

King George VI Varieties

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Part 2 — Malta

(Continued from May)

The two preceding articles (GSM February and May 1988) described plate flaws to be found on the KGV definitive issues of Malta. Varieties associated with the 'SELF-GOVERNMENT 1947' overprint will now be considered. However, when examining such items it is most important to remember that the stamps were recess-engraved. This type of printing, unlike letterpress (typography) or photogravure, results in an uneven surface on the stamp as the design consists of ridges of ink standing proud from the surface of the paper. An apparently broken letter or figure in an overprint may well mean nothing more than a failure of the ink from the overprinting unit to penetrate into the valley between the ridges. Equally, underinking at one spot can cause a break as the ink covering is so thin that the continuity of print is broken, while a spot of ink on the typeface may also prevent the ink from adhering properly. These occasional and random breaks cannot be regarded as philatelically significant, even though they may occur frequently.

On the other hand, the overprint varieties that follow are in a completely different category as they occurred regularly, at one time or another, during the period of issue. The most obvious, stem from damage to the overprinting type, which causes malformed letters and figures. These in turn can lead to distinctive repair work. Sometimes the blame for a defective letter or figure can be attributed to an imperfect piece of type (or slug) where an air bubble in the molten metal or some metallic impurity has had an adverse effect. Pollution of the type can also occur and this generally takes the form of 'fouled letters', for example, an excess of ink can fill an enclosed part of a letter, such as the apex on an 'A'. A piece of fluff may also lodge in the type and duly receive its measure of sticky printing ink, which will print as a dot, dash or blob. These can disappear or change in shape depending on how thor-

oughly the overprinting unit has been cleaned. I strongly recommend the KGV Bahamas Landfall issue, locally overprinted in Nassau in 1942, as a happy hunting-ground for anyone interested in such items. In the meantime we will stay with the far fewer varieties associated with the Self-Government overprint from Malta.

The Large NT Variety

Research by the KGVICS nearly thirty years ago identified the use of, at least, five different overprinting plates, with two, possibly three, being replaced during the life of the issue. The majority were used for groups of values, such as the 2d., 2½d., 4½d., 1s.6d., 2s. and 2s.6d. During the early 1950s there were reports that the 'NT' of 'GOVERNMENT' on R6/1 on stamps from this group were slightly taller than normal (Fig. 1). In March 1952 a comment in GSM concluded that, *These larger letters are not likely to be due to the printers using wrong founts as it is most improbable that this overprint is printed from loose type. A more likely reason is that the type was damaged and repaired by retouching.* Twelve months later a further comment noted that a new setting for the overprint had been used for the 4½d. in the new colour issued on 8 January 1953—*This is made apparent by the difference in the alignment of the lettering throughout the sheet and the fact that the large NT variety which appeared on stamp No. 51 is now absent.*

There is no question that a new setting was used for the new colours, but, I am confident that it came into use as early as 16 May 1950 for the second release of the 2d. and 2½d. in the old colours. They are easy to identify as the shades are most distinctive and, of course, the next issue of these values were in the new colours. The letters 'NT' are of normal size on R6/1 and '1947' is further to the left in relation to 'SELF-GOVERNMENT'. It is a minute difference, being equivalent to the thickness of a vertical stroke of the letter 'E', but with care it can

be picked out. The easiest way to check the two settings is to compare the overprints on the only release of the 4½d. olive-green and yellow-brown (S.G. 241) issued on 25 November 1948 with the 4½d. in the new colour (241a) released on 8 January 1953. I can only suggest that the second comment in GSM arose from inspection of the new colours, rather than close examination of the overprint on intermediate printings.

Value by Value

¼d. A hyphen appears between the 'E' and 'L' of 'SELF' on R12/2 (Fig. 2). A variation can be found where the 'hyphen' is attached to the 'L' (Fig. 3).

