

King George VI Varieties

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Part 5 — Fiji

(Continued from May)

Parts 3 and 4 of this series (February and May 1987) described the varieties to be found on the Fiji KGVI ½d., 1d., 1½d. and the 2d. and 2½d. with the map design. I will now complete the story so far as I know it. However, I am sure that other varieties exist and do hope that collectors will not hesitate to report them. For example, I can provide an illustration of the 179th Meridian flaw at R2/1 on the 2d. Die I, mentioned in Part 4, as a copy has, at last, come my way (Fig. 1). To be strictly accurate the extra line is nearer to 179 30'.

Two Pence (Government Buildings)

The design for the green and magenta 2d., featuring the Government Buildings was approved on 21 August 1941. The stamp was issued on 19 May 1942 and remained in use until it was replaced by the QEII stamp of the same design and colour in 1954. It was printed by De La Rue in sheets of sixty — ten rows of six. There appear to have been six printings, May and December 1942, 27 May 1946, 5 June 1947, 21 July 1949 and 8 February 1951. The first two printings were comb perf. 13½, the rest were comb perf. 12. The same Frame Plate 1 was used throughout. Centre Plate 2 came into use in July 1949.

In the 1960s Niall Fair closely examined nine sheets from various printings and fortunately recorded his detailed findings in *Geosix*, the quarterly journal of the King George VI Collectors' Society. They make fascinating reading and I will only summarise the major points of interest.

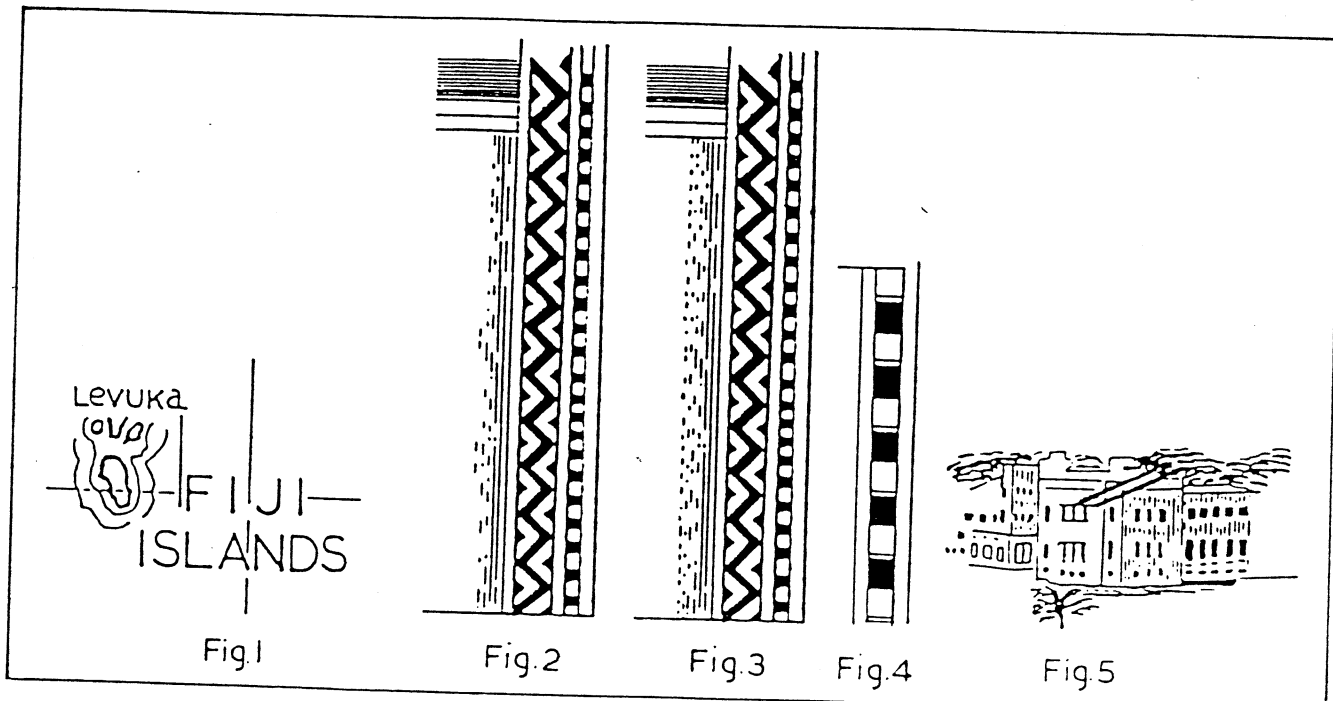
The Extra Lines Variety. The frame plate is the same design as the 2d. map stamp, but shows extra lines and dashes on the inner side of the frame, probably to help mask incorrect registering of the centre plate or, at least soften the edges of the vignette. It is interesting to note the whitish appearance of the south-west corner of the value tablet, which was so noticeable on the map stamp and this suggests that the same master die could have been used with the extra lines added to it, and a new transfer roller relief made. These lines lead to an extraordinary variety on R5/6. Niall Fair found that on the perf. 13½ issues and the first perf. 12 issue every stamp showed four lines of vertical shading on the right side of the stamp — two virtually continuous lines adjacent to the inner frame line with two lines of short dashes to their left. In addition, it is possible to see, with the aid of a very strong glass, a few very faint traces of a fifth line (Fig. 2). However, on all the other perf. 12 releases these slight traces have been firmly and clearly strengthened to give very definite fifth and sixth lines of vertical shading on just one stamp — R5/6 (Fig. 3).

