

King George VI Varieties

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Part 7 — Malta

The KGVI Malta story is a complicated one, with about seventy-five printings for the 1938 issue and some sixty-six for the Self-Government overprinted series first issued on 25 November 1948: both included colour changes for the lower values. As a measure of the complexities involved, there were, at least, twenty-seven entries in *GSM* concerning KGVI Malta releases, between November 1941 and January 1956.

There are some very interesting KGVI Malta varieties, although matters are complicated by the highly probable use of double pane plates for the single colour values, rather than the single pane size used for the bi-coloured stamps. The first hint that this could be so was noted in the February 1945 *GSM* when it was reported that, *the new printing of the 1/2d. was released in December printed from Plate 4, numbered thus in the bottom margin below the 9th stamp. In our supply the margins were wide enough to include the marginal dividing marks and we noted that some sheets had a cross centred below the imprint and a solid circle in the top margin; on other sheets these positions are reversed, the latter having the 4 rather weakly printed. This is clear evidence of two panes to the Plate.*

A further complication is that for some values one plate was used for many printings. An example was the 2d. which had eight, possibly nine, printings from an unnumbered plate (Plate 1), before Plate 2 came into use for the last printing of the 2d. scarlet, used for the Self-Government overprint, and subsequently the first release of the overprinted 2d. yellow-ochre. On the other hand, the 1/2d. with fifteen printings saw the use of an unnumbered plate and five numbered plates beginning with Plate 2. In sum, it is possible to trace the use of forty different plates! The variations stemming from the double panes and the use of so many plates must always be remembered when examining a positional block expecting to find a variety; its absence could well indicate that the block originated from the other pane, another plate or a corrected plate. Chasing varieties among the issues of Ascension, Barbados and Dominica is comparatively easy compared to the twists and turns of the Malta tale! However, there is plenty of Malta material about ready for study and sheets do appear at auction.

A few brief notes will help to set the general scene before some varieties are described. The fifteen values (1/4d. to 10s.) were recess printed by Waterlow and released in London on 15 February 1938 — two days later they were issued in Malta and, not surprisingly, all First Day Covers seem to be dated 17 February. Sheets of the 1/4d. consist of 120 stamps in twelve rows of ten. The other values were issued in post office sheets of sixty — six rows of ten. There were slight variations of perforation around a basic 12½

line resulting from the use of several perforators by Waterlow, whose imprint appears on the bottom selvedge under the two central stamps. When used, single colour plate numbers appear under Row 6/9. For the bi-coloured stamps the frame plate number is under R6/9. The centre plate number when used appears under R6/10.

Plate Varieties

The late Roy Botwright, Frank Saunders and other members of the *King George VI Collectors' Society* studied the issues closely during the very early 1960s. They were later joined by members of the *Malta Study Circle* and a wide-ranging study was published by the circle in 1971. Despite all this work much remains to be done, not least, to establish beyond all doubt how Waterlow used their plates. I am sure that other varieties will come to light; those that follow have been culled from many sources and, perhaps, will act as a spur for some others to carry out more study.

1/2d. Three varieties were recorded by Botwright on the original 1938 1/2d. green from the unnumbered plate (or Plate 1). At R1/2 he noted a short vertical scratch across the foreground below the signal tower. On the adjacent stamp at R1/3 a line joins the King's nose to the corner of his mouth (Fig.1) and

on R2/7 strong doubling affects the side panel on the right side.

1d. Some newcomers to the KGVI scene may wonder why the 1d. red-brown is catalogued at £1 for an unmounted copy — apparently reserve stocks of the stamp were burnt when the GPO in Valetta was bombed during the early part of the Second World War. Indeed, a contemporary report in a philatelic magazine stated that there was a shortage of the 1d. red-brown in Malta as well as this country. It was, of course, replaced by the 1d. green on 8 March 1943. Botwright reported slight doubling of the diagonal lines of shading in the framework of the bottom right corner on an unpositioned 1d. red-brown from Plate 1. It has been suggested that it could exist on the 1d. green and I can confirm that similar signs of doubling occur at R3/4 and 5/1 on a pane of the 1d. green from the same plate (13 March 1944 — perf.12.7). A small vertical line shows to the left of the tower at the extreme left on the design on R1/10 on some sheets of the 1d. green from Plate 3. It resembles a large stone or even a small body falling from the parapet (Fig.2). When examining a sheet from the same plate Botwright found that R2/10 had a green spot in the sky under 'MALTA', while a small diagonal line (NW-SE) joined the extreme top left corner of the vignette on



