

# King George VI Varieties

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## Part 4 — Fiji

(Continued from February)



### Two Pence (Map Design)

The 2d. with the map design was another De La Rue production, comb perf. 13½ in sheets of sixty — ten rows of six stamps. The vignette featuring a map of the Fiji Islands was designed by Mr A. Guy who was the Chief Draughtsman in the Lands Department, Suva. When first issued on 5 April 1938 the design omitted to show 180° by the relevant meridian of longitude. This was corrected and on 1 October 1940 the 2d. was issued printed from the old frame plate, numbered 1, and a new centre plate numbered 1, with the 180° added. The differing designs are classified Die I and Die II in the catalogues. There were two printings, possibly a third, of the Die I. The second one in 1939 can be identified by an aniline brown centre. Shade differences exist in Die II, but so far as I know there was only one printing.

**Weak Entries on the Map Issues (2d., 2½d./2d. and 2½d.).** A notable variety is the weak entry in the frame shading on R1/2. It affects the lines to the right of the head oval and above the large ornamental dot to the left of 'FIJI' in the name tablet (Fig. 1). The overall effect is a whitish patch, which can be found on all printings from the first 2d. Die I to the last printing of the 2½d. Die II in perf. 13½. A second noticeable weak entry occurs on R7/5 of the 2½d. perf. 13½, where a weakness shows above the dot in the upper part of the frame (Fig. 2). In addition, the shading over the head of the King within the head oval is also lighter on every stamp. I must add that it is difficult to illustrate these weak entries and to achieve an effective sketch I have slightly exaggerated the weakness in the design. However, once seen in a pair or positional block they are easy to spot. They all disappeared with the appearance of Frame Plate 2 and the release of the 2½d. in

perf. 12. Indeed, this release prompted an item to appear in the March 1948 issue of GSM that a retouched die has been used in the making of the new plate 2 from which the latest supply of the 2½d. has been printed. This amends a long standing imperfection in the medallion of all specimens of 256 and 256a which showed a light patch over the King's head. The retouching has taken the form of strengthening the diagonal and horizontal lines to darken the area and also adding to the hair to give it a rounder outline. This retouched die does not constitute an additional variety as its arrival coincides with the new perf. 12. It is worth noting that, although the shading is initially heavy, frame plate 2 wore rapidly and the 1952 issue of the 2½d. shows many weak entries.

**Varieties on the 2d. Die I.** I fear that my own collection lacks multiples of the Die I issue and the remarks that follow have been culled largely from comments made over the years by earlier enthusiasts. But before describing specific varieties I will mention one historical fact that I find most unusual. It was recorded in *Stamp Collecting* in late 1943 that the Government of Fiji had prohibited the export of mint and used current stamps. This must have been a blow to collectors outside the Islands and is certainly a far cry from the exporting efforts of the modern philatelic bureaux that have proliferated around the world in the post-war years. Now back to Die I varieties.

**The White Face.** This variety was first described by Rev. Tippett in the *Australian Stamp Monthly* in February 1942. Ten years later he wrote a full account of his findings in *Stamp Collecting*. In sum, he described 'The White Face' as a clear and complete stripping of ink from the face of the King. At the time he had handled between 20 and 30 copies on which the date and/or the postmark was decipherable. They were dated between 5 April and December 1938 and had been used at Suva, Ba, Lautoka, Nadroga, Savusavu East and Korovou. He suggested that a number of sheets although unsatisfactorily printed, had not been destroyed, but sent to Fiji in the initial despatch. He very firmly pointed out to detractors of the variety in the UK that even though they had not seen copies with 'The White Face' they certainly did exist and when seen were very easily identified. Tippett also made the point that Fiji's own collectors were very active and knowledgeable and that most of the

accumulations going to dealers had been thoroughly picked over before leaving the islands. It was, therefore, likely that only a few 'White Faces' had escaped after internal use for the local 2d. rate. I suspect that they were probably not constant, nevertheless, would very much like to see a copy in my collection!

