

King George VI Varieties

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Part 3 — Fiji

At the conclusion of the preceding article (GSM November 1986) I mentioned the attractions of recess printed stamps. The delightful pictorial series issued for Fiji on 5 April 1938, printed by De La Rue and Waterlow, exemplifies the qualities sought by a collector searching for interesting varieties on well designed, attractive stamps. At the start, eleven values were released ($\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 5s.) and to these were added a further six values during the next twelve years. In addition, small, but most significant changes in design affected the $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 2d. and 6d. on 1 October 1940, together with a colour change for the 5d. Furthermore, there was a locally produced surcharged issue on 10 February 1941 ($2\frac{1}{2}$ d./2d.) and a major change of design for the 2d. value on 19 May 1942. These factors combined with perforation and shade variations combine together to add zest to the hunt for the elusive variety.

Much has been written over the years about this KG VI issue. The Rev. A.R. Tippett, who was attached to the Methodist Mission in Fiji, was an early pioneer in the field of varieties. He brought some of them to the notice of collectors in the early 1940s, when he was able to examine large quantities of the early printings of the low values. Since then, others, such as R.A. Derrick, F.R. Saunders, Ruth Munday and F. Bentley Kettle, have discovered many more. However, so far as I know nobody has attempted to present a summary of the varieties that can be found — the aim of this section of the series. I hope that it will inspire others to come forward and add to the list.

Half Penny

The late Frank Saunders studied the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. value in considerable depth and his findings were published in *Geosix*, the journal of the King George VI Collectors' Society, in 1960. The stamp was printed by De La Rue in sheets of 60 (six rows of ten). There were most probably six printings (5 April 1938, 1939, October 1941, October 1942, January 1944 and August 1948). The 1941 release was line perf.14 and the final one in 1948 was comb.perf.12 — the remainder were comb.perf.13 $\frac{1}{2}$. Saunders reported that only one plate was used in the lifetime of the stamp and that by 1948 well over 150 separate instances of damage to the plate could be found. Indeed, he discovered that after the 1944 printing it was possible to plate every individual stamp on the sheet; an interesting challenge for anyone who is looking for a new philatelic venture at the start of 1987! In fairness though, many of the flaws are very small and I will only mention a few that can be seen without too much difficulty, but before describing plate damage it will be as well to mention a noticeable die flaw and an example of a strong impression.

Die Defect

Die defects were described in the preceding article on Barbados varieties. The $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Fiji also offers an example that appears on every stamp. It is a small distinctive mark parallel to the rope, situated between the mast and the rope on the left side, where they come together at the top of the canoe's mast (Fig.1).

Strong Impressions

Row 5/3 is an interesting stamp. Saunders suggested that when the plate was made either the transfer roller shifted slightly when impressing the stamp or the first weak impression had to be strengthened. Whatever the reason the stamp stands out from its neighbours for depth of impression. Tippett confirmed that it existed on the 1938 printing and continued to the last in 1948. It is certainly evident on a large block I have of the 1948 release, but of equal interest is the appearance of weak impressions on R5/6 and 6/6 as they stand out even more prominently. Indeed, if they were single stamps they would prompt the belief that there was another perf.12 printing in pale green. Can any reader confirm similar copies?

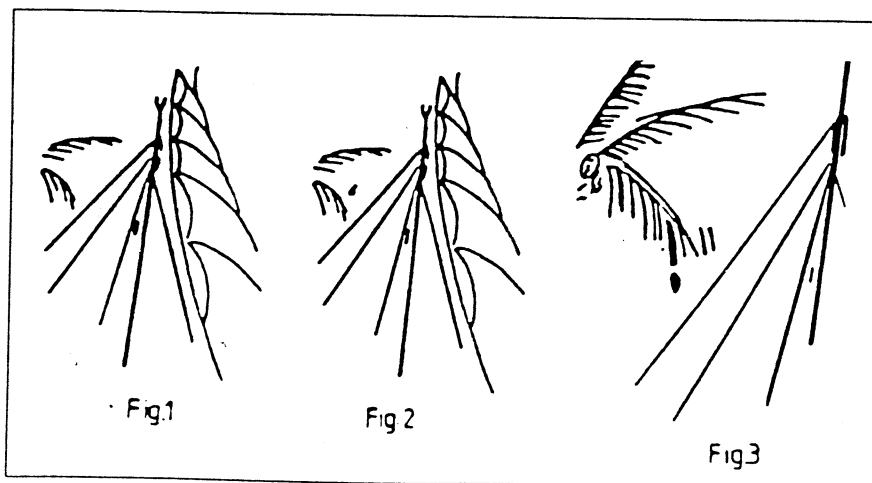
Plate Varieties

It is most important to remember that damage to the plate occurred over a long period. Saunders noted that nothing significant had developed by 1941, but on the 1942 printing a number of clearly visible flaws had made an appearance. A bar of colour cut the right frame line on R1/7, level with the second highest section of sail. He also found that at a later stage during this printing damage occurred to R6/6, which printed as a bar of colour, similar to R1/7, but lower and not on the extreme outside of the frame as it does on that stamp. On R2/6 a spot of colour

appeared high on the King's left cheek, while on R3/6 another spot showed in the white cloud above the land to the right. Finally a patch of green in the sky came into being on R6/7 between the right frame and the bottom of the top section of the sail. Saunders stressed that all these signs of damage were clearly visible to the naked eye.

