

King George VI Varieties

RICHARD LOCKYER, OBE

Part 2 — Barbados

The 1938-50 definitive issue of Barbados is an interesting one for any collector who is not only seeking to embellish his collection with nice varieties, but also, is intrigued by the way they came into existence. The small format Seal of Colony stamps followed the heraldic design that first appeared in 1892 and continued to be used, with various alterations, until 1950 when a pictorial series was issued. The 1938 issue was recess printed by De La Rue in sheets of 120 — 12 rows of 10 — for the seven values up to 4d., and in sheets of 60 — 6 rows of 10 — for the remaining values up to 5s.

The late Frank Saunders (the founder, in 1960, of the thriving King George VI Collectors' Society), listed no less than 115 printings of the twelve values, four of which were never distributed as they were destroyed by fire following the bombing of the De La Rue works on 28-9 December 1940. Some of the issued printings produced notable colour, shade and perforation changes. A few copies of his Study Paper, *Barbados — The Postal Issues of the Reign of King George VI*, reviewed in *GSM* in August 1981, are still available from the Society*. Looking to the future, Edmund Bayley of Bridgetown, Barbados, is currently writing what promises to be the definitive work covering all aspects of the Island's postage stamps. It is worth noting that his research has revealed two more KGV printings, for coil stamps, making 113 printings distributed for use. As a matter of interest for older readers Mr Bayley is the younger son of Herbert Bayley who, during the 1940s and 1950s contributed much to the philatelic study of current Barbados issues and was, also, the author of *The Post Office in Barbados*, which was published locally in 1933. For the moment I only intend to bring to the attention of collectors some of the more noticeable varieties of the 1938 series with the hope that they will then be persuaded to delve deeper into the subject.

Master and Intermediate Die Defects

At the start it is worth noting the presence of three minor defects in the design that appear on nearly every stamp of the issue. They are not varieties in the generally accepted sense, but deserve mention as close scrutiny will quickly reveal their presence and raise a query in the mind. The first is a scratch or possibly a poorly executed attempt to strengthen a frame line. It occurs between the outer and central frame lines on the left side of the stamp (Fig. 1). The second, another similar mark, is adjacent to the first, but between the central and inner frame lines (Fig. 1). The third, affects the middle horizontal line above 'BARBADOS', the line is split in two instead of being a single prominent line (Fig. 2). These light faults in the design must have been on the master die and then transferred to the intermediate dies for different values. However, the 2d. which

did not appear until 1941, shows that its die received some corrective attention. The two scratches are absent and the horizontal line shows just a trace of having been split. The other two values, 8d. and 5s., which were also not part of the original release, still show the scratches, but the 8d. displays a clear single horizontal line, while on the 5s. the line has been partly corrected.

Weak Entries

In the December 1950 edition of *GSM C.P.* Rang reported a flaw on the 1/2d showing as a white patch in the top right corner of the stamp, caused by the absence of some of the vertical lines of shading (Fig. 3). The flaw, subsequently termed a weak entry, can be found on Row 9/2 of all of the four printings of the 1/2d. Further research by Rang confirmed that a weak entry was present on other values and in other positions. He tentatively concluded that the flaw was due to a defect on the master die and was repeated on each of the plates of some values. He suggested that, before the plates were used, the defect was corrected by retouching, but some escaped attention and others were only partly corrected. He examined sheets of every value and discovered that on:

1d. The flaw remained on R3/7 and was partly retouched on 3/2, 4/1, 7/8, 9/2 and 9/7.

1 1/2d. The flaw remained on 1/1, 1/2 and 10/3. Partly retouched on 10/10.