Fig.1

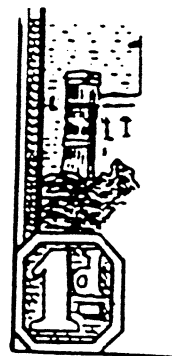


Fig.2

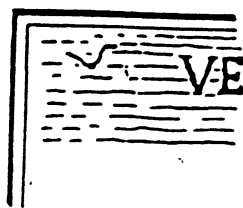


Fig.3

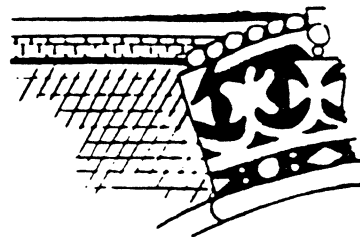


Fig.4

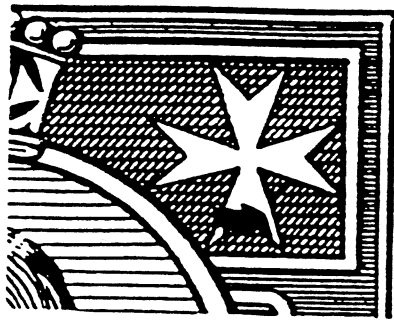


Fig. 5

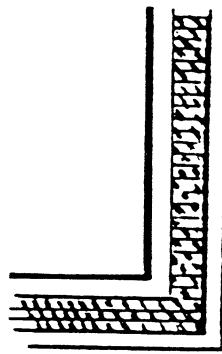


Fig. 6

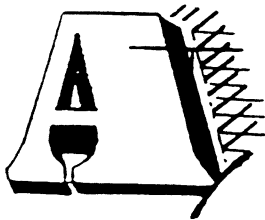


Fig. 7

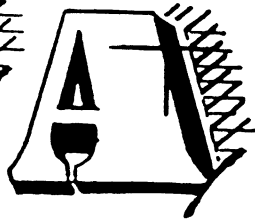


Fig. 8

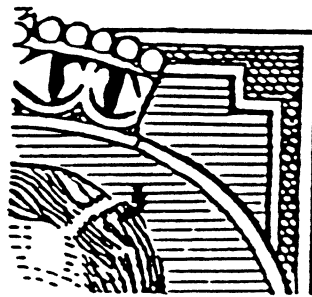


Fig. 9

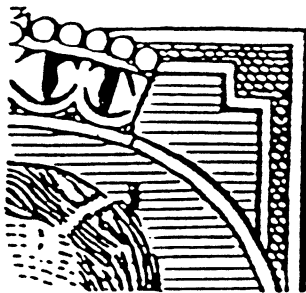


Fig. 10



Fig. 11

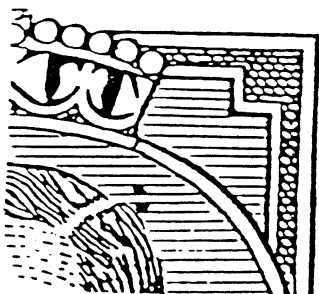


Fig. 12

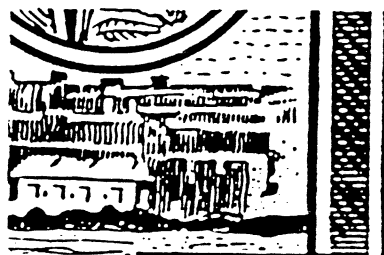


Fig. 13

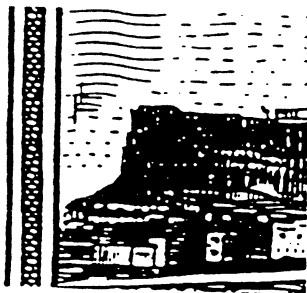


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

R5/6. The only flaw I have found on R2/ on an overprinted copy that could c from Plate 3 or 4 (Fig. 3). The 1d. grey i trates an interesting example of a run: repair to a plate at R2/9 where the top i line has been strengthened by recurring about 4 mm just to the left of the cr (Fig. 4).

1½d. The 'Broken Maltese Cross' varie very distinctive and occurs on R5/7 (Fig. can be found on the scarlet and the b issues from the unnumbered plate. A p of foreign matter may have become loc on the plate or the plate was damaged. latter is more probable as the flaw pers after a major colour change in 1943 when plate must have been thoroughly clear Panes with the 'Broken Maltese Cross' carry an example of minor duplication: R6/9 where the spiral shading on the wa the Hypogeum is doubled just under head oval and between the first pillar and inner frame line of the vignette. I stron suspect that the minor varieties that fol occur on both colours, but can only con their existence on the 1½d. black as I h yet to see the relevant parts of a scarlet pa

On panes of the 1½d. without the 'Bro: Maltese Cross' (further evidence of the of double pane plates), a number of ir ances of doubling occur, together with c traces of 'T' marks. On R2/7 the shading the raised floor over 'GEUM' of 'HYF GEUM' is slightly doubled and gives general impression of a general fuzzi when viewed through a glass. Much str ger doubling affects the lines of shading the right side of the raised floor on R2/9: give the impression of small wriggling b. The outer and inner frame lines and des in the lower right corner of R4/8 are v strongly doubled (Fig. 6). In addition, lines on the face of the King are heavie more pronounced. The existence and p pose of 'T' marks on Waterlow print produced for many countries, not only M ta, will be examined in a future article, su ce it to say that traces can be found on R3 (Fig. 7) and R5/8 (Fig. 8).