The fifth printing in January 1944 is of particular interest as the Plate No.1 had almost disappeared from under R9/9 and a new No.1 had appeared under R6/8. Saunders refuted the suggestion that the plate had been cleaned and repaired as every trace of earlier damage was still present, with the addition of very many other marks such as spots of colour on R1/9, 2/1, 3/1, 3/5 and 5/1, while on R3/9 a 'Patch' appeared on the second lowest section of sail, and a spot of colour between the third and fourth fronds of the right palm tree, dubbed 'The Falling Coconut' at the time, made an appearance on R2/2 (Fig.2).

The 1948 printing also showed two plate numbers, but the number under R6/9 was no longer indistinct having been completely restored. Further damage occurred, but at a much reduced rate compared to the previous two printings. On R1/9 a prominent patch of green appeared in the sea half way between the outrigger and the bottom frame line. In addition, a most prominent variety occurred at R5/8, where the palm tree on the edge of the sea has a frond lengthened, and adjacent to it, in the sky, there are two almost vertical strokes of colour (Fig.3). There is also a clear dot of colour in the sea near the base of the sail. When first spotted this variety was given the name 'The Extended Palm Frond'. Finally, it is worth noting that on the 1948 release the bar of colour on R1/7 was slightly modified and on R6/6 it appeared as only a small smudge.



One Penny

Waterlow and Sons were responsible for the Fiji 1d. which was printed in sheets of sixty (six rows of ten) and perforated 12½ line. Nine printings have been traced (5 April 1938, 1939, June 1942, January 1944, 5 June 1947, 7 June 1950, 9 September 1952, 14 September 1954 and 12 July 1955) and not surprisingly there were variations in shade, gum and paper. Two Frame Plates were used, the first was unnumbered and the second, which came into use in 1950 can be identified by the figure 2 under R6/9.

It appears that Frame Plate 1 was probably re-entered for the 1947 printing. An indicator of this could well be the appearance of an inverted T in the top margin above R1/10. In any event a clear double entry can be found on R3/10 (Fig. 4). Anyone lucky enough to have a positional upper right corner block of six will see that R2/10 was also affected (Fig. 5). There are also four tiny blue spots in the margin by this stamp. Traces of doubling also show on R1/6-7, 2/4, 2/9, 3/5, 3/7, 3/9-10, 5/4, 5/6-7 and 5/9.

It is noteworthy that all these impressions carry a small, but unusual mark partly concealed in the square occupied by the tenth (i.e. middle) triangle in the bottom frame line (Fig. 6-16). It was suggested by the Rev. Tippett in G.S.M. in October 1951, who noted the existence of six of them, that they were setting marks. He confirmed that the six had existed from the start as he had copies with day of issue post marks. On the other hand, Saunders noting that the marks were all situated in the middle triangle, suggested that this would be the point where the rocking-in of the impression would begin and the marks were, therefore, perhaps evidence of transfer roller shift. Neither remarked on the fact that the inverted T in the top margin over R1/10 is located exactly in line with the middle triangle in the stamps of the tenth vertical row, nor did they offer an explanation why two vertical marks appear in the triangle on R5/9, nor why R3/5-7, 4/4-5, 4/7 and 5/4-7 have a faint, but unmistakable, extra and almost vertical line in the frame colour, just above the horizontal frame line adjacent to the middle triangle and amongst the horizontal lines of shading inside the vignette area. Fig. 18 illustrates the appearance of the relevant area of R3/5 with this line and the 'setting mark' mentioned earlier.

I freely admit that some of the marks mentioned in the previous paragraph are exceedingly small, but my final offering, concerning the 1d., is easily seen, if not easily found. The 1947 printing also offers a constant coloured mark by the second 'I' of 'FIJI' at R3/2 (Fig. 19). This could, I suggest, be attributed to a dent, in the plate, retaining ink.

1½d.

