

KING GEORGE VI VARIETIES

Part 21—St Kitts-Nevis 1950 Tercentenary Issue

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'Money is necessary to win medals—but a keen eye produces interest cheaply', so wrote the late Frank Saunders in the November 1970 edition of *Geosix*, the quarterly journal of the King George VI Collector's Society. Saunders was a dedicated philatelist and thorough researcher, always willing to share information with other collectors and encourage them to venture beyond the narrow bounds of catalogue listings. His philosophy has been inspiring and Parts 21 and 22 of this series have been written in the hope that they will stimulate others to follow his advice. The 1950 St Kitts-Nevis Tercentenary of six stamps had a face value of 2s. and 2d. (11p) when released. In 1991 they are only catalogued at 25p (5s.). For the speculator of the early 1950s they must have been a miserable failure. But for those willing to study them, interest certainly comes cheaply.

Historical Background

On 10 November 1950 six values of the definitive series (1d., 1½d., 2½d., 3d., 6d. and 1s.) were issued bearing the overprint 'ANGUILLA/TERCENTENARY/1650—1950' to commemo-



rate 300 years of British settlement. The small island was first depicted on stamps just two years before, when the 10s. and £1 values were issued showing a map of the area. The vignette was printed by lithography by De La Rue and these two stamps join the FID map sets, described in Parts 19 and 20, as the only King George VI stamps so printed.

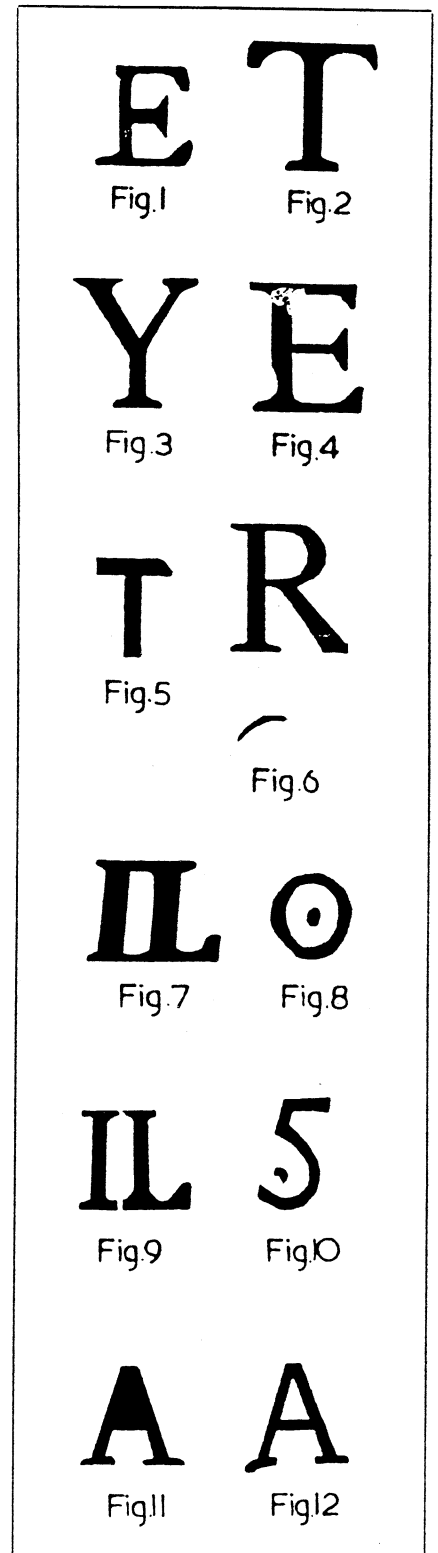
Requisition 3887/1

The release of the Tercentenary set marked the completion by De La Rue of Requisition 3887/1, this had called for a total of 1,404,000 stamps for the six denominations, all to be overprinted 'Anguilla/Tercentenary/1650—1950' in two lines. In the event, three lines were used. The paper issue and requisition books were completed in the normal way, but the British Library does not have in its care any records pertaining to the plates or overprinting formes. It has been suggested by the library staff that this could be the result of De La Rue changing their recording system in the late 1940s, when in some instances files were introduced to replace the meticulously kept record books, with their entries frequently completed in copperplate reminiscent of the 19th century.

