

KING GEORGE VI VARIETIES

Part 34—The 1941–42 Provisionals of Kenya Uganda and Tanganyika

The problems of maintaining stamp supplies in wartime provide the background to Richard Lockyer's study of the varieties on the South African overprints

Twenty years have passed since research by Stuart Rossiter, concerning the issue of overprinted South African stamps for use in Kenya Uganda and Tanganyika in 1941–42, was published in the *London Philatelist*. His full and fascinating account, based on an examination of the Postmaster General's file 537/36/Vol III/A while visiting Kampala in 1972, must be compulsory reading for any collector interested in the philatelic history of the colony and the effect of military operations on the supply of ordinary postage stamps.

War Time Damage

Thanks to further research undertaken by Denis Littlewort, the Chairman of the King George VI Collectors Society, into the Williams, Lea emergency printing of Bermuda large keyplate definitive stamps, the story opens with a letter, dated 30 December 1940, from the managing director of De La Rue to the Crown Agents. This stated, 'I have no doubt that Mr Mackay has reported to you that our George, Crown and Star factories were severely damaged last night and also that 108 and 110 Bunhill Row were destroyed by Fire.' The writer promised a full report as soon as a complete inspection could be made. On 8 January De La Rue told the Crown Agents that, 'In many respects the position is much better than we could possibly have hoped at the outset'. Fortunately, it appeared that nearly all the original dies and plates were intact as well as the printing plates and engraving machines. However, on the following day a CA telegram to Nairobi reported that '10c. and 20c. stamps in the course of printing destroyed'. This drew a response from the PMG in Nairobi on 10 January that only three months supply of the 10c. and 20c. and substitute denominations remained in stock.

A Stiff Upper Lip

On 15 January Mr C Prudhoe, the De La Rue warehouse manager, circulated customers with an understated note saying, 'In circumstances beyond our control, records of goods despatched from our warehouse after December 2nd 1940, have all been destroyed. If you have not received an invoice for goods supplied to you after this date would you kindly give particulars of the items ...'

Supply Difficulties

On 17 January the CA notified Nairobi that 850,000 20c. stamps had been shipped in early December and 1,500,000 of the 10c. should reach Kenya in three months. Five days later another cable from London reported that the 20c. stamps had been lost at sea plus 309,100 of the 30c. The good news was that 1,500,000 of the 10c. should be despatched in February. A secret telegram to London on 23 January stated that stocks of the 10c., 20c. and 30c. were likely to be exhausted by the end of

February, but the use of substitute denominations and booklet stamps could last until mid-March. Another classified telegram to Kenya 24 hours later noted that about 200,000 10c. and 12,500 20c. stamps had been salvaged, although some had been slightly damaged by melting wax interleaf. Thus, 500 sheets of the 10c. were being despatched using the flying-boat service via Lagos, another 500 sheets by the next boat to Takoradi for onward transmission by air and 1000 sheets of the 10c. and 500 quarter sheets of the 20c. were being posted c/o The Postmaster in Cape Town.

Emergency Action

On 24 January PMG Nairobi wrote to PMG Pretoria enquiring whether it would be possible for the government printing works there to undertake an emergency printing. A reply pointed out that there were no engraving machines available, but a photogravure mock-up of the design could be produced on paper with a springbok watermark. Furthermore, interleaving would be absorbent paper as waxed paper was not available. A secret London telegram dated 1 March confirmed that the despatches mentioned on 24 January were on their way and another 3000 sheets had been posted on 18 February followed by 1000 more on 21 February. In addition, 1,500,000 of the 10c. would be posted when ready, with deliveries of the 20c. and 30c. commencing in two to three weeks.

The advance by Allied troops through Somaliland into Ethiopia was in progress in early 1941 and on 3 March the PMG in Nairobi informed the Chief Secretary that, provided all the new supplies arrived on time he could release stamps for use, if desired, in the occupied territories. However, on 28 March Nairobi telegraphed Pretoria to start printing a photo emergency issue and on the following day advised the Colonial Office that stocks would only last for a maximum of 14 days and the parcels en route would only suffice for about three weeks. In these circumstances 1,000,000 10c. and 1,000,000 20c. values had been ordered from South Africa. The stamps would be ready in a month, but would not be issued if the United Kingdom disapproved. This message drew a very quick response from the Secretary of State in London who telegraphed, 'Should greatly prefer not to use reproduction of

