

King George VI Varieties

Part 66—The Last Roundup (Section 1)

Richard Lockyer, OBE, updates his article on Ascension, originally published in August 1986

The title indicates that the end of this series is approaching. The next few parts will consider some varieties that have come to notice during the years since it began in August 1986. The countries will be listed alphabetically and the date of the original article will be quoted when relevant. In addition, the opportunity will also be taken to include news items from philatelic magazines of the 1940s and 50s announcing the discovery of varieties, some of which seem to have slid back into obscurity today.

Ascension (Part 1, GSM August 1986)

'Dot in the sky'

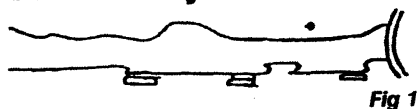


Fig 1

All printings of the ½d., including sheets from the very first 1938 printing without the 'Long "E"' variety, show a small mark in the sky on R1/1 (Fig 1). (It is worth remembering that a vertical marginal pair from the first printing with the printer's guide cross above R1/3, but failing to display a 'Long "E"' at R2/3, is an item to grace any specialist collection. Not surprisingly examples are very hard to find.)

'Fleck in the sea'

TOWN

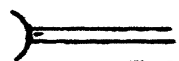


Fig 2

A reasonably strong scratch mark in the sea just to the right of 'GEORGETOWN' can be found on R2/6 of the ½d. from the 1944 printing (Fig 2). It continued on later printings, but is not so obvious.

'Ticked value tablet'



Fig 3

A frame plate flaw, in the form of a semi-diagonal line from the right side of the upper left value tablet, affected R6/1 on the 1944 printing (Fig 3).

'Wart on the Nose'



Fig 4

A tiny defect to the centre plate used for the ½d. value shows very clearly on the first printing and appears as a spot on the bridge of the nose of the King at R10/3 (Fig 4). On later printings the flaw lacks the same clarity, but is still detectable.

'Double flaw on "d"'



Fig 5

Dr Richard Baker, of the Ascension Island Study Circle (AISC) and KGVICS, noticed this slight damage to the 'd' in the lower right value tablet of R10/4 on printings from 1949. The top of the '2' also shows very slight damage (Fig 5). His help is gratefully acknowledged in confirming the existence of other varieties and the associated printings.

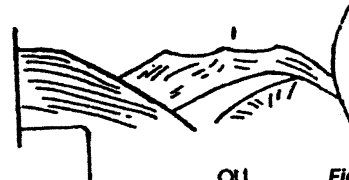
'Line through the mountain'



OU Fig 6

A small diagonal scratch on the centre plate featuring the Green Mountain printed as a line on the mountainside on R10/2 from 1940 to the end. It can be detected on the 1d., 2d. and 4d. values (Fig 6).

'Balloon' flaw



OU Fig 7

This tiny flaw is detectable on the centre plate used for the 1d., 2d. and 4d. values from the 1946 onwards. It shows as a small mark above the mountain on R4/3 (Fig 7). By itself it hardly justifies comment, but its existence adds interest to a collection if in a pair or positional block with the 'mountaineer' flaw at R4/4. The latter has, of course, achieved listed status in the *Commonwealth* catalogue. It is now known to have occurred on the 1945 printing of the 4d., i.e. earlier than the 1946 date quoted in Part 1 of this series.

'Tree stump flaw'



OU Fig 8

Dr Baker has also reported a speck of black jutting out of the mountainside on the left side of the design at R1/6 on the 1d., 2d. and 4d. values printed between 1938 and 1944 (Fig 8). Bernard Hughes, also a member of the AISC, has seen a slight trace on the 1949 1d. and both 2d. values, but nothing on the 1946 printings.

1937 Coronation

Two minor varieties on the 2d. were noted in *Stamp Collecting* (19 June 1937). The first on R9/4 took the form of two parallel lines running from the first stroke of the first 'N' of 'ASCENSION' into the orb. The second example was on R9/6, with the same lines as on R9/4, together with a similar pair of parallel lines from the top of the left-hand '2' at the same angle as the others. The same edition carried a recent report from its correspondent on the island; 'Ascension went stamp crazy yesterday, the entire population of one hundred and fifty being engaged in licking stamps. Even so, I doubt if the first day covers reached 1000. As you probably know, no complete sheets of the 2d. were issued. Apparently the Governor detected an error in a stamp near the bottom right-hand corner and had them all taken out before sheets were sold to the public.' Two months later Ascension first day covers were advertised for sale in London—at 16s. (80p). This may not seem much today, but this was at a time when the state old age pension was 10s. a week.

