on R1/1 as the letter looks decidedly like a 'G' (Fig 41). The tenth stamp in the same row has a white spot in the sea just off the coast of South West Africa (Fig 42) and the 13th has a white spot where Lake Nyassa is located (Fig 43). The penultimate stamp depicts a lovely variety as Mercury wears a wristwatch (Fig 44) and on the last stamp in the first row a very large dark spot occurs under the 'P' of 'POSSEEL' (Fig 45). There is only one variety on the second row and it is most distinctive—'Lake Victoria' appears above 'POS' on R2/19 (Fig 46). (A corner block of four has three nice varieties.) On R3/1 a couple of large white dashes show above the head of Mercury (Fig 47), while on R3/12 a 'Star' shines over Suez (Fig 48). A large white dash occurs to the right of the 'd' of '3d.' on R3/19 (Fig 49). The fourth row has two varieties—the fourth stamp has two 'stars' between the '3d.' and Mercury's waist and the tenth has another 'lake' just above the 'ER' of 'UNIVERSAL' (Fig 50). The '3' on R5/6 has a spur (Fig 51) and a dot by the right elbow. On R5/11 an easily seen 'Comet' approaches the back of Mercury's leg (Fig 52). On R6/4 the normal dot under the 'd' is enlarged and a white dash shows below, while R6/10 has a white dot under the 'CA' of 'AFRICA' and R6/15 has another over the line of longitude below 'NIE' (Fig 53).

Part 18 in GSM November 1990 will describe varieties on the 1946 and 1949 New Zealand Health Stamps.