East African stamps made in South Africa owing to complete absence of usual security factors and danger of complications through infringement of copyright. Suggest you consider surcharging of other denominations or obtaining an overprinting of genuine stamps of a neighbouring territory.' An equally speedy reply pointed out that it was not possible to surcharge other denominations as none were available in sufficient quantities and action to use South African produced stamps had been deferred while enquiries were in progress to see if stamps of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia or India could be overprinted in those countries. In the event, on 12 April Pretoria was asked to go ahead and overprint 480,000 1d. stamps, 1,200,000 of the 3d. and 1,440,000 of the 6d. with the legend KENYA, UGANDA AND TANGANYIKA and 5c., 10c. and 20c. respectively. Ten days later the work was in hand. The Colonial office in London confirmed this action adding a reminder that the customary blocks for the Royal collection would have to be forwarded.

Probably Lost at Sea

On 30 April the PMG reported that main stocks were exhausted. Two days later the CA stated that further supplies had been sent. Two of the five consignments failed to reach Nairobi—one having been 'probably lost at sea'. On 9 May a letter from Pretoria to Nairobi noted that a supply of overprinted stamps had been forwarded by registered parcel post. Confirmation of receipt was sent on 26 May, but as UK despatches were arriving no decision was made to use the provisionals. Normal monthly demand at this time was about half a million stamps of each of the 10c. and 20c. values.

On 19 June, because the main stocks of the 5c., 10c. and 20c. stamps were exhausted and only tiny stocks remained at small post offices, it was recommended that the overprinted South African stamps should be distributed after examination by a Board of Survey. Sealed supplies began to be sent out on 21 June with wrappers bearing the wording 'In no circumstances is this cover to be opened until you receive telegraphic instructions from this office to place these stamps on sale.' On 28 June it was decided to issue on 1 July, after a telegram was received from Dar es Salaam reporting that stock of the 10c. was exhausted and only a few days supply of the 5c. and 20c. remained. An announcement was broadcast on 30 June and published in newspapers on 1 July. A second consignment of stamps arrived from Pretoria on 26 July.

Numbers Printed and Issued

Sheets of the South Africa 1d. and 6d. consisted of 240 stamps (20 horizontal rows of 12), 3d. sheets had 120 stamps (20 rows of 6). The first consignment of overprinted sheets (9 May) had 1999 sheets of the 5c./1d., 9999 of the 10c./3d. and 5999 of the 20c./6d. One sheet of each value had been retained on the printers' specimen file in Pretoria which accounts for the strange totals. A Board of Survey carried out an initial examination of the first batch and three sheets of the 5c., forty-seven of the 10c. and twenty-one of the 20c. were withdrawn and destroyed. A further survey on 28 June resulted in the destruction of 168 5c. 1853 10c. and 62,748 20c. stamps. The Board noted that the large quantity of 20c. stamps 'was almost entirely due to a fault in the overprinting ... suggestive of being the first batch.' The other consignment (26 July) had 4000 sheets of the 5c., 30,000 of the 10c. and 12,000 of the 20c. values. Of these, 6972 5c. stamps, 14,940 of the 10c. and 9184 of the 20c. were withdrawn and destroyed. To complete the account 720 (i.e. 360 pairs) of each denomination were sent to London for eventual distribution as specimens. The *Commonwealth* catalogue notes that these stamps were overprinted SPECIMEN in sans serif capitals 26 x 3mm reading diagonally downwards. The editor points out that this overprint was locally handstamped and should not be confused with a much larger handstamp with serified letters later applied to stamps used at the Postal Training School outside Nairobi. By the end of 1941 the stock of the overprinted values had nearly all been issued and the supply of the normal definitives returned to normal. In the June 1942 edition of *GSM* a note stated that Lt-Col H F Stonham had reported that the three stamps were more or less completely obsolete after a life of seven and a half months.

The 70c./1s.

