

KING GEORGE VI VARIETIES

Part 16—Brunei

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(Continued from February 1990)

For the sake of clarity the pen and ink drawing illustrating the normal lines of shading in the sky on the 1947–52 Brunei River definitives, shown in the previous article (*GSM* February 1990), will be repeated as *Fig 1*.

Two Cents

Prior to 1951 there was little of interest on the 2c.—Morley considered that this was either through lack of use of the plate or the high quality of the engraving. In any event, only minor signs of recutting of the heavy shading north-west of the left and tallest palm are traceable on Row 1/7 (*Fig 2*) and R1/9 (*Fig 3*). When viewed individually they are hard to distinguish, but in a marginal strip the darker patches show up well. There are also two exceedingly small marks, which could interest a dedicated variety hunter. The first is on R1/1 where a vertical line shows by the right frame line of the lower left value tablet (*Fig 4*) and the second on R1/5 is a semi-circular mark in the south-east corner of the top right tablet (*Fig 5*).

The 27 June 1951 release (SG 80ab) caused quite a stir at the time, as not only did the colour of the stamp change from grey to black, but a very clear retouch appeared on R1/1 (*Fig 6*). It seems probable that the impression, being an outside one, suffered from wear and tear and the white space to the lower right of the top left value tablet received attention. The white cloud to the left of the tallest palm being reduced to half its size by the insertion of a wide band of shading. It is very easy to spot as the area is usually light and the left cloud always has a more or less open edge to it. This minor retouch is now listed as SG 80ac. The adjacent stamp at R2/1 also received some attention and takes the form of a slight retouch to the lines of shading below the 'B' of 'BRUNEL' (*Fig 7*). The major retouch on R1/1 was reported in *Stamp Mirror* on 18 August 1951, consequently positional corner blocks can be found today.

Five Cents

The 'Retouch' on the 5c. at R1/8 is the most significant variety occurring on the Brunei River definitives (*Fig 8*). It was discovered by A M Leverton and described in great detail by C P Rang in the January 1951 edition of *GSM*. Rang expressed surprise that the retouch had not been detected before and considered that it was probably because, although the paleness of the '5' in the top left corner could be seen easily with a good glass would be required to see that the vertical lines forming the body of the figure differed from those on a normal figure. Their irregularity, thickness, spacing and direction being in marked contrast to the perfect regularity of the lines to be seen on lightly inked normal copies. In addition, he noted that the shape of both the '5' and the 'c' were different from the normal. Rang speculated about the cause of such an extensive retouch and considered two possibilities. The



Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 7



Fig 5



Fig 8



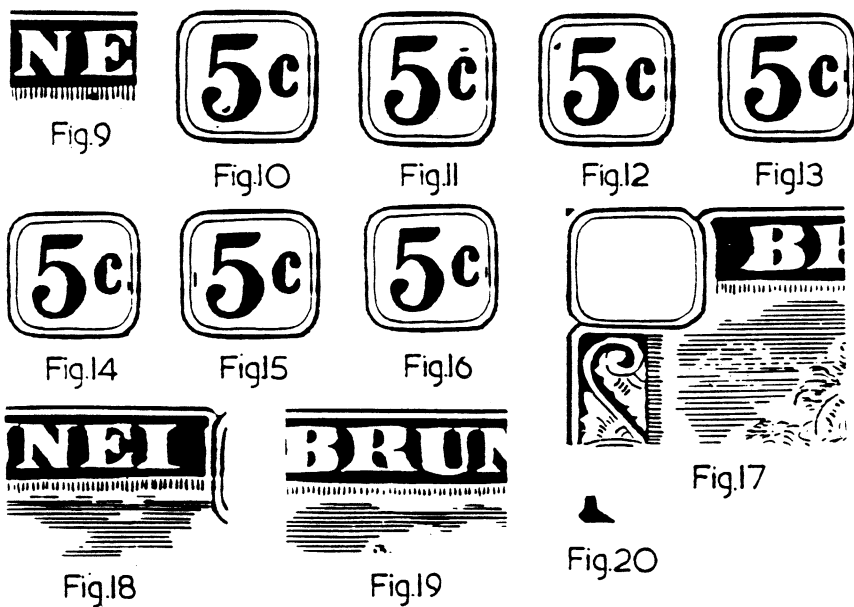
Fig 6

first, that some damage occurred to the plate by which the '5' and the 'c' were completely removed, and the other, that they were omitted when the plate was made. Acceptance of the first was made difficult as the surrounding lines of the tablet had not been retouched. In addition, he added, 'It is hard to imagine any damage so neatly positioned as to remove the value without touching the immediate surroundings.' Rang then turned to the alternative, the complete omission of the value when the plate was made. He recalled the method used by De La Rue when building up their earlier recess-printed plates which involved the use of a pantograph to insert the value and pointed out that the engraving of the value on the Brunei stamps, with numerous parallel lines, was typical of pantographic work. Referring back to 1935 Rang drew attention to an article by F J Melville concerning pantography, which had established that the use of this technique had been responsible for omitting parts of the inscription on individual stamps in

