

King George VI Varieties

RICHARD LOCKYER, OBE

Part 6 — Dominica

After a longish spell devoted to Fijian varieties (GSM February, May and August 1987), Dominica will take the stage, but before it does, I must say as a collector of KGVI stamps for some forty years, how pleasing it was when Stanley Gibbons produced a reprint of the 1968 edition of their KGVI album last November. It is good to know that the initial batch of 500 has been sold and another 500 have been printed. Clearly the attractive designs of the period still hold their appeal and hopefully this series of articles will also help, to re-stimulate interest. The handbook of the British Philatelic Federation does, of course, list specialist societies, but not everyone has ready access to a copy, and the opportunity is taken to draw attention to the existence of the *King George VI Collectors' Society*. It was founded in 1960 and has 220 members in 18 countries. Details of membership will be sent to any reader who cares to write to me c/o GSM.

After that commercial, varieties come to the fore! The 1938-51 definitive issue of Dominica first came to my notice when reading a cutting taken from the September 1953 issue of GSM entitled 'Dominica Re-entry'. It described the very strong doubling affecting the 2½d. value (S.G. 103 and 103a) on Row 5/5. In the following April there was an article describing the other plate flaws on the same stamp using information provided by the late Roy Botwright, the first President of the KGVICS. However, before describing them and other similar instances of doubling on other values, some information about printings and plate numbers will be given for the benefit of collectors who have not necessarily been bitten by the 'variety bug'.

Printings and Plate Numbers

The Farthing. The ¼d. value is the odd one out in the series — a small vertical rectangular format featuring Dorothy Wilding's full face portrait of the King. It was printed by photogravure by Harrison and Sons and follows the design adopted for the 1938 Grenada ¼d. John Easton in his book *British Postage Stamp Design* mentions a belief or rumour, current at the time, that the design, suggestive of the studio-work of an advertising agent, was originally intended as a standard Edward VIII 'Keyplate' for all British Colonial issues. Thankfully events proved far more satisfactory.

The ¼d. stamp was first issued on 15 April 1940. There were three further printings — November 1942, March 1944 and 18 December 1946. Plate 2 came into use in 1944 and appears below R10/11. Sheets were printed in ten rows of twelve, perforated 14¼ comb.

At this point I will digress to mention what can only be described as a ¼d. value by default. In September and October 1951 *Stamp Collecting* described and illustrated a verti-

cally bisected ½d. stamp (S.G. 99) cancelled with the Crowned Circle 'PAID AT DOMINICA' mark and bearing on the cover the Rosseau date stamp of 12 February 1940. It was reported that three wrappers existed and an explanation was sought by the magazine from the Administrator on Dominica. His reply is worth re-recording as a small fragment of postal history:

Sir, I have the honour to refer to your letter of November 1st 1951 on the subject of a bisected copy of the ½d. Dominica stamp which was apparently used in substitution for a ¼d. stamp in 1940.

I have been very carefully into this matter and at no time was any official sanction given for the use of a bisected ½d. stamp. How the bisected stamp you mention came to be post-marked at Rosseau I do not know, but it was done entirely without sanction and in direct contravention of instructions.

The transfer of Dominica from the Leeward Islands to the Windward Islands became effective on January 1st 1940. When the transfer took place no ¼d. stamps, which are used as postage within the islands for newspapers, were available. A proposal that the 2d. Leeward Island stamp should be surcharged as ¼d. stamps was turned down. A supply of ¼d. stamps was ordered, and pending their arrival the Postmaster was instructed to accept newspapers for postage, collect the value of the postage, and to put no mark whatsoever on the newspaper. This procedure was carried out until supplies of the ¼d. stamp arrived.

I hope this information will be of use to you and I would emphasize again that no official sanction was ever given for the use of a bisected ½d. stamp. I have the honour, to be, Sir Your Obedient Servant, E.P. Arrowsmith, Administrator.

Despite this official reply some queries still remain to be resolved. Were the three stamps bisected and cancelled by an unbriefed or accidentally forgetful postal clerk? (It could have been deliberate forgetfulness!) Or did a stamp collector chance his luck and the bisected stamps slipped through the system? Finally, where are the wrappers now and is there still a fourth to be recorded?

Pictorial Issues (½d. to 10s). The information that follows is drawn largely from an excellent book *The Printings of King George VI Colonial Stamps* (1952). The authors, W.J.W. Potter and Lt.Col. R.C.M. Shelton, were in the forefront of a small group of enthusiasts of that era. In addition, supplementary detail comes from GSM of the early 1950s. Some of the information in the book has been superseded by later research, but it is a volume that should be on every KGVI collectors' bookshelf — if you see a copy, then buy it!