It is an outstanding variety and I suggest is just as noticeable and appealing as the KUT Mountain Retouches that have caught the eye of catalogue editors. One final point completes the story. The QEII stamps have six lines of shading alongside the right inner frame line. This naturally leads to the supposition that this was always the intention of the original designer, but somehow or other it never came to full fruition on the KGVI issues except for one stamp on three of the

six printings: yet another intriguing philatelic mystery of the period.

Other Frame Varieties. Other than the Extra Lines on R5/6, there is little else worth mentioning from Frame Plate 1. On R5/6 clear doubling shows in the left portrait oval the King's face at the left and the vertical lines under the oval. Very slight doubling of the vertical lines under the oval also occurs on R2/3 and 3/3. While on R9/6 the right hand vertical lines of ornamental squares has an additional line above many of the squares (Fig. 4).

Centre Plate Varieties. The most significant sign of damage on Centre Plate 1 occurs on R10/2 where diagonal scratches cross the white face of one of the central buildings (Fig. 5). There is also a very small, but noticeable green scratch mark in the gutter by the south-east corner of R10/4. A number of other minor marks, visible with a good glass, can be found on R1/2, 2/1, 3/1, 4/4, 4/6, 5/3, 7/2, 8/2, 9/1-2, 9/5 and 6. Their absence on other perf. 12 stamps from the same positions indicates that the plate must have received some attention at a later stage, probably in 1947. In support of this the damage to R10/2, which is very distinctive, has disappeared, but the lines in the clock tower have become doubled. Furthermore, although the scratch in the gutter adjacent to R10/4 no longer shows, very slight doubling occurs in the south-west corner of the stamp. Centre Plate 2 offers numerous examples of doubling, indeed, Niall Fair reported that it was hard to find an impression without any sign of duplication.



Three Pence

The 3d. does not seem to have attracted the attention lavished on some of the lower values. It was designed by Miss Inez Stinson of Herbert Street, Suva. There were most probably nine printings: 5 April 1938, 1939, 1941/2, January 1944, 26 November 1945, 22 May 1946, 19 January 1948, 9 September 1952 and 12 July 1955. Waterlow and Sons used two plates, the first unnumbered, however, the date when Plate 2 came into use has not, so far as I know, been definitely established. Frank Saunders inclined to 1944, but there is very strong evidence pointing to 1941/42, as Tippett, when describing the 3d. value in the February 1942 edition of *Australian Stamp Monthly* commented that there were minor differences in shade, clearness and gum between Plates 1 and 2. It hardly seems likely that such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable philatelist would have mentioned Plate 2 unless he had seen examples. Sheet formation was ten rows of six stamps to a horizontal row, perforated 12½ Line with minor variations e.g. in March 1944 GSM noted that the vertical perforation is 12.7 instead of 12.5 in last supply. Plate 2 unchanged. This statement further strengthens support for the initial use of Plate 2 1941 or 1942.

Varieties. Several minor varieties can be found on some of the printings from Plate 2, unfortunately I cannot be more specific than that as there was disagreement between Saunders and Kettle about which printings were affected. R3/3 is an interesting stamp, on inspection it appears to be darker than its neighbours. This darkening is particularly noticeable in the area of the King's head. The darkening is not as strong as the major doubling that, for example, occurs on the 3d. Victory of the Falkland Islands at R8/5, or R1/6 and 2/8 of an early printing of the 2d. scarlet from Malta. Nevertheless, through a glass it is easy to see signs of duplication which occur in the small triangle of shading to the north-east, the oval frame line and the lines of shading behind and to the right of the King's head. Furthermore, the frame lines and lines around the head in this area are wider than other stamps on the sheet (Fig. 6).