a sheet and quoted as examples, the lack of dots in the Arabic value on the first issue of Labuan, the missing fraction bar on the 1897 Tonga 2½d. (SG 43a—R2/10) and the missing hyphen on the 1s. (SG 50a—R6/7) as well as the three errors on the ½d. and 4d. values issued for the Virgin Islands in 1899 (SG 43a—b and 46a). Rang submitted that in the instance of the Brunei 5c, the omission had been detected in time for the value to be engraved by hand, thus perhaps avoiding the need to set-up the plate again for the pantographing machine. Since Leverton's discovery the retouch has been identified on all issues of the 5c, printed from the single plate introduced in 1916 (SG 55a, 66a, 67a, 68a, 82a and c) which provides the strongest evidence, if not conclusive proof, that Rang's hypothesis was correct. I cannot resist adding that, so far as KGVI varieties are concerned the 'Inserted Fraction Bar' and 'Inserted Hyphen' on the Tonga 2½d. and 1s. values are, of course, most collectable varieties.

Left: Retouch to clouds at left on R1/1 of the 2c. black, issued 27 June 1951; 5c. orange (R1/8) showing the 'retouched 5' in the top left value tablet





A report in *Stamp Mirror* (16 December 1950) commented that on R1/3, 'The centre cloud is touched up at the right side, more or less eliminating the double part of the cloud near the tall left palm.' R4/5 drew the remark that, 'the large cloud on the left side had been shaded into a considerable extent'. I have not been able to identify either of these retouches on the sheets or multiples I have examined. However, on R4/5 a small constant mark occurs in the vertical lines of fringe shading below 'NE', probably the result of slight accidental damage to the plate rather than a deliberate act (Fig 9). Similar examples can be found on R5/3 and 5/8 in the lower left value tablet (Figs 10 & 11) and 3/2 in the lower right (Fig 12). A short vertical line parallel and just

inside the right frame line of the lower right tablet, reminiscent of that on the 2c., occurs on R3/1 and 3/5 (Figs 13 & 14). Similar lines occur on R3/3 in the upper left (Fig 15) and R5/9 in the lower right tablets (Fig 16). They all have the hallmarks of a deliberate, but maybe an inadvertent, act, rather than casual damage.

Ten Cents

The retouch on R2/6 of the 10c. closely follows the work on R1/1 of the 2c. previously described—the left cloud has been filled in with lines of shading (Fig 17). However, unlike the 2c. they are not easily visible to the naked eye, nevertheless, the faint and delicate lines of extra shading can be seen clearly with a good glass. The retouch on R2/10 is clumsy in

comparison, as all the sky below 'NE' has been filled in with strong, almost rough, lines of shading (Fig 18). Just below on R3/10 the lines under 'RU' have been strengthened (Fig 19).

In *Stamp Mirror* (17 March 1951) it was reported that the foot of the '1' in the top left value tablet was defective on R2/5-6, the front serif being short and distorted. I can confirm R2/5 (Fig 20), but have looked in vain for an example on R2/6. On the other hand, R2/1 carried an almost identical fault, so perhaps there was a printing error in 1951.

The 10c. is another source of small regular marks—another vertical line occurs in the upper left tablet at R2/6 (Fig 21) and a very small dot can be found in the upper right tablet on R1/7 (Fig 22). Two other marks occur in the fifth row on the fifth and eighth stamps. They are well defined, short, dark vertical lines in the coloured background between the 'S' of 'CENTS' and the adjacent outer right frame line of the lower right tablet. The lines occur in slightly different positions (Figs 23 & 24).