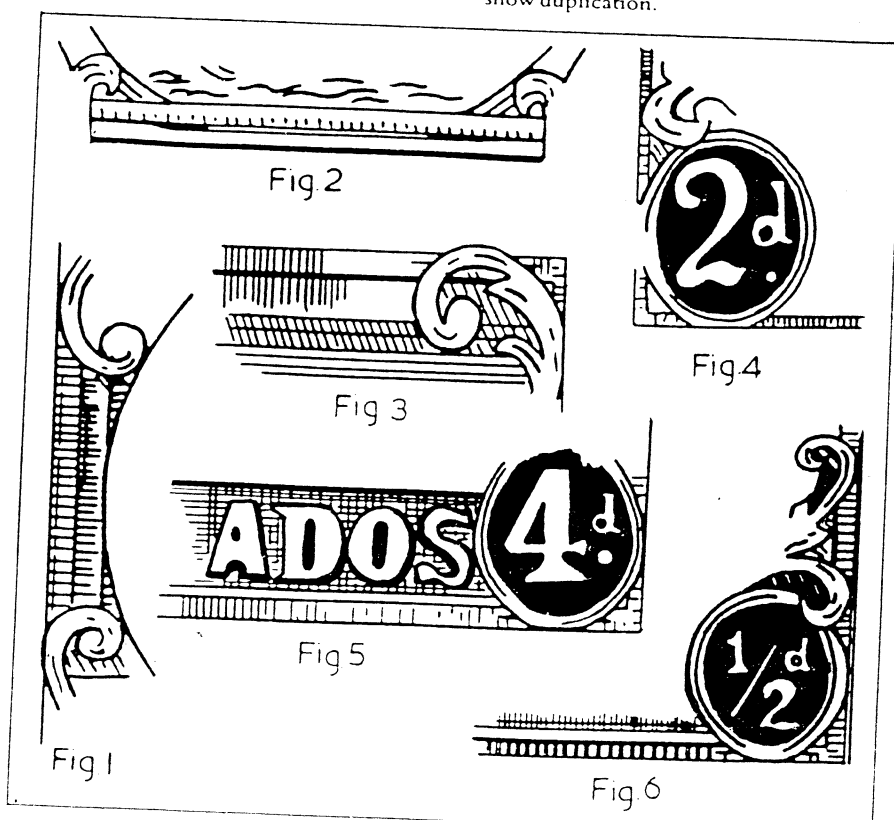
1s. The flaw remained on 5/6. Partly retouched on 6/1, 6/2, 6/3 and 6/4.

Rang found no evidence of corrective work on the sheets of the 2d., 2 1/2d., 6d. or 5s. but considered that successful retouching had removed the flaw from the 3d., 4d., 8d. and 2s.6d.

Another weak entry, but in an entirely different position on the sheet, occurs on the 2d. value at R12/1. The outer frame line gives the impression of a break at the low left where the left hand value tablet touches the frame line (Fig. 4). A further example appears on R8/10 of the 4d. perf. 14 — the short vertical lines of shading in the bottom border are either very faint or completely missing (Fig. 5). I am sure that others can be found, but it helps if you have complete sheets or very large multiples to examine!

Re-entries

Good examples of re-entries can be found on the 1/2d. yellow-bistre (Fig. 6) and the 2 1/2d. (Fig. 7). The 1/2d. is re-entered on R8/10 — the lower right corner, and frame line and the vertical lines of shading below 'BARBADOS' are doubled. R12/6 of the 2 1/2d. also has noticeable design duplication. The left hand vertical frame line and the lettering of 'BARBADOS' being affected. Finally, the short horizontal lines of shading in the extreme lower left corner of the 1d. at R11/1 show duplication.



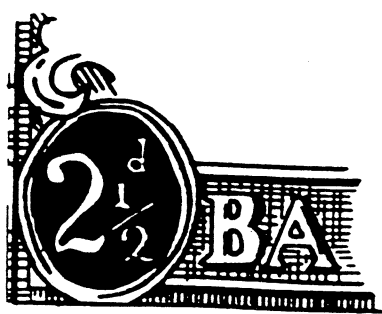


Fig. 7

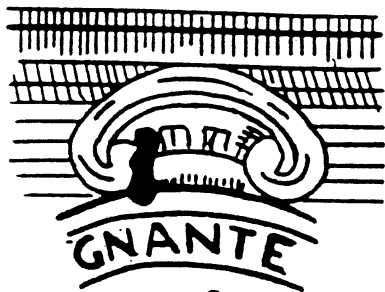


Fig. 8

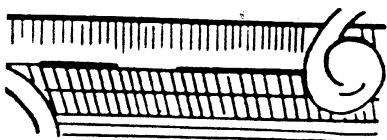


Fig. 9

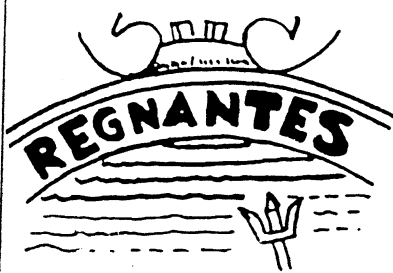


Fig. 10



Fig. 11

Fig. 13

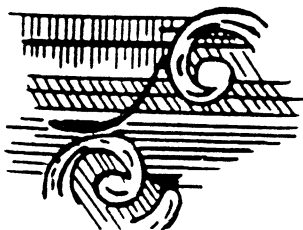


Fig. 12

An excellent transfer flaw can be found on the 2½d. (Fig. 8). The first three stamps of the third vertical row show a flaw in the ornament at the top of the oval above 'NA' of 'REGNANTES'. Their existence proves that the plate was entered in vertical rows. There were only three printings of this value and large corner blocks or even positional vertical strips containing the three stamps with the transfer flaw are, with the passage of time, hard to find.