**The Garrick Line.** This item was named after its discoverer. It is a frame plate flaw on R5/1 and consists of a heavy scratch on the left-hand side of the stamp, commencing at the bottom of the medallion and running almost vertically downwards through the figure 2 into the shading beneath it. In late 1943 it was reported that the flaw only appeared on some eighty sheets.

**Quotation Mark.** Two marks occur before 'TAVEUNI' on R2/6. Derrick assessed this as an early flaw and a good one.

**The 179th Meridian.** In 1948 Ruth Munday reported an unusual unpositioned flaw on the 2d. Die I. It was a short vertical line midway between 'LEVUKA' Island and the 180 degree line of longitude. She suggested that it was a line drawn in the wrong place for the 180 line and not properly erased from the plate. It was confirmed by Derrick on R2/1. ← *Should be R 3/1*

**The Rectangular Flaw.** This occurs on R8/1 between the top frame lines above the second 'I' of 'FIJI'. It continues through Die II until Frame Plate 2 came into use in 1948 (Fig. 3).

**The Fern.** This can be found on the value tablet on R9/1 at the north-east corner. It continued until 1948.

**Unnamed Flaws.** The following brief details, again from Derrick, may well help someone to plate a stamp in their collection. First, on R4/1 a vertical green line runs through the centre of the lower half of the second 'I' of 'FIJI'. Secondly, an oblique green line appears from the letter 'J' of 'FIJI' across the right side of the name 'VANUALEVU' on R6/1 (Fig. 4). Thirdly, a vertical brown line joins the 'A' of 'LEVUKA' to the 'F' of 'FIJI' on R10/2.

**Varieties on the 2d. Die II.** Details have already been given of the 'Rectangular' and 'Fern' flaws and they continued on the Die II issues using Frame Plate 1. However, two distinctive centre plate flaws made their first

appearance in 1940 and continued right through to the 2½d. perf. 12. The first is called 'Two Islands' and occurs on R8/5 — two small dashes appear just to the left of 180° (Fig. 5). The second is the 'Vatulele Curl', a small brown arc, south of the western most point of 'VITILEVU'. By coincidence it does in fact mark the approximate position of a small island called Vatulele located just off the mainland. The flaw occurs on R9/6 (Fig. 6). A lower right vertical corner block of six will, of course, contain both varieties, but regrettably all too often the uppermost pair have been removed to make a nice tidy block! The last item in this paragraph is a plea for help. I have a single copy of the 2d. Die II with a mark similar to the variety called 'The 179th Meridian' on Die I. The brown line is again in the position of this meridian, but crosses the north-east of Vanva Levu Island. The northern end of mark has a distinct dot where the initial pressure from an engraver's tool might fall (Fig. 7). If any reader can help would they please put pen to paper!

**Catalogue Pricing.** While reading through old cuttings I came across an item from *Stamp Collecting* contributed many years ago by Mr J. Trotter of Fiji. He claimed that the 2d. Die II postally used was extremely scarce and offered sound reasons why this was so. The Die I was on sale from 5 April 1938 to October 1940 (2½ years). It was used for mail, the local rate was 2d., and also needed for fiscal use on receipts — a minor form of taxation which is now thankfully a matter of history. The Die II replaced it in October 1940 and was on sale until 19 May 1942 (20 months). The letter rate increased on 1 January 1941 to 2½d., but because of enemy action far from Fiji, the new stamp of this denomination did not appear until 6 January 1942, its place in the meantime having been taken by the 2½d./2d. provisional on 10 February 1941. The provisional was produced locally using Die II stamps, while many of the remainder were used fiscally. Thus, the 2d. Die II was only in use for normal postal purposes between October 1940 and February 1941, when mails were not heavy. For the newcomer to the KGVI scene this account will, I hope, provide an insight into why every now and again a particular low value is given a very high rating by catalogue editors. In this instance, a glance at the *Part 1* catalogue will reveal that it is valued at over 1000 times face value for a definitive used only some forty-five years ago!