Twenty Five Cents

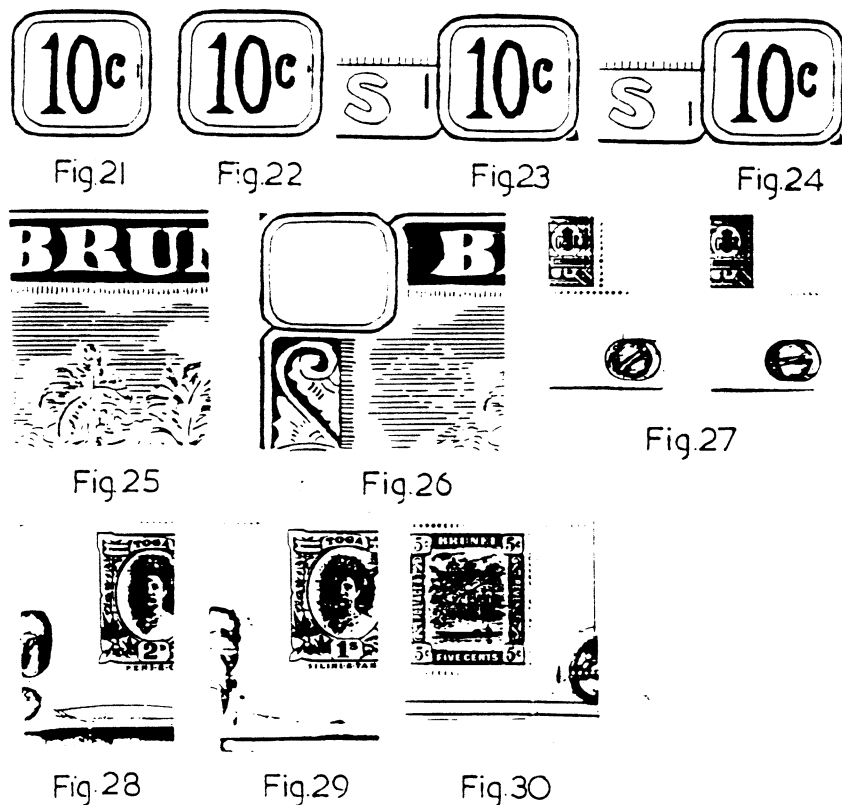
Extra lines have been added to the centre cloud to the right of the tallest palm on R3/5, thereby reducing the size of the cloud by half (Fig 25). The left-hand cloud seems to have fascinated whoever worked on the Brunei plates, because on R4/5 additional lines below the value tablet extend not only into the cloud, decreasing its size, but downwards, effectively closing the edge of the cloud normally left open on the left side (Fig 26). Another retouch on R1/4 from the January 1951 printing has been reported and described as 'extra lines of shading' runs downwards from the 'N' of 'BRUNEI' to the top of the palm tree.

Hand Painting

In the March 1986 *GSW* I drew attention to the strong possibility that damage to the letters of the 6d. Leeward Islands at R3/5 (RHP) had been partially repaired by hand painting. Brief mention was made of similar work on the 10c. Brunei and 2½d. Tonga. It is, therefore, appropriate to examine this matter in more detail.

At the start it must be stressed that only the final printing (25 September 1950) of the 10c. Brunei, perforated 14½ × 13½ was affected. Morley, having examined some sheets of the value wrote as follows in the January 1953 *GSW*. 'The ten cents has also been the object of another type of retouching in the last printing—of September 1950—namely hand painting. In this release it was observed, with justification, that the solid area around the words "TEN CENTS" in the bottom row was printing up very weakly and so the printers improved the appearance by hand painting this part to bring it up to the average depth of colour. It was very well done and for a time I thought it had been recut on the plate, but close examination of a few sheets showed inconsistencies, and I finally came to the conclusion that it was paint and not printing ink. It must have been a costly business for the printers as anything from seven to nine stamps are affected in each sheet and it was not done in a slapdash manner, so in time alone it must have cost them more than they received for the sheet. The bulk of the sheets I have seen from this release were not touched up so it may be relatively scarce.'

I have positional examples occurring on R5/5-6, both show hand painting between the 'S' and the right hand value tablet, and on R5/9-10, where on both stamps hand painting can be seen either side of 'TEN CENTS'. It is most relevant that one of the stamps (R5/5) shows a



well defined conventional stroke of strong colour shaped with a tip, rather than the usual firm patch of colour which shows on a second example from the same position, thus illustrating the inconsistencies mentioned by Morley. It is evident from his remarks and my own examples that the bottom row received attention. However, when viewing sheets of the 10c. from earlier printings it is noticeable that, not only do the white patches on the bottom row stand out, but there are at least nine others, seven in the top row, that cry out for treatment. Has any reader a complete sheet of the 1950 10c. to check if other impressions were touched up?