When looking at single copies the first recognition feature is, undoubtedly, the duplication in the small triangle, for the sake of clarity Fig. 7 illustrates the normal design. The variety on R4/2 is easily seen. It is a spur inside the Arms medallion. The spur measuring 2½mm, is on the inside frame line at about seven to eight o'clock (Fig. 8). Two extremely small spurs appear on the outer and inner frame lines in the bottom left corner of the value tablet on R8/1 (Fig. 9).

Further down the sheet there is horizontal doubling in the diamond work within the right hand frame on R9/2 (Fig. 10). The diagonals of shading of the canoe and the upper bodies of the native supporters on R6/1, 3 and 4 are doubled, but in all fairness this can only be seen with a very strong glass. Similar help is needed to identify the merest trace of vertical doubling in the north-west corner of the left hand value tablet at R9/3, while slight doubling also occurs on R9/5-6 affecting the canoe and supporters.

Finally, for those interested in the identification of printings I pass on some comments made by Kettle to Saunders in 1951. Kettle noted that sheet size appeared to become smaller as the years passed and that UV lamp reaction became progressively duller with

each printing, until by 1948 reaction was a pale brownish purple shade and very dull. For the really technically minded Kettle reported that in 1938 the paper was 80 per cent sulphite pulp and 20 per cent ground wood, in 1942 it was 70/30 and in 1943-48 became 50/50.

Five Pence

I have read that the principal claim to fame for the 5d. is that the Governor of Fiji objected to the blue-coloured sugar cane on the 1938 printing. There could well be a fair measure of truth in this as after the second printing in 1939 the yellow-green cane appeared on 1 October 1940. For the record there seem to have been eight printings: 5 April 1938, 1939, 1 October 1940, June 1942, 26 November 1945, 27 May 1946, 19 June 1948 and 9 September 1952, all line perf. 12½ in sheets of sixty, six rows of ten. Frame Plate 2 and Centre Plate 2 came into use for the last printing. The only variety, other than most noticeable and uncatalogued shades, and they are another story, is to be found at R3/4 where the left vertical frame line in the south-west corner, adjacent to the value tablet is doubled (Fig. 11).

One Shilling

The 1s., printed by Waterlow and Sons, offers no less than nineteen separate examples of doubling. Saunders maintained that they demonstrated how printers worked to 'improve' the impression made from a plate, as he had seen copies with the doubling bearing very early postmarks. Tippett was not so certain, but was confident that the doubling could be traced back to 1944 and strongly suspected that they occurred right back to the first printing. There were, in fact, six printings: 5 April 1938, 1939, January 1944, 9 April 1947, 21 July 1949 and 9 September 1952 and each sheet consisted of six horizontal rows of ten stamps. They were line perf. 12½ without a plate number.

Varieties. Close examination will reveal that the outer vertical frame line on the right of the stamp is generally thinner than the one on the left side. This weakness could well have been most pronounced on R1/7, leading to an attempt to strengthen the frame line, probably by hand, as on the lower right side a second line appears to the left of the main line (Fig. 12). The neighbouring stamp at R1/6 also shows that it received attention, but this time the attempt to strengthen the frame line was done in a different way, most probably by re-inserting the transfer roller, as not only is the lower section of the outer frame line doubled, but also the near-by grid and vignette frames. In addition, the diagonals of shading in the grid frame are very clearly doubled in the south-east corner with the right side of the value also showing duplication (Fig. 13).

Similar treatment seems to have been given to other positions. On R1/9 the diagonal lines of shading below the value are doubled as well as the right side of the value (Fig. 14). Very slight doubling of the diagonal lines below the value also occurs on R1/10, but the noticeably thin and broken upper section of the right frame line, as it touches the medallion, helps to plate this stamp without difficulty. It is worth making the point that a horizontal strip containing the last five stamps of the top row contains some interesting varieties.

R2/5 of the 1s. value has similar doubling

to R1/10, but has a stronger frame line. A different area is affected on R3/6 as the shading lines on the left cheek of the King are doubled. An even wider area of R4/3 is doubled, including the diagonals in the oval, the lower part of the outline of the oval, the neighbouring diagonals of the grid frame and the outer frame line. The doubling on R4/4 is closely akin to that on R2, while further down the sheet the right vertical frame line and the diagonals in the grid frame are doubled in the south-east corner of R5/5. On the seventh stamp of the fifth row the central diagonals in the bottom grid frame, the lines of shading on the King's forehead and the shading lines at the top right of the medallion are all doubled. To complete the tally minor doubling in the lower grid frame occurs on R3/1, 5/9, 6/1, 5 and 10, on R6/3 the doubling in the grid frame occurs in the top right corner and on R6/9 shows in the south-east corner and the right vertical frame line.