Before looking at the varieties that can be found on the 1½d. I will digress, just for a moment, to give some information about the canoe, used as a central feature of the design created by Miss C.D. Lovejoy of Labasa. It was, of course also used for the 1d. designed by Mrs V.E. Ousey, who was a member of the Fiji P.S. Mr Derrick writing in *Stamp Gossip* in May 1947 described the Camakan, as it is called, in great detail. He explained that the hull, cut from a single log, has its central part built up by a vertical planking to give added freeboard and is decked with solid pieces fore and aft. The canoe sails equally well in either direction,

however, Derrick stressed that it is vital to keep the cam or outrigger to windward — a capsizing being all too possible should it be allowed to get to leeward. Tacking, he wrote, calls for physical effort, as the sail is reversed bodily, using the masthead as a pivot, the junction of the two yards being dragged from one end of the canoe to the other. To complete the picture, the hull is made from the Vesi tree, the sails from woven Pandarus and the ropes from woven coconut fibre, although I suspect that in 1987 nylon may have crept into use!

The first two printings appeared without a man in the canoe, or as a wag said at the time, if someone was aboard then he was asleep in the hold. In any event, the matter was rectified and it does seem possible that a native figure was engraved on the original die and a new plate was issued. Support for this suggestion can be found with the aid of a good glass when it will be seen that the original outline of the canoe appears to run through the body of the figure and the horizontal lines of shading in the sea go through the face of the native. The changed design issued in 1940 has been designated Die II in the catalogues. Derrick noted that for the purist the figure was too far astern, in a position very difficult to accomplish and most uncomfortable to hold.

After that nautical digression I will return to the stamps, printed by De La Rue in sheets of sixty (ten rows of six). I believe that there were eleven printings (5 April, 1938, 1939, 1 October 1940, June 1942, October 1942, 10 January 1944, May 1945, 21 July 1949, 9 September 1952, 16 February 1955 and 25 September 1956). The last two releases were from Plate 2. From 1938 to 1945 the sheets were comb perforated 13½, except for the June 1942 release which was line perforated 14. The last four issues were comb perforated 12.

Weak Entry

The corrected Plate 1 showing the native figure was probably prepared with the transfer-roller moving horizontally and starting at the lower right corner. A flaw developed after the first thirteen impressions i.e. rows ten and nine and R8/6, which resulted in a weak entry of the top ornamental frame. It shows between the third and fourth shell ornaments from the left on all the remaining stamps on the sheet (Fig. 20). In addition, the last five impressions on the plate, R1/2-6, show another weak spot between the fourth and fifth ornaments (Fig. 21). For the sake of clarity I have shown a clear break in the frame in both illustrations, however, in reality they are not so distinct, but nevertheless are easy to recognise once one knows what to look for and where to look.

Plate Varieties

Rather like the 1d. a multitude of minor varieties can be found on the 1½d., but I will only describe the more prominent signs of damage to the plate that appeared on the later perf. 13½ and the first perf. 12 printing.

Scratches

An easily seen scratch on R6/1 runs diagonally from the left-hand inner frame line to the base of the sail and continues down into R7/1 (Fig. 22). (Saunders reported that it occurred on the perf. 14 printing.) A lighter scratch occurs on R2/5 (Fig. 23).

Falling Coconuts

Small dots of colour occurring in the right position near a palm tree have often been

called 'Falling Coconuts' by those who give names to flaws. They abound on the 1½d. Two examples occur on the dark carmine release at R7/6 and 8/1 (Figs. 24-5) and continue on the later issues. Two more appear at a later date on R2/3 and 10/3 (Figs. 26-7). 'The Falling Coconut' on R2/3 is the most prominent and deserves the title. This particular stamp from the May 1945 printing also illustrates the extent of minor damage to the plate as besides the falling coconut there are four other minor flaws — a small dot to the left of the mast head, a mark slightly above and to the right of the second 'I' of 'FIJI', a mark in the sea just above the twelfth and thirteenth shell ornaments from the left in the bottom frame, and lastly, a dot just outside the frame line at the left. Finally I cannot resist mentioning a flaw named 'The Flying Coconut' in the 1950s, occurring on R1/4 (Fig. 28).

'The Flock of Birds'

This description was given to the flaw on R3/4. It first appeared on the 1944 issue and by May 1945 a straggler had joined the flock (Fig. 29). Other minor flaws also occur on this stamp, but all of them disappeared with the 1949 perf. 12 release.

'The Moon and Reflection in the Sea'

This variety occurs on R7/4 and the title aptly describes the location of two suitably placed dots of colour on the 1945 issue (Fig. 30). In the absence of the reflection on the preceding printing it was called 'The Rising Moon'. Other very small flaws also occur on this stamp, but do not appear on the 1949 issue.

'The Spotted Plague'

This is a most unusual name for a variety, but a close examination of R10/1 in its 1945 state will quickly show why it was so called. There are no less than six areas on the stamp showing dots and marks.

'The Falling Palm Frond'

On R6/3 of the 1945 issue is yet another example of a minor flaw inspiring the philatelic pen (Fig. 31) and the last I will mention from the perf. 13½ printings. Although when one examines a sheet from this issue it can be seen that nearly every stamp can be plated — a challenging, but pleasant task to be done in tandem with the 1d. mentioned earlier ...