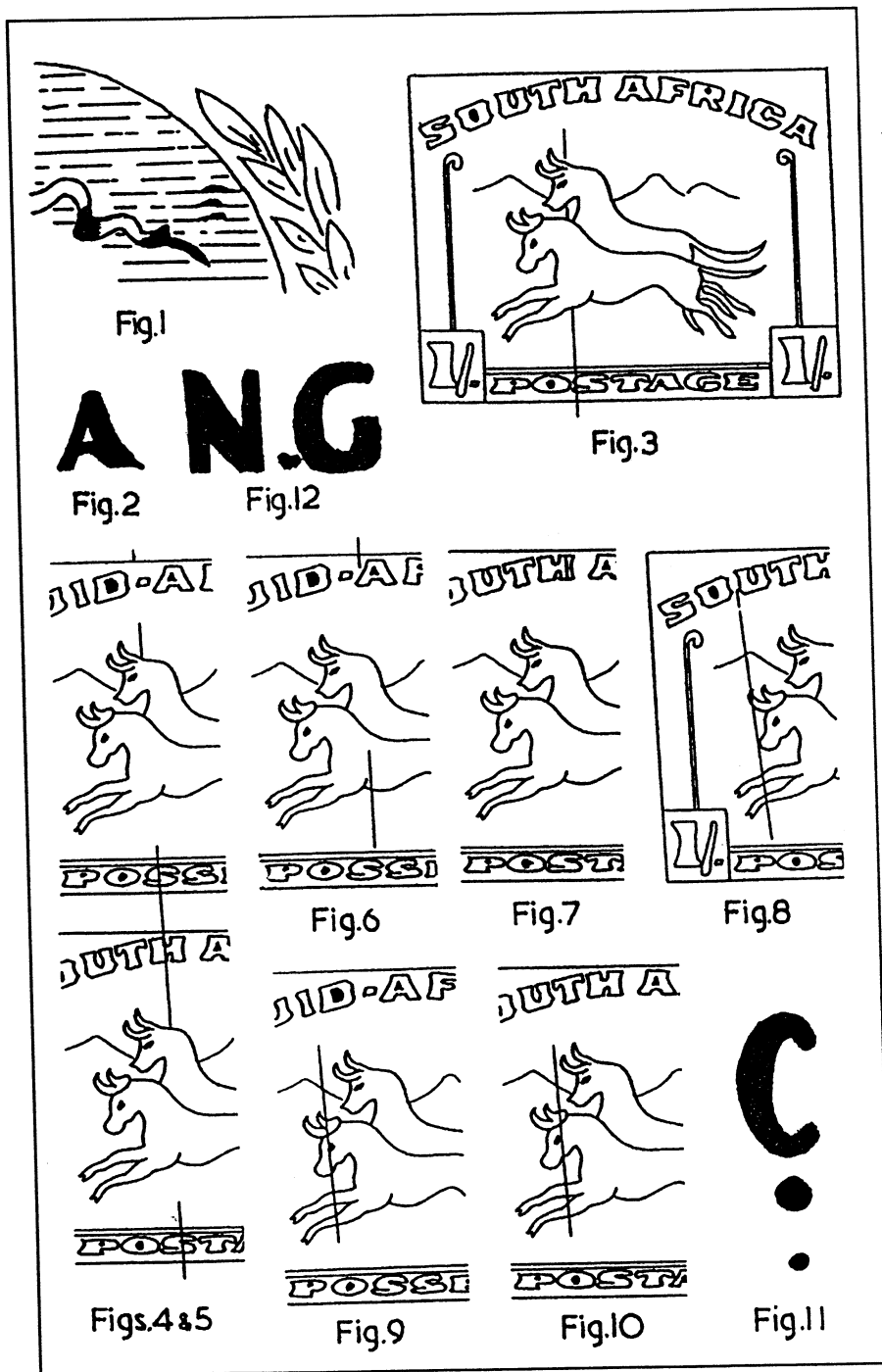
Although the file examined by Rossiter did not deal with the issue of the 70c./1s. he found a note elsewhere stating that the stamp was being issued on 20 April 1942 'for the airgraph service'. This was confirmed by Berrington, who added in his book that when airgraphs ceased the value was used mainly for parcels. 480,000 were released, less 268 which were withdrawn as 'unsuitable'. Sheet size was 20 rows of six. On 1 July 1952 the four overprinted values were demonetised.

Varieties

5 cents. Gordon Ward's erudite and detailed 80-page book entitled *The Ship Penny of South Africa* mentions the overprints on page 53. He notes that the first 2,000 sheets of the 1d. value overprinted for use in KUT came from stock of the March 1939, Plate 14 issue printed from Cylinders 35 and 50. As an aside it is noteworthy that the total number of sheets issued and delivered from this plate up to 30 March 1940 was enough to provide 368,000,000 stamps! The second consignment of 4000 sheets was overprinted between 8 and 15 July, and although most of them came from the 1939 issue, some originated from the May 1940 release using Cylinders 60 and 17, plate 15. In Ward's opinion the latter are less often met with than examples from Plate 14. A significant difference in deter-