Despite the lack of formal record, an examination of the sheets confirms that plate 1 was used for the small format stamps, depicting the King's head (1d., 1½d. and 2½d.). The double-pane sheets were printed by typography and each pane consists of ten horizontal rows of six stamps bordered by a single jubilee line. The panes are comb perforated 13¼ × 14 and are separated by a vertical gutter. The plate number (1) is located in the margin over R1/2 on the left pane and under R10/5 on the right. The three large format bicoloured stamps (3d., 6d. and 1s.) were also printed by typography. Two head plates were used with different designs. The 3d. and the 1s. share the same one showing the King's head and the Seal of Nevis (Hygeia administering the stream of life). The 6d. has the King's head and the Seal of St Kitts (Columbus sighting the island of St Christopher). The head plate number (1) appears over R1/2 and under R12/4. None of the frame plates were numbered. However, the existence of constant head and frame plate flaws proves that the original plates continued in use. Double jubilee lines, with constant breaks, surround the 12 rows of five stamps. These allow marginal copies to be plated in the same manner as other De La Rue issues, e.g. Bermuda large keyplates. The three large format stamps were all printed on chalky paper and were, surprisingly, perforated 13 × 12½.

The planned date of despatch was 'the end of August'. The original requisition shows that the 1d., 1½d. and 2½d. were to be '60 set', but this was amended to read '120 set'. On 19 July 1950 1858 large sheets of white, thin paper, including 170 for wastage, measuring 22¼ × 21¾ inches were issued to De La Rue. These sheets were big enough, when divided, to print two double panes '120 set'. The following double pane sheets were despatched: 1d. 3585 (430,200 stamps) 4—18 October 1950, 1½d. 1320 (158,400) 4 October 1950 and 2½d. 2010 (241,200) 4—18 October 1950, against a requisition of 3450 (414,000), 1350 (162,000) and 1950 (234,000) respectively.

The 3d., 6d. and 1s. were '60 set' and the paper issued was twice the size of the eventual printed sheet. Sheets of small white thin paper, measuring 15¼ × 16¼ inches, were issued for the 3d. and 6d. and medium white thin paper, measuring 18¼ × 21¾ inches, for the 1s.—a difference carefully noted, in a different hand, in the paper issue book. On 19 July 1950, 1857 sheets were issued for the 3d., including 207 for waste and 2194 for the 6d. with 244 for waste. On the following day 1552 sheets were issued for the 1s. including 202 for waste. The printed '60 set' sheets for the three values were despatched on 27 September and 18 October 1950 with 3380 (202,800) for the 3d., 3997 (239,820) for the 6d. and 2759 (165,540) for the 1s. against a requisition for 3300 (198,000), 3900 (234,000) and 2700 (162,000) respectively.



A note in the requisition book records that, with the exception of the Bureau supplies sheets of stamps to be numbered 1 up each duty and interleaved with wax paper. 500 sheets of each duty to be sent by parcel post as soon as possible in advance of the main supply. A further note stipulates that 90,000 of each value were destined for the Bureau. This implies that the following were sent to the colony: 1d. 340,200, 1½d. 68,400, 2½d. 151,200, 3d. 112,800, 6d. 149,820 and 1s. 75,540. From these figures it is clear that the 1½d. is the key value in the set. The stamps were withdrawn from sale on 31 January 1951.

The Overprints

As the stamps were printed in two different formats the overprint, although the same three-line form, differs on two counts. First, the size of the lettering on the small stamps (1d., 1½d. and 2½d.) is 1mm, whereas on the other three large stamps (3d., 6d. and 1s.) it is 2mm. Secondly, the distance between 'ANGUILLA' and 'TERCENTENARY' is 12mm on the three lower values and 11mm on the rest. In consequence the overprint on the former looks poorly executed in comparison to the latter where it appears neat and well-balanced. Black ink was used for the overprinting, except for the 1s. when red was the chosen colour. In the selvage of the left pane of the small stamps under R10/1 is a horizontal black line measuring 19½mm, this must have been associated with the overprinting in some way. Sheets of the large stamps do not have any unusual marks in the margins.