Later editions of the magazine mentioned a square instead of a round dot under the left 'd' in the left value tablet on the 1d., a curved hairline from '1' of '1937' into the white border on another 1d. and an 'escaped curl' on the left cheek of the Queen on the 2d. None was plated.

'Cut mast and railings'

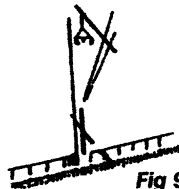


Fig 9

Slight damage to the centre plate used for the 1½d. and 2s.6d. values affected Row 3/1 (Fig 9). It was not present on the 1½d. perf 13, released on 17 May 1944, and most probably happened during the printing of the 2s.6d. released on 14 February 1945. This suggestion is made because very few examples of the high value with the variety have been reported. The flaw was not corrected. The variety on both values has now been listed in the *Commonwealth* catalogue.

'Jib stay' flaw

In the first part of this series the mark that crosses the lower right stay of the derrick at the end of the pier on R6/6 of the 1½d. was named the 'Derrick' flaw. By popular assent it has since been renamed! Bernard Hughes has confirmed that the flaw occurred on the 1953 as well as the 1954 printing originally quoted in the article. Thanks go to him as well for his assistance in this review.

'Buoy flaw'

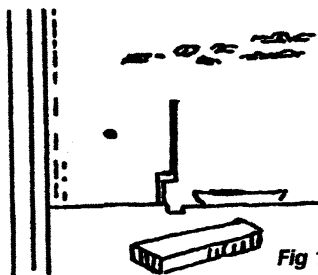


Fig 10

A small black mark in the sea above and just to the left of the left-hand shed can be found on R2/4 on the 1½d. value (Fig 10). Dr Baker has examples on both the February and June 1949 printings (perf 14), plus the 1953 and 1954 issues (perf 13). However, he also has several sheets and blocks from the June 1949 printing on less grey paper without the variety. This leads to the suggestion that the vignette, at least, was printed on some sheets before the February release and retained for eventual issue in June.

'Spot over mountain'



Fig 11

The retouch at R6/5 on the 3d. from the 1950 printing is well documented and is now called the 'Tornado' because of its appearance (Fig 11). A tiny spot over the central mountain peak can be detected on the same stamp between 1944 and 1950 (Fig 11). It is possible the cause of the 'Tornado' retouch was a noticeable black mark in the sky. The similar retouch on R10/4 is now known to have been preceded by a black line on part of the 1944 printing. However, more frequently, the line was officially scratched out or hand erased. The R10/4 retouch is found on the 1946

printing as well as the pale 1950 printing. Thanks are due to Murray Payne who originated the research into the origins of this retouch in their house journal, *Sixth Sense*.

'Extra rocks'



Fig 12

Dr Baker spotted the 'Extra rocks' on the 3d. value. Normally there are four rocks in the sea close to the left vertical frame line. However, on R10/3 two extra rocks made an appearance at the extreme left on part of the 1940 printing. They continued on the later issues (Fig 12).

'Boulder' flaw

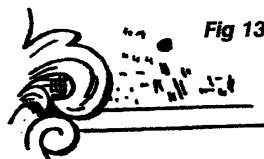


Fig 13

A small but noticeable area of damage to the centre plate used for the perf 13 printings of the 6d. and 10s. printed as a 'Boulder' or 'Football' on the hillside in the lower left corner of the vignette on

R5/4 of both values (Fig 13). Bernard Hughes has reported the flaw on part of the 1938 printing of the 6d. as well as the 10s. release. There is also a small 'Rock'



EE SIS

Fig 14

on the mountainside in the centre of the vignette (Fig 14). It precedes the 'Boulder' flaw on the 1938 6d. value (perf 13%). It is, therefore, possible to find an example with only the 'Rock' and another with the 'Boulder' and 'Rock', both from the first release.

'Sty on the eye'



Fig 15

In 1991 Martin Appleby of the KGVICS reported a most unusual flaw on a 1s. value perforated 13% (Fig 15). It has yet to be positioned. On the other hand, it could be a 'one-off' caused by a small piece of paper sticking to the plate to produce a 'confetti' flaw.

Marginal marks

½d.

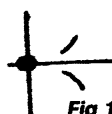


Fig 16

The arrow-like mark affecting the top guide cross on the ½d. from the 1953 release was mentioned in Part 1. There is also a similar mark at the centre of the right-hand margin (Fig 16).