mining individual stamps rates a footnote in the Commonwealth catalogue, where it is stated that the 1939 issue measures $18\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$ mm and the other $18\frac{1}{4} \times 22\frac{1}{4}$ mm. The price of the latter being three times greater in the mint state. Ward judged the measurements to be $18\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$ and 18×22 mm. However, he qualified these figures stating, 'There is some slight variation in the new measurements, but no doubt at all about the reduction.' Way back in November 1942 Mr J V Jenson had told *GSM* that the sizes were 18.6×22.5 and 18.2×22.1 mm and matched the first and second supply. The reduction was, apparently, intended to give a wider gutter for perforation. Colin Fraser writing in *Stamp Magazine* (November 1982) mentioned that the 5c. overprint existed on both thick and thin papers, with the difference corresponding to different printings of the South African stamps.

The only worthwhile variety on the 1939 issue occurs on R20/7 where a small black spot called 'The Spot on the Pennant', which had occurred on Plates 12 and 13, was poorly repaired leaving three heavy lines of shading on sheets used for the overprint. The repair is, in fact, more noticeable than the original spot. An arrow pair from the bottom margin will show the variety (Fig 1). Ward lists sixty-eight other minor imperfections on Plate 14. A few are, of course, hidden from view by the four line overprint which was applied to the quarters of each sheet i.e. sixty stamps at a time. In Ward's opinion cylinder flaws on Plate 15 are not very exciting, except for R 1/2 where there is clear evidence of severe damage to the cylinder in the form of a stab mark in the top line of the stamp over the 'F' of 'AFRICA'. I have only seen sheets from the 1939 (Plate 14) issue. These are easy to



pick out as there is a series of six identical regularly spaced, slightly diagonal, red marks in the right margin.

10 Cents. In 1940 the hyphen in the Afrikaans inscribed 3d. stamps was introduced. There were two distinct releases using Cylinders 55/30, Plate 5. The *Commonwealth* catalogue describes them as dull ultramarine for February 1940 and ultramarine, with the month unspecified. To my eye the former is on toned paper with yellow gum and the latter on white paper. Both shades can be found with the overprint. The simple skeletal marginal arrows are most interesting and are markedly different from the usual broad and bulky shape that follow on Plates 6 and 7. The overprint on the Plate 5 sheets is crisp and clear. Berrington described a dash occurring between the 'K' and 'E' of 'KENYA' on **R3 B872**. He also listed 'no left limb to "T"' and 'a blob joining the "U" and "T"', both on unidentified positions. *

20 Cents. Colin Fraser noted that the 20c. overprint existed on two printings of the basic stamp—green and deep orange and orange-brown. Bearing in mind the number

* R1/2 and R2/2

of overprinted stamps destroyed by order of the Board of Survey, it is not surprising to find that in general terms the overprint is frequently of poor quality. Letters are often filled in with ink. Signs of a tail appears on the 'A' of 'TANGANYIKA' on R20/12 (Fig 2). Berrington also reported that the base of the 'C' in the overprint was missing on R1/6.

70 Cents. The varieties on the 70c. can be conveniently split into three groups. First, there are, at least, four combinations of shade: sepia-brown and chalky-blue, sepia and dull blue, purple-brown and milky-blue and chocolate and slate-blue. From this it appears that the South African authorities used any stock they had to hand for the overprinting. All the sheets were printed from Plate 3. The second group consists of several imperfections on the basic stamp. An almost vertical blue line passed down through the second stamp of Row 3 (Fig 3), R4 (Fig 4), R5 (Fig 5), R6 (Fig 6) and, finally, R7 (Fig 7) where it is most noticeable as it cuts heavily through the 'H' of 'SOUTH'. An example of faulty shading under 'AF' of 'AFRICA' on R3/6 is easy to distinguish

when a multiple is examined. Lastly, a brown line cuts through the head of the foremost gnu on R17/4 (Fig 8), R18/4 (Fig 9) and R19/4 (Fig 10). The third group concerns the overprint. The well-known 'Crescent Moon' on R20/4 is listed in *Part 1*. However, the second small black dot below the 'C' of 70c. on R1/1 is not so obvious (Fig 11), while another constant dot appears between the 'N' and 'G' of 'TANGANYIKA' on R20/1 (Fig 12).

Part 35 (GSM February 1995) will feature a miscellany of varieties to be found on other KUT stamps issued during the reign of KGVI.

Collectors interested in joining the King George VI Collectors' Society should write to the General Secretary, 98 Albany, Manor Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3EW. The next display meeting will be held at the British Philatelic Centre in London on Saturday 25 February 1995.