### The 2½d./2d. Provisional

Before I describe the major varieties and give a brief history of the locally produced surcharge, I must mention a comment by Tippet in the *Australian Stamp Monthly* in November 1941. It helps to illustrate the financial pitfalls awaiting the unwary collector. While en route to Fiji in the Spring of 1941 an Australian dealer had offered him a sheet of the surcharged stamps for fifty shillings (£2.50) assuring him that the stamps had been withdrawn from sale. However, as Tippet wryly remarked as he wrote the article in Fiji on 12 September he was still able to buy the stamps over the post office counter! A similar cautionary tale concerns the Bermuda ¼d./1s. (S.G. 30) issued on 11 January 1901 and called 'The Newspaper Provisionals' as the minimum rate of ¼d. had been set on 1 January 1901. Copies changed hands on the island shortly afterwards for 6d. each as they were deemed to be so unusual. Furthermore, only 240,000 had been issued.

However, fresh supplies totalling another 974,880 stamps (30a) soon knocked a hole in that speculative market. *Caveat Emptor* ...

But now to return to the KGVI 2½d./2d. The 2½d. rate for Inland and Empire letters came into effect on 1 January 1941. Unfortunately, German bombing raids on London badly damaged the De La Rue works on 29 December 1940 and the newly printed stock of the 2½d. value was destroyed. To make up the new rate naturally created an extra demand in Fiji for the lower values and, as stocks were low, approval was given on 29 January 1941 to overprint the 2d. value. It says much for those concerned that the locally surcharged stamps were on sale on 10 February and in May 1941 GSM reported that 7650 of the *Surprise Provisional* had been sold on the first day across the counter at GPO Suva.

Fortunately for collectors in the mid-1980s Tippet had the opportunity to examine scores of sheets during the 1940s, and in 1949 *Philately from Australia* published his detailed findings. He reported that the type for the surcharging had been set up in the offices of the *Fiji Times and Herald* in Suva on linotype and kept in forme at the Treasury. He mentioned that someone who had been present while printing was in progress had described to him how the Government Printers had used considerable force, at times, to tighten up the figures in the forme as they loosened during use. This could well account for some, if not most, of the minor variations of measurement and alignment of the surcharges from sheet to sheet, as well as some of the broken figures revealed by very close examination of the stamps. It is most important to note that Tippet was adamant that sheet numbers were not an indication of the order that sheets were surcharged. He offered no proof, but in all fairness I believe he was correct. After all why should busy printers, carrying out an emergency order, have bothered to sort out sheets into numerical order? They would undoubtedly have been under pressure to produce quick results and in fact did so. I suggest that in human terms it was just another printing job and the end result was what mattered.

In the event, Tippet found that four lots of the 2d. Die II had been sent to the Government Printers during 1941 and quoted the following official figures: 5 February — 3000 sheets, 4 April — 3500 sheets, 10 June — 4000 sheets and 17 November — 800 sheets. It is a fair assumption that some of this stock would have been recalled from local post offices and this would certainly have resulted in sheets being surcharged out of numerical order.

Tippet's research further revealed that sheets could be separated into three identifiable groups. The first, estimated at 6500 sheets (Type A) from the February and April deliveries could be identified by R10/4 where the neck of the small '2' in '2½d.' was broken (Fig. 8). In the second group (Type B) this stamp had a clean figure, but both R9/6 and 10/1 showed constant broken necks to their small '2's' (Fig. 9). The last and very small November group of 800 sheets (Type C) had only a few minor flaws and it is noteworthy that Tippet found that R9/6, 10/1 and 10/4 all showed flawless surcharges. It seems to me that the 'Broken Neck' at R10/4 is the easiest to find today, not only because there were more sheets with the flaw, but of more significance because there was a lot of speculative buying at the time and the flaw was noticed at an early date. For example, it was noted in GSM in September 1941.