The 1949 Printing of the 1½d.

Nearly forty years have elapsed since the perf. 12 issue came out in 1949. At the time it caused quite a stir because the well known and publicised flaws with their evocative names vanished overnight. Saunders examined a sheet and suggested that the plate had been stripped and cleaned, as some of the unpublicised signs of damage were still faintly visible. He, together with Bentley Kettle, also discovered that Plate 1 had been re-entered and with a good glass evidence of doubling can be found on twelve stamps. Only one has achieved catalogue recognition — R4/2 — by Bridger and Kay, where it is easy to see with the naked eye that the top frame line is doubled in the north-east corner as well as the top of the oval frame surrounding the head of the King. Duplication is also visible in the south-east corner. For the record the other examples of slight doubling occur on R1/4, 1/6, 3/2-3, 6/1, 7/3-4, 7/6, 9/1, 10/1 and 10/5.

To be continued

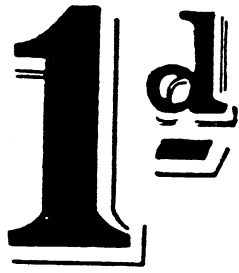


Fig.4

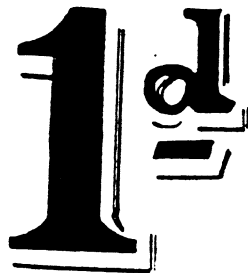


Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12



Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig.15



Fig.16



Fig.17

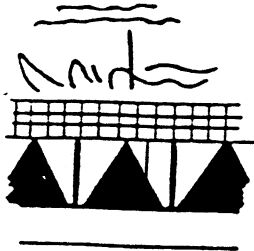


Fig.18



Fig.19



Fig.20



Fig.21

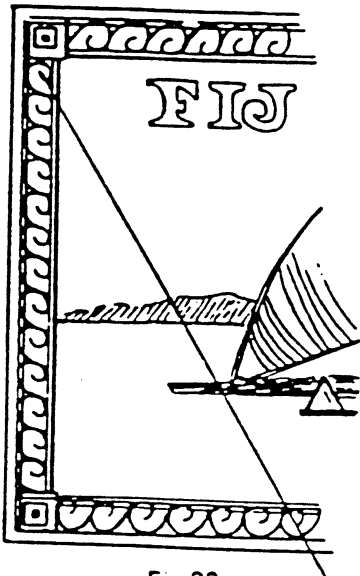


Fig.22

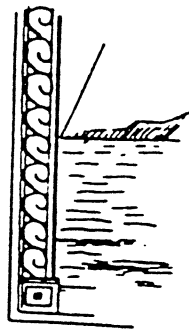


Fig.23

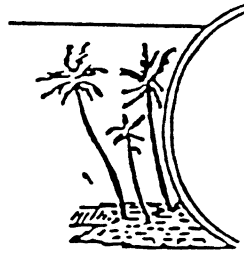


Fig.24

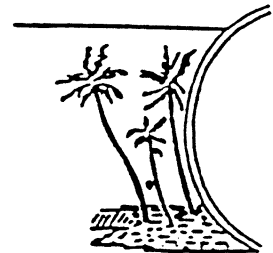


Fig.25

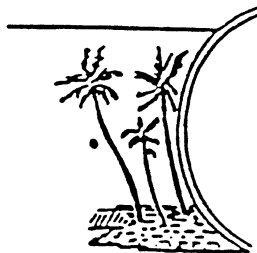


Fig.26

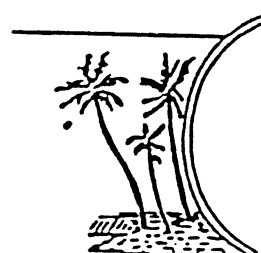


Fig.27

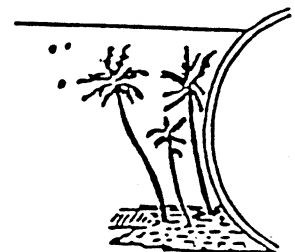


Fig.28



Fig.29

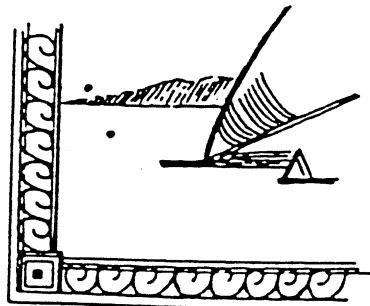


Fig.30

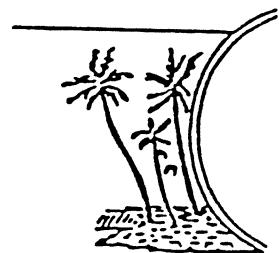


Fig.31