The cause must have been a small foreign object sticking to the transfer roller and after three impressions it either fell off, was removed or disintegrated. The shape of the flaw on the three stamps varies slightly, possibly indicating that some hard substance broke up under pressure.

Retouches

Fortunately, the two distinctive retouches on the ½d. and 1d. green are located in popular positions. A large imprint block of the ½d., in either colour, that includes R10/6 will also afford the enthusiast the opportunity to add another retouch to his display. The two cuts in the horizontal of the design are very obvious (Fig. 9). A lower left corner plate block of the 1d. contains the corrective work at R11/2, where the upper lines of shading in the sky have been thickened and the 'E' and 'TES' of 'REGNANTES' show evidence of more work (Fig. 10).

Flaws

'The Line Over the Horse's Head' flaw on the 3d. at R4/10 (Fig. 11) is a very popular variety that has achieved catalogue status in the *Commonwealth King George VI Catalogue*. The conspicuous, heavy, vertical line appears on all releases of the 3d. up to and including the colour change to blue in April 1947. It has been reported that the flaw does not occur on the December 1947 issue. Regrettably, I do not have an example in my own collection and can only stress that a positional piece without a flaw is highly desirable as it completes the story. The flaw itself was probably caused by something being impressed on the surface of the plate.

'The Joined Scroll' variety occurs on the 4d. at R7/8 and has been granted catalogue recognition by Bridger and Kay. Mr F. Bentley Kettle, another KGVI stalwart of the immediate post-war years, suggested in *Stamp Collecting* in October 1952 that three states of the flaw could be found. He believed that the original state of the variety was caused by a sliver of metal being firmly impressed on to the printing plate, which when removed left a recessed line that naturally took up ink (Fig. 12). The second state, Kettle suggested, shows evidence that an attempt was made to restore the plate, as the horizontal lines adjacent to the semi-circular mark have been roughly cut. The third and final state occurs on the release of December 1947 when the distinctive flaw line has been removed and the background lines recut, although they are thicker than normal. There could, of course, be a primary state prior to the damage to the plate, but this is only conjecture.

'The Flying Mane' or 'Plume' flaw on the 4d. is another easily recognisable variety (Fig. 13). It also rates a separate catalogue entry at an enhanced price, whether mint or used. I find it ironic that the majority of the varieties described in this series of articles are just as interesting, in a philatelic sense, as the minority that have acquired a catalogue

number. On the other hand, it is a blessing in disguise that the majority have not caught the eye of the Catalogue Editor as it means that they are there to find, lurking in club packets and dealers stock books, priced as normal stamps! But to return to the 'Flying Mane', it occurs on stamps with both perforations, at R4/1. The flaw was corrected on the December 1947 release, but, as yet, it has not been determined when it first appeared. A small depression in the face of the plate caused the variety as, following the removal of surplus ink from the face of the plate, the slight hollow retained enough ink to form a fortuitous flying mane. There is also a second small constant mark in the sky just to the left of the horse's head from a smaller dent in the surface of the plate.

The 'Diagonal Scratch' plate flaw occurs on all printings of the ½d. at R2/4. A heavy diagonal line runs NW-SE across the head and body of the King (Fig. 14). A similar mark also appears on the 1d. green, but I have not been able to position it (Fig. 15). However, at R5/1 on the 1d. green there is a minute, but delightful change in the design. The 'shell-like' object in the sea, just below the nostrils of the right facing horse (it is really the tail of the strange body of the other horse), usually has a nondescript vertical projection (the tip of the tail) to the left of the 'shell'. However, on R5/1 the projection takes on the very definite shape of a duck's head! (Fig. 16) I wonder if this was an accidental slip by the engraver or a deliberate sense of fun?

The 'Value Tablet' flaw occurs on R1/1 of the 3d. (Fig. 17). Kettle was able to prove that it was not constant throughout the entire life of the plate, as he had the 1941 perf. 14 printing without the flaw, and the 1944 perf. 13½ x 13 and the 1947 (blue) printings with the flaw. Damage to the surface of the plate most probably caused a slight depression and ink was retained in it after wiping.

There can be no doubt that other varieties exist and this is one of the attractions of recess printing as imperfections usually show up more clearly than on stamps printed by other methods. Besides this, the beauty of the clear lines and the lovely colours are a joy to the eye.

Part 3 (February GSM) — Fiji.

*Details of the King George VI's Collectors' Society are available from Mr Lockyer, the Secretary, 24 Stourwood Rd, Southbourne, Bournemouth, BH6 3QP.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17