It was suggested in GSM in May 1941 the surcharges had been duplicated by probably electrotyping or stereotyping from original consisting of two settings of the charge each possessing small, but characteristic flaws. The one, displayed a dot or to the left of the head of the large '2' or first, third and fifth vertical rows, and other, showed the stop slightly below level of the 'd' on the second, fourth sixth vertical rows. Tippet found that charge A showed clear evidence that it been built up from thirty repetitions matrix of two stereo impressions. Thus, tical columns 1, 3 and 5 showed a chip front to the head of the large '2' (Fig. which was not evident in columns 2, 4 and 6). In type B the same principle was to be found but the chipped part seemed to have chipped and bulged only a little. The respective columns in Type C, Tippet discovered, were all so alike that he was not able to find constant differences. Furthermore, in several instances he was told that these sheets been purchased just before the stamp appeared from sale. Although he could find any official record of the type had been unpicked or re-arranged Tippet strongly suggested that the evidence pointed to this happening for the last 800 sheets bearing in mind that in the late stages of Type B no less than twenty-four of the surcharges on individual stamps had imperfections of varying degree, in comparison to for Type A and only 5 for Type C. (I will gladly pass on details of these minor surcharge varieties to any interested reader.)

### Twopence-Halfpenny (Map Design)

There were five printings of the 2½d.: January 1942, January 1944, May 1945, 19 January 1948 and 9 September 1952. The first printing was line perf 14, the second and third comb perf. 13½ and the remaining two were comb perf. 12. Centre Plate 1 was used throughout. Frame Plate 1 was used for the first three printings being replaced by Frame Plate 2 for both the perf. 12 releases.

**Varieties.** As the Centre Plate was the same as that used for the 1940 issue of the 2d. the same varieties are to be found on R8/5 and 6 of the 2½d. An additional and obvious flaw does, however, make an appearance on R10/5. An 'Extra Island' shows to the left of the 'T' of 'TAVENUNI' (Fig. 11). A large (5 x 10) vertical plate block of the 2½d. makes a very nice piece as it contains a weak entry (R7/6) and three centre plate flaws (R8/5, 9/6 and 10/5). In addition, evidence of a long fine almost horizontal scratch on Frame Plate 1 can sometimes be found crossing the centre of R9/5 into the margin of R9/6. An equal fine vertical scratch almost bisects R10/5 and continues into the bottom margin, just to the left of green Frame Plate '1' in the margin. Yet another very strong green line (scratch on the frame plate) joins the 'B' of 'LAMBASA' to the 'V' of 'SUVA' continuing into the margin on two unpositioned perf. 13½ copies in my possession — can anyone please allocate them a position?

In the next article in August I will complete this section of the series devoted to Fiji and describe varieties found on the 2d. (Government Buildings), 3d., 5d., 1s., 1s.5d. and 2s. stamps.

*Copies of GSM containing Mr Lockyer's earlier articles — Ascension (August 1986) Barbados (November 1986) Fiji (February 1987) are still available, £1 each plus postage. E.J.*

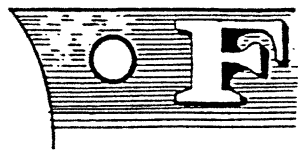


Fig.1

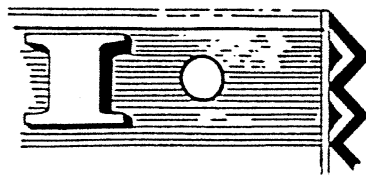


Fig.2

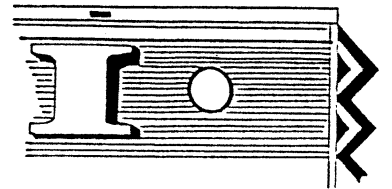


Fig.3

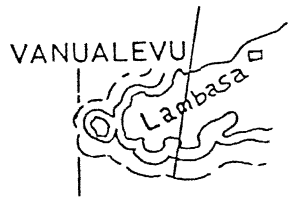


Fig.4



Fig.5

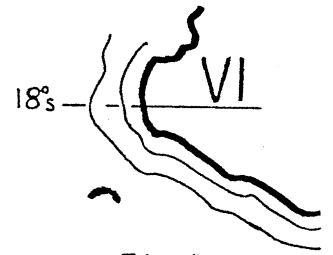


Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11