Just in case doubts still exist about hand painting by the security printers I refer to page 75 of *Stamp Collecting* by Stanley Phillips*, an excellent book that should be on every collector's bookshelf, because even though some of the opinions expressed have been overtaken by modern collecting trends, the section on stamp production is full of information and easy to read. Furthermore, some old fashioned advice is there to be heeded by anyone seeking an easy fortune in the world of stamps. But back from the general to the specific—hand painting. Phillips when dealing with the subject wrote, 'The printers of the "King as Admiral" stamps of Rhodesia in which the King's head is printed in black or a colour, and the frame in another colour, did not destroy sheets of stamps in which registration was poor, but filled in the gap between the centre and frame with a wash of colour applied by hand, which effectively concealed the defect.' He concluded with a warning that, 'they can, of course, be easily faked'. Additional support for hand painting (or colour washing) on the issue can be found at the end of the extensive listing contained in the 1980 Commonwealth *Five Reigns* catalogue. Waterlow and Sons were, of course, the printers involved.

Another report about hand painting was published in *GSM* November 1942 when it was noted that examples existed on newly released sheets of the Tonga 2½d. with a script CA watermark, recess printed by De La Rue (SG 77). In February 1948 Rang was more specific when he wrote, 'white patches in the figure '2' have been corrected by painting-in. In the first printing 10 to 15 examples appeared in each sheet, the most prominent

being Nos 3, 29, 39 and 41. In later printings the number was less.' Bentley Kettle added more comment in the 7 November 1952 *Stamp Collecting* when he said that the touching-up had been done in the neck of the large '2', with an ink that differed considerably from that used for the printing of the stamp, the hand painting being green rather than blue. An assessment of colour that has my full endorsement nearly forty years on, although it is not immediately apparent to the naked eye.

The Leeward Islands 6d. has been mentioned already, but the 2d. drew comment in *GSM* February 1944 when it was noted that an indentation on the value tablet on R10/6 from a right-hand pane had been rendered almost invisible by a stroke of hand painting and, on the same pane at R7/2 another stroke of colour had been applied to the top of the 'I' of 'ISLANDS'. The 25c. from Mauritius (259) was featured by Rang in March 1948. He described how on one of a pair the very faint almost colourless impression of the word 'MAURITIUS' had been roughly strengthened using ink or paint in the same colour and stressed that it was not water colour. A weak 'M' on the other stamp had not been corrected. Rang suggested that the major work was good enough to disguise weak printing and therefore, from the printer's point of view was worth doing. Nevertheless, he warned that retouching of this type could be done by anyone on any stamp showing some retouchable defect and ended by emphasising that if such varieties were to be authenticated they must have come from a Government Department or similar source so that the chances of tampering could be discounted. Finally, should any collector wish to assemble examples of hand painting then the higher values of the 1896 Zanzibar issue should be examined, as Rang observed that sometimes hand painting filled in the blank space left when the colour of the flags had been incorrectly placed. The printers were De La Rue.

Screws and Washers

This review of Brunei varieties, having digressed a little, concludes in a slightly off-beat way. Collectors possessing corner multiples will have noticed the irregularly shaped, but constant, marks in the margins of the 1c., 2c., 5c., 6c., 10c., 25c., 30c. and one dollar values. For

the majority the marks occur in the lower left and right corners. Their presence has intrigued me, particularly as on the bicoloured stamps the marks are also bicoloured. It was pleasing, therefore, to find a possible explanation when I recently acquired a couple of half sheets of the New Hebrides 1d./10c. (SG 44), because in the lower corners are the unmistakable imprints of a screw and washer in the colour of the stamps (Fig 27). Supporting evidence also comes from the corners of the Tonga 2d. and 1s. values (Figs 28 & 29). Examination of Brunei corner multiples leads me to believe that they originated in the same manner—Fig 30 comes from a 5c. corner block. It appears, therefore, that the strangely shaped marks were caused by ink sticking to screw-heads, washers and packing material used to hold the plates in place for printing. In the 1990s it is all too easy to forget the technical simplicity of yesteryear.

Epilogue

There is no doubt that further questions arise the more one looks at stamps. This is one of the major attractions of the KGVI period; for example in the left margin of Tonga 1s. multiple in my collection is a reversed number 20492. It is the first I have ever seen in the margin of a De La Rue product—up to now I have believed that the use of such numbers was an exclusive practice by Waterlow to show their plate numbers. They are very hard to find as the numbers were printed at the edge of the margins and were usually guillotined before the sheets were released for use. Just for the record I can report the following: 41004 in the top margins of some KGVI Sierra Leone values, and on the 1949 Cook Islands issue: 44112 (½d.), 44102 (1d.), 441108 (6d.) and 44114 (2s.). Perhaps readers can add to this list for Waterlow and also offer an explanation why De La Rue put a reversed number on their 1s. Tonga.

The next article (GSM August 1990) will describe varieties on the 1948 Silver Wedding and 1949 UPU issues from South Africa.

Left: 10c. stamps from the lower right corner of the sheet showing weak printing at either side of the value tablet; Right: Stamps from the same position but with weakness covered up by hand painting