1½d.

Since August 1986 it has been possible to examine more sheets of the 1½d. as well as marginal blocks with the 'davit' flaw at R5/1. It is, therefore, appropriate to reconsider the marginal marks by R5/1 and 6/1, some of which were described and illustrated in Part 1. The 1944 issue shows just two dots, a semi-vertical pair, in the frame colour alongside R5/1 and they continue to the final printing. A third very faint dot sometimes appears below the pair.

A black dash by R6/1 has been seen on a positional block from the 17 February 1949 release (SG 40c). However, matters become more complicated when the 1 June 1949 release occurred (40d/db). Only the three dots in the frame colour appear by R6/1 on sheet number 1227; a black dash then shows as well on sheet 1234. The latter combination also occurs on two other sheets (082 and 084) with the number over R1/5 and the selvedge missing over R1/6. (This most probably indicates that the sheets were either incorrectly numbered prior to despatch or were returned to the UK and were then reissued with a new number. They

were probably numbered after sheet 1234 originally.) The colour of the paper used for the first two sheets is cream, with off cream or a very light grey for the other two. A positional block with deep grey paper shows an additional cross and dot by R5/1 and a squiggle or zigzag attached to the guide cross, both in the frame plate colour. In addition, a thin, short vertical black line shows by R4/1 on this block.

The shades of the frame colour, together with the varying appearance of the paper and sequence of marginal marks indicate that difficulties occurred during printing of the 1½d. perforated 14. The February issue has always been described as 'vermilion' in Part 1. On the other hand, *Commonwealth* chose 'deep scarlet' until 1997 when a change to 'brownish vermilion' occurred. However, that is straightforward compared to the June release. Indeed, it was noted in *GSM* (August 1949) that 'In our supply of the new 1½d. black and carmine, two shades have been noted—carmine and greyish carmine. At first sight they appear to be possible listable varieties, but we are of the opinion that the wiping of the centre-plate has caused a greyish tint all over the paper, which has affected the carmine. Since the wiping would not be the same for each sheet, one would expect to find intermediate shades, and this is borne out by our stock. Whilst of mild interest perhaps to specialists, it hardly warrants catalogue rank.' Nevertheless, by November it was admitted many

collectors had expressed their views on the matter and in the face of public opinion there would be a separate listing. To help collectors to decide which stamp they owned the black and carmine stamp had 'the greyish tint all over the paper and is more pink than the bright rose-carmine'. *Commonwealth* has always used rose-carmine and dull rose-carmine. For good measure, Potter and Shelton preferred scarlet and scarlet-rose for the February release and carmine-rose with normal or grey paper, for June.

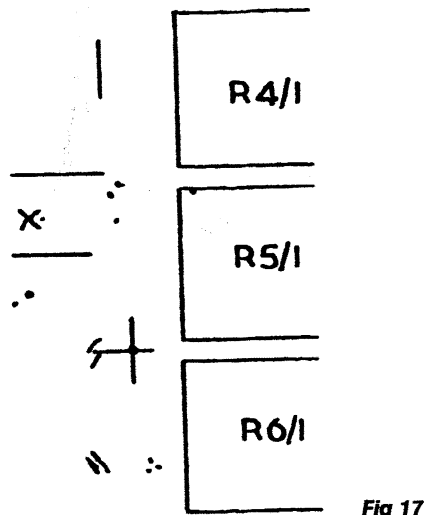


Fig 17

An explanation for the apparent illogicality whereby the black dash appeared in February, but was not present on a sheet from the June release could be that the black vignette was printed on a batch of sheets in late 1948 or very early in 1949 and during the printing run a mark was made on the plate by R6/1. A small number from the top of the pile with the black cross was then used to

satisfy the February despatch. The remainder with and without the black mark were then put to one side for use when the large June printing was carried out, by which time more marks had been added to the frame plate. The remarks made earlier about the absence and presence of the 'Buoy Flaw' are relevant.

The next issue in 1953 has a second, slightly shorter dash in the frame plate colour almost superimposed on the original black dash by R6/1. In addition, two side-by-side dots appear under the cross and dot, again in the frame plate colour. Fig 17 illustrates the position of all the marks described and it must be emphasised that the last two side-by-side dots only show with a wide selvage. It can be confirmed that the thin black vertical line by R4/1 is joined by another, in line with it and positioned by the top half of R9/1 on the perf 13 printings. It is most probable that they both came into being during the final phase of the perf 14, June 1949 printing.