Initially, the stamps featuring four pictorial designs, did not have plate numbers, but only the normal imprint in the middle of

the bottom margin. The stamps were recess printed in sheets of sixty — five rows of twelve — and perforated 12½ line. However, as time progressed fresh numbered plates came into use, and four new values released on 15 October 1947, all carried plate numbers. Details of release dates and plate numbers follow:

½d. 15 August 1938, August 1942, February 1944, 8 November 1946.

1d. 15 August 1938, November 1942, February 1944, 10 October 1945 (New Centre Plate 2 below R5/12), 15 November 1949 and 11 March 1951.

1½d. 15 August 1938, February 1944 and 10 October 1945.

2d. 15 August 1938, February 1944, 10 October 1945, 15 November 1949 and 11 March 1951.

2½d. 15 August 1938, August 1942, February 1944, 10 October 1945, 16 February 1948 and 15 November 1949.

3d. 15 August 1938, February 1944, 10 October 1945 (New Centre Plate 2 and Frame Plate 2 below R5/11-12), 16 February 1948 and 15 November 1949.

3½d. 15 October 1947 (Frame Plate 1 below R5/11).

6d. 15 August 1938, February 1944, 10 October 1945, 8 November 1946 and 15 November 1949.

7d. 15 October 1947 (Frame Plate 1 below R5/11).

1s. 15 August 1938, February 1944, 8 November 1946 and 15 November 1949.

2s. 15 October 1947 (Frame Plate 1 below R5/11 and Centre Plate 2 below R5/12) and 15 November 1949.

2s.6d. 15 August 1938, February 1944 and 15 November 1949.

5s. 15 August 1938, February 1944 and 15 November 1949.

10s. 15 October 1947 (Frame Plate 1 below R5/11) and 15 November 1949.

Shades

It would not be surprising if, with fifty-six printings for fifteen values, there were not some distinctive shades. There are, but in fairness to those responsible for colour matching at Waterlow, there are not many. Indeed, *Gibbons Part 1* only splits the 2½d. leaving each of the other values with a single entry. The *Commonwealth* catalogue is more generous and features shades for five of them. Classifying shades is a tricky business even with stamps in pristine condition and factors such as the type of paper and gum, the age of the stamp and above all the care, or, regretfully, sometimes the lack of care in the past all complicate matters. Nevertheless, bearing that caveat in mind I hope that the following descriptions will help collectors seeking to allocate issue dates to the more prominent shades.

The ¼d. is reasonably easy to sort out.