½d. Brown. The varieties that follow occur on stamps from the initial overprinting in 1948. A new overprinting plate came into use in 1950. A most distinctive flaw occurs on R1/2 on which the 'T' has an accent or tick running upwards from the right upper side of the cross bar (Fig. 4). On the adjacent stamp, R1/3, the 'O' is clearly broken (Fig. 5) but more care is needed to identify the thickened bottom bar of the second 'E' of 'GOVERNMENT' on R2/5½ (Fig. 6), which is, together with the 'M' slightly taller than normal. Equal care is required to find the shortened middle bar of the first 'E' of 'GOVERNMENT' on R4/4 (Fig. 7). The best known variety occurs on R4/10 where the 'N' and 'T' are joined neatly together (Fig. 8). It occurs on old stock, used for the initial issue, taken from Plates 4 and 5 and the first printing from Plate 6 in 1948. The probable cause was a sliver of metal or a hardened piece of ink becoming wedged between the two letters. It was reported in *Stamp Mirror* by Mr S. Lewis on 28 May 1951. Another aptly named variety is the 'Hammer' on R5/3 (Fig. 9). A tiny but constant black spot also occurs to the upper right, 2mm from the centre of the damaged crossbar of the 'T'. A similar spot can be found on R1/9, level with the base of the 'T' and 2½mm to the right.

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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



Fig.16



Fig.17



Fig.18

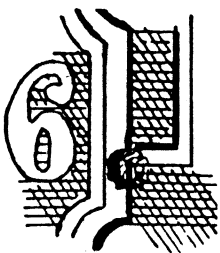


Fig.19

1d. Green. An increasing flaw affecting the letter 'T' occurs on R5/10, Plate 4 and four distinct states can be identified. Initially the 'T', on the 16 May 1950 release was undamaged (Fig. 10). However, the right horizontal arm of the letter deteriorates, giving the second state (Fig. 11). The malformed arm was then retouched for the next, and last, issue of the 1d. green on 11 March 1952—the third state (Fig. 12). It then appears that this most noticeable corrective work was re-corrected, as the 'T' reverts to a more normal shape (Fig. 13).

3d. Blue. In the preceding article (GSM May 1988) mention was made of the damaged '1' of '1947' occurring on R4/7 of the 3d. blue. The two damaged states associated with States III and IV of the plate flaw—the 'Horseshoe' and 'Extra Window' varieties—are illustrated at Figs. 14 and 15.

4½d. Olive-green and Yellow-brown. Minor constant imperfections to the type effect R5/9 on the 4½d. There is a large nick in the top of the 'S' (Fig. 16), the top bar of the 'F' is bent downwards (Fig. 17) and both the 'G' and 'O' have a small nick in their left sides at ten and nine o'clock respectively.

6d. In February 1953 GSM reported the release in London, on 30 December 1952, of a new printing of the overprinted 6d. from a new Frame Plate 4 and Centre Plate 2. It was noted that in a sheet which was examined the 'F' of 'SELF' was damaged on R3/1. The variety has been given catalogue status by Commonwealth, as has the repair (Fig. 18), which left the top bar of the 'F' much thicker.

5s. The ½d. and 5s. shared a common overprinting plate and the variety called the 'Joined NT' at R4/10 also occurs on the higher value (Fig. 8). At the 1988 Spring Stampex I was shown a copy of the 5s. with the 'Hammer' (Fig. 9) by J. Edward Sellars (Philatelists) Ltd and it seems highly probable that some of the other varieties described on the ½d. also occur on the 5s. Confirmation that this is so would be gratefully received so that the information can be recorded for the future.

Ghost Overprints

I have three examples of incomplete ghost overprints appearing in different positions in the margins of the 2d. (S.G. 238), 4½d. (241) and 1s.6d. (244). For example, the word 'SELF' appears on its own, in the top margin of an upper left corner block of six 2d. values, astride the perforations between R1/2 and 3. The letter 'S' shows in the same position above R1/3, presumably the 'ELF' went elsewhere! Saunders owned a similar block, but the ghost appeared in a different location. He appealed unsuccessfully for an explanation some twenty-five years ago—can anyone help in 1988?

Addendum

In the preceding article (GSM May 1988) I mentioned the 'Broken Value Tablet' variety on the 2s.6d., but unfortunately was not in a position to provide an illustration. However, when in Lincoln recently I visited the only stamp shop and to my joy found an unmounted copy (Fig. 19). It is noteworthy that the strong outer right vertical frame line of the tablet is broken in the area of the mark. This suggests that the plate suffered a knock, the depression being deep enough to retain ink and print as a large blob of colour.

The next article in this series will appear in November 1988 and will be devoted to varieties occurring on the South Africa 1945 Victory and 1947 Royal Visit issues.