The marks by R5/6 and 6/6 first occurred during the June 1949 printing and continued to the end. The arrow and cross and dash are in the frame plate colour (Fig 18).

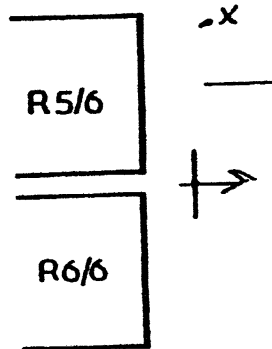


Fig 18

Guide marks

In May 1942 the 1d. was released with a new perforation—13 comb. A black horizontal line measuring 6.5mm with a dot at its right end appeared between R4/3 and 5/3. Hughes believes that all stamps showing the 'Line and Dot' are from 1942/45 printings. The marks did not appear in this form again. However, an easily distinguishable black dot has been seen in the margin between R4/3 and 5/3 on a batch of half sheets of the 2d. perf 14 from the June 1949 printing bearing sheet numbers over R1/3. Dr Baker has confirmed it on most, but not all denominations, printed from 1945 onwards. It is worth noting that on some of the half sheets the dot has either been clipped or eliminated by a perforation hole.

The 'JG' initials

It was mentioned in the first part of this series that it had been noted in *GSM* (July 1946) that sheets of the 13 May 1946 printing of the 2d. had the scratched initials 'JG', in the frame colour, in the middle of the top margin. No explanation was offered. Examples have now been

found (Fig 19). Furthermore, examination of the records in the British Library has revealed that a member of the De La Rue staff with the initials JFG signed out the frame plate in the Plate Issue Register. The CA inspectors frowned on such personal handiwork on the plates. Scrutiny of

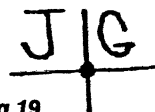


Fig 19

Forged postmarks

A book entitled *Madame Joseph Forged Postmarks* has been mentioned before in this series. Brian Cartwright in his recent article about the forgeries (*GSM* September 2002) stated that the Royal Philatelic Society with the aid of the British Philatelic Trust 'produced the remarkable book', but did not mention the authors. In fairness, the opportunity is now taken to pay tribute to the author Derek Worboys and mention the very special tribute he made, as part of the prologue, to Roger West, who edited the book, and Allan Leverton. The Prologue itself makes fascinating reading as it describes the varying reaction of others to the discovery of the hoard of forger's tools.

The book is a 'must' purchase for anyone interested in following a fascinating philatelic by-way. Five single-ring cancels for Ascension during the 1940s are illustrated: an oval 'REGISTERED' cancel dated '16 MY 41', plus four c.d.s.'s for 'JY 10 41', 'AU 27 43', 'JU 15 44' and 'JU 15 44'. On the last, the cross bar of the letter 'A' of 'ASCENSION' is not joined and the 'S' appears to be strengthened.

sheets and positional blocks of the 2d. has revealed that hand erasure was used to scratch out the offending letters; while for later printings they were buffed off the plate. Nevertheless, traces of the scratches still remained to pick up ink and leave evidence after printing.

'David' flaw

This is probably the most popular Ascension variety. *Commonwealth* has listed it for many years, but in the early days without an illustration. In Part 1 of this series a line drawing was provided and an Aberdeen collector wrote to say how grateful he was as he had been looking at the wrong end of the pier for years! Amazement is sometimes expressed about the prices commanded by the 2s.6d. with the variety. Ascension is, of course, a well liked by collectors and this together with small printing numbers provides the answer. For the record, the number of sheets for the three printings were: 1938—600, 1944—345, 1945—255 and there is evidence that it occurred on only part of the 1938 printing.

2s.6d. albino

Both catalogues now list the 2s.6d. with the frame printed double with one albino (SG 45a and CW 11b). A quick glance at the valuation shows that it certainly pays to examine closely any copies seen.

Part 67 (GSM February 2003) will describe varieties on King George VI definitive issues of Bahamas that have come to light since the earlier Parts of this series in 1989 and 1992-3.

Readers interested in the KGVI philatelic era may like to join the King George VI Collectors' Society. At least four meetings are held each year and one includes an auction that is open to postal bidding. *Geosix*, the society's newsletter, is published each quarter. The annual subscription rate is £7 (surface) and £10 (airmail). Further details from: The Secretary, KGVICS, 98 Albany, Manor Road, Boumemouth, BH1 3EW.

Readers who would like further information about the Ascension Study Circle should contact Dr Richard Baker by telephone on 01227 264484.