1s.5d.

The artist's design for the 1s.5d. submitted for approval on 16 October 1939, included the words 'AIR MAIL' in the bottom margin, the duty tablet on the left and a five face portrait of the King, also on the left. The design was approved, subject to major alterations which are very obvious when the issued stamp is examined and did, of course, include the deletion of 'AIR MAIL'. There were five reported printings: 13 June 1942, 26 November 1945, May 1946 and 5 June 1947. All were line perf. 14 from Frame Plate 1 and Centre Plate 1. The sheet formation was twelve horizontal rows of five stamps. There are some very good shades to be found, which have, so far, escaped the eye of catalogue editors.

It is strange to read in the September 1949 edition of GSM that the value was out of stock at the Crown Agents Bureau, while today sheets are reasonably easy to find and are not expensive, bearing in mind the ravages of inflation. Individual unmounted copies only rate 25p (5s.) in the 1987 Part 1 - not a good investment for the speculator. The stamp was withdrawn from sale on 1 June 1952, having been replaced by the 1s.6d. on 1 August 1950.

Varieties. The vertical lines of shading surrounding the coat of arms are well defined, except just above the '1' of the value, where they are slightly double. However, on R1/1 the vertical lines of shading below the badge and value are very strongly doubled on at least two shades. This doubling makes that part of the stamp appear much darker when compared to the same area on its neighbours (Fig. 15). On the other hand, I have seen many sheets of another shade without finding any trace of the doubling. In the past mention has been made of a variety with a patch of smudged ink at the top of the oblique stroke between the '1' and '5' of the value. It exists, but appears to be a random and frequent occurrence on some sheets. In February 1942 Tippett reported the existence of a pair of lines in the margin before the imprint, with one of the lines entering R12/2. He surmised that they could have been caused by a cracked plate, rather than a pair of hair lines. I have not come across such an example, which hardly surprising as his stamps must have come from the first printing and whatever the cause corrective action must have been taken very quickly.

Two Shillings

The 2s. value is another Waterlow production: without plate numbers and line perforated 12½. It seems that there were, no less, than nine printings offering good shades of violet in the post-war years: 5 April 1938, 1939, June 1942, January 1944, 9 April 1947, 21 July 1949, 8 February 1951, 14 September 1954 and 12 July 1955. Sheets were ten rows of six stamps.

Variety. R1/6 shows much duplication in the upper part of the stamp. The top horizontal frame line is also partly doubled (Fig.16).

Two Shillings and Sixpence

Only five printings have been recorded: 5 April 1938, June 1942, January 1944, 19 January 1948 and 9 September 1952. They were all line perf.12½ in ten rows of six stamps printed by Waterlow without plate numbers.

Varieties. In *Stamp Collecting* dated 2 November 1953 Kettle drew attention to two instances of doubling on the 2s.6d. The top frame line of R1/3 being duplicated in the north-west corner, together with doubling of the horizontal background lines behind the head of the King. R1/4 offered horizontal doubling of the leaves of the palm and in the bottom right corner — both of a minor nature.

The Remaining Values

Fiji varieties have occupied three parts of this series. However, even then no mention has been made of the 6d., 8d., 1s.6d., 10s. or £1, as, unfortunately I do not have information to pass on. But to complete the general picture, it would be remiss not to give brief details of their release dates and plate numbers, as known to me, which could be of help to others.

Six Pence. Printings: 5 April 1938 (Die I), 1 October 1940 (Die II), 10 January 1944, May 1945, 5 June 1947, 21 July 1949, 24 October 1950, 9 September 1952. Perforations (all comb): 1938 — 13x12, 1940-45 — 13½, remainder — 12. Sheets marked Plate 1 from 1940 onwards.

Eight Pence. Printings: 15 November 1948, 7 June 1950, 9 September 1952. Perforations (all comb): 1948 — 14, 1950 and 1952 — 13. All Plate 1.

One Shilling and Six Pence. Printings: 1 August 1950, 16 February 1955, 12 July 1955. Perforations (all comb): 1950 — 14, 1955 — 13. All Plate 1.

Five Shillings. Printings: 5 April 1938, January 1944, 1 October 1946, 12 March 1947, 5 June 1947, 9 September 1952, 12 July 1955. All line perf.12½ without plate numbers.

Ten Shillings and One Pound. Both values issued 13 March 1950. Line perf.12½.

Correction: Unfortunately gremlin trouble affected the last line of the first paragraph of Part 4. It should have read "Shade differences exist in Die II... not Die I. Ed.

Part six of this series (November) will describe varieties to be found on the 1938 definitive issue of Dominica.