1d., 1½d. and 2½d. Research by Saunders in 1970 was hampered as he was only able to study right panes. However, from an examination of these he deduced that it was probable that the double pane sheets were overprinted in one operation, rather than pane by pane. In the past 12 months I have had the chance to examine left and right panes and the evidence gleaned supports his hypothesis. First, the absence of any variation in the vertical measurement of any of the three lines of overprint point to the use of a common matrix. Secondly, the first 'E' of 'TERCENTENARY' on the last stamp of every row lacks a serif at the top left (Fig 1). Thirdly, although the spacing between the rows of overprint may vary slightly they are constant from left pane to left pane and right to right. For example, on right panes the distance between rows can be 23¼, 24 or 24¼mm, but on left panes the differences, although the same, occur between different rows. Thus, between the first and second rows the distance on the right pane is 24¼mm, but on the left panes it is 24mm or between rows five and six the distances are 23¼ and 24¼mm. Finally, if a ruler is laid vertically through the overprints it will be seen that their horizontal position varies by a minute amount. This variation is constant across a row. All this evidence leads to the conclusion that the overprinting unit was built up using slugs cast from a six-line horizontal unit to make a '120 set' forme, with each line having its own very small individual characteristics as well as the serifless 'E' already mentioned.

3d., 6d. and 1s. On the large format stamps there do not appear to be any variations in the distance between individual parts of a single overprint. This indicates that they were made up as a single unit. The left top serif of the first 'T' of 'TERCENTENARY' (Fig 2) is slightly enlarged on every stamp as is the left upper diagonal of the 'Y' (Fig 3) while the second 'E' has a small indentation on the left side (Fig 4).

The long dash between 1650 and 1950 is identically spaced on every stamp. All these factors point to the use of a common matrix. The slight variations in distance between each overprint unit indicates that they were set up singly and not cast as a multi-unit matrix, such as the 15 unit one used for the 1952 Tristan da Cunha overprints on the stamps of St Helena, where the first 'T' of 'TRISTAN' has a chipped cross bar on R4/2, 4/5, 9/2 and 9/5 (Fig 5). From all this evidence, and in the absence of firm confirmation from official records, it seems most likely, that three lines of overprint were set up as a single unit for the 3d., 6d. and 1s. and from this a matrix was made with 60 slugs cast and set up individually to form a '60 set' overprinting unit.

Overprint Varieties

As early as 25 November 1950 W M Royale (a pseudonym/anagram used by A W Morley) had drawn attention in *Stamp Mirror* to a curved black mark below the 'R' of 'TERCENTENARY' on the 3d. at R6/3 (Fig 6). He suggested that it was a printing mark left by a slightly proud stereo nail. It has only been found on the 3d. and is similar to, but not as large as, the 'Crescent Moon' on R20/4 of the Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika 70c./1s. issued in 1942 (SG 154a). Three months after Royale's comment W T Waugh, a member of the Bearsden PS in Glasgow, contributed a short article in *Stamp Collecting* listing varieties he deemed significant.

1d., 1½d. and 2½d. Waugh considered that only two varieties on the small format stamps were worth mentioning—'The Leaning "I"' in 'ANGUILLA' on R2/1 (Fig 7) and the 'Dot in "O"' in 1650 on R10/5 (Fig 8), both from the left pane. He reported that he had not seen the 'Dot in "O"' on the 1d. and that the 1½d. could be found with and without it, while the 2½d. always had the defect. My own search has not altered his findings. The 'Leaning "I"' is slightly controversial as the 'I' is always just off true vertical. This is more apparent on the first stamp of every row (Fig 9). However, in fairness to Waugh, it is more easily picked out on R2/1, as the vertical shafts of both the 'I' and the first 'L' are thicker than normal, the 'L' also leans very slightly to the right and the serifs at the top and bottom of the two letters are usually joined (Fig 7). The fiddly nature of the small letters combined with the heavy inking tends to make many other letters on the panes appear to be joined as well. 'ANGUILLA' is frequently affected. Saunders listed 15 examples on a right pane he examined and I have detected 57 on another. This leads to the general conclusion that their existence demonstrates only too well the sticky nature of the ink and the ensuing problems when used with such small letters. There are perhaps a couple of exceptions on some right panes. On R9/1 a black dot appears in the '5' of '1950' (Fig 10) and on R10/4 the apex of the 'A' of 'TERCENTENARY' is filled in (Fig 11). Individual letters and figures show minor cracks and chips, but they are minute. On the panes I have studied some of the examples mentioned by Saunders can be seen, but others are not visible. It seems that this is a consequence of ink either, filling in, or failing to fill in, these tiny faults. The 'Turned down Foot' of the first 'A' of 'ANGUILLA' on R9/6 (Fig 12) and to a lesser extent on R9/5, both from the right pane, are the most noticeable.

Part 22 (GSM November 1991) will complete the survey of the 1950 St Kitts-Nevis Tercentenary Issue describing the overprint, head and frame plate flaws to be found on the 3d., 6d. and 1s. values.