2d. Two aptly named varieties, described A. Dowling and I. Hamilton in *Stamp Coll ing* in 1952 and 1953, can be found on so printings of both the 2d. black and 2d. sc let. Their existence gives further support the contention that double pane plates w used by Waterlow, as although the varie are located on adjacent stamps they have r been seen together on the same post off sheet. The first occurs on R2/6 and is call 'The Curl Over the Left Eye'. This is b cause on the forehead of the King, above left eye, there is a cleared space in wh there are two small marks giving the apper ance of a wisp of hair — hence the name. addition, there is a dark and more promine patch of colour behind the head immediat ly at the end of the parting of the hair, rat like a cowlick. It is possible to trace, at lea four different states of these flaws on R2. State 1 occurs on the 1938 grey-black w the 'Cowlick' and an area on the upper fo head clear of shading lines (Fig. 9). T second state shows on the 1941 slate-black the 'Cowlick' and the merest trace of t 'Curl' (Fig. 10). On the following early pri ings of the 2d. scarlet the 'Curl' is easy to s together with the 'Cowlick' (Fig. 11). T fourth state shows lines of shading coverr the forehead and a diminutive 'Cowlic (Fig. 12). The correction probably happene prior to the 1945 printing. I have yet to d cover when the 'Cowlick' finally d.

appeared. To my eye it is far more noticeable than the 'Curl', which caught the attention of earlier collectors, particularly on the 2d. black. It is surprising, therefore, that some time elapsed before it was noticed, but then the efforts of many collectors during the early 1940s were devoted to far more important matters.

The second variety on the 2d. is called 'The Extra Windows' and occurs on R2/7 on both colours. It consists of dark coloured marks resembling additional windows in the walls of the buildings at the right side of the vignette above the value tablet (Fig. 13). Initially there were seven marks on the 1938 printing, but four of them merged together, thus forming the five marks found on later issues. It is believed that they were corrected in 1945.

Instances of doubling can also be found on some unnumbered panes of the 2d. scarlet. The most prominent examples I have are on a sheet where R2/6 shows the fourth state and is, therefore, probably from the December 1945 printing. Virtually the whole of R1/6 is strongly doubled and stands out from its neighbours because of its dark appearance, rather like the ½d. Fiji mentioned in an earlier article (GSM February 1987). The same can be said of R2/8 on the same pane. Single copies can be plated as R1/6 will, depending on the position of the vertical perforating holes on the left of the stamp, have a scarlet vertical guide line, or at least part of it, in the top left corner. Less significant doubling occurs on R5/5 where the top outer frame line is doubled over the 'TA' of 'MALTA'. Traces of 'T' marks also occur on nine stamps on the pane. These marks are all located between the left inner frame line and the cliff on a level with the cliff top. The 'T' is on its left side and on R6/7 is clearly visible to the naked eye, with a faint 'shadow' of a second 'T' above and slightly to the right (Fig. 14). The others are at R1/9, 2/6, and 9, 3/3, 4/7, 5/6, 6/1 and 5.

Extra Flagstaff

The *Commonwealth* catalogue lists the 'Flag' variety at R5/8 on the overprinted issue. Others have called it 'The Flag on the Citadel'. It was reported by Major Pogson in the *Philatelic Magazine* on 16 July 1954, who called it an 'Extra Flagstaff'. It is interesting to note that whatever the name, a chance mark on a plate in the right place always seems to inspire evocative titles for varieties. For example, a vertical mark on the 1938 1d. Basutoland occurs on R2/4, and coincides with the crest of a hill on the right side of the vignette. What is more natural than to call it the 'Tower' variety? It has long been given recognition by *Commonwealth* and accorded a good financial rating, accurately reflected in the occasional advertisement in the philatelic press. But back from Africa to Malta and the 'Flag' variety. The flaw resembles a flag and flag-pole at the left end of the citadel wall (Fig. 15). It exists on, at least, three shades of the 2d. scarlet from the unnumbered plate without overprint, as well as on sheets from the same plate used for the self-government issue on 25 November 1948 in a fourth distinctively dark shade. It has been reported that the flaw was corrected. I question this and wonder if perhaps someone has inadvertently mixed panes or even plates as there was one printing of the 2d. scarlet from Plate 2 used for the overprint, before the change of colour to yellow-ochre.

The varieties occurring on the 2d. yellow-ochre, 3d., 6d., 1s. 2s. 6d. and 5s. will be described in the next part of this series.