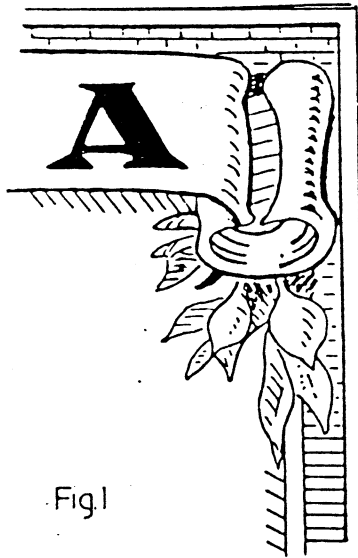


Fig. 1

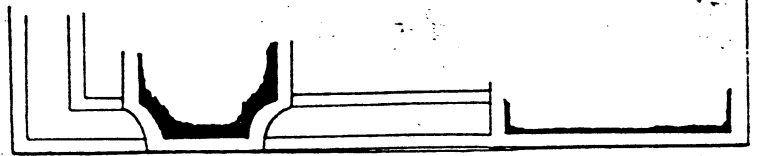


Fig. 2

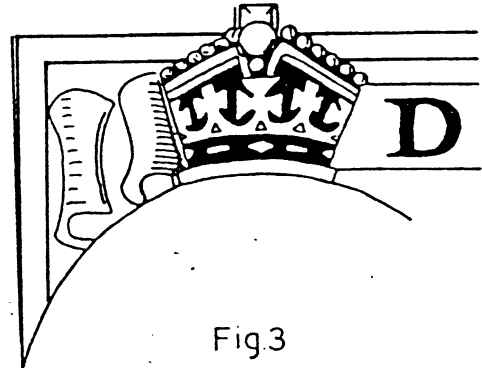


Fig. 3

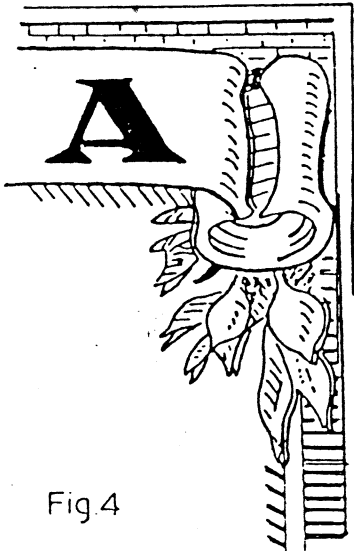


Fig. 4

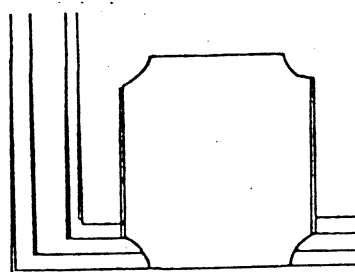


Fig. 6

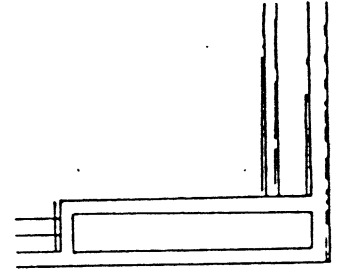


Fig. 5



Fig. 7

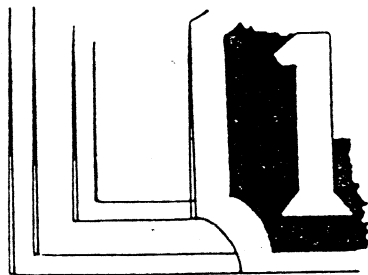


Fig. 8

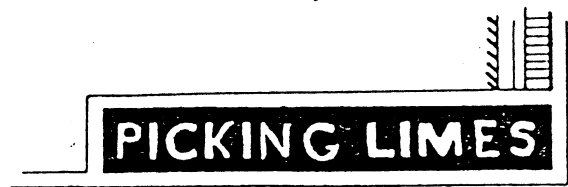


Fig. 9

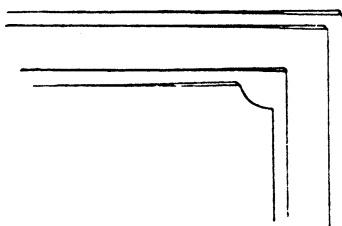


Fig. 10

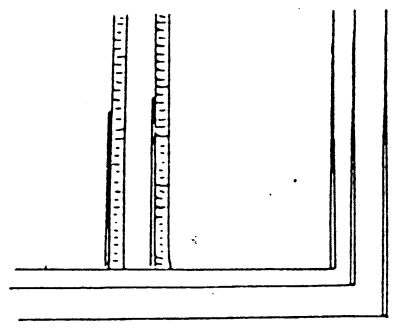


Fig. 11

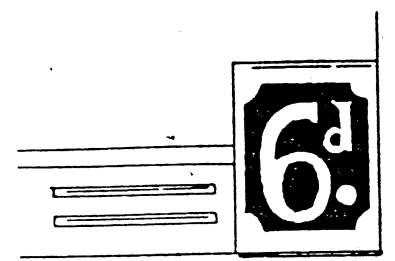


Fig. 12

Thick chalky paper was used for the 1940 issue, to be replaced by thin ordinary paper in 1942 — both are chocolate. The third and fourth printings, from Plate 2, are more red-brown than chocolate. (*Commonwealth* calls it dull chocolate for the 1944 release.)

The 1938 issue of the ½d. is red-brown and yellow-green and stands out from the 1944 stamp which has the much darker colours of chocolate and green, in turn these shades were paler for the 1946 release. The first 1d. grey and scarlet shows up well when compared to the 1949 issue of grey and carmine-red.

The 1½d. issued in 1945 is green and violet, rather than the initial green and purple. The 2d. gives another nice shade as the carmine and grey of 1938 differs from the scarlet and grey of 1944.

A note in the new printings section of *GSM* for December 1942 curtly describes the second printing of the 2½d. as 'changing from blue to ultramarine'. Sometimes later printings of the 2½d. can be mistaken, by the optimist, for the 1938 release (S.G. 103), but having recently inspected a sheet alongside a sheet of the ultramarine shade it is easy to see why the first issue was awarded separate catalogue status. The 6d. provides a couple of nice shades. The original 1938 release is described in *Part 1* as emerald-green and violet, but *Commonwealth* adds the 1949 issue calling it deep emerald-green and violet. This is supported by an entry in *GSM* for January 1950 when it was noted that the newly released 6d. had a 'much deeper emerald-green centre'. However, Potter considered that there were at least three shades of green, thus illustrating the difficulty when trying to sort out colours.

The 1s., described by Gibbons as violet and olive-green, affords a second shade with the November 1949 release; in the January 1950 *GSM* it was reported that there was *more olive in the frame*. On the other hand, *Commonwealth* classifies it as sage-green. November 1949 also saw the release of the second printing of the 10s. and *GSM* found *more yellow in the frame* — a very fair description.

Varieties

2½d. I will deal first with the 2½d., even though it will be out of order, because it not only caused me to examine the stamps of Dominica more closely, but, of far more importance the following explanation for the doubling that occurs on eight stamps was offered in the April 1954 edition of *GSM*. *The varieties in question all show duplication of the lines of engraving and are commonly described as re-entries, but it is probable that they did not arise as a result of the deliberate action of re-entering the die on the plate in order to improve or repair the first impression. It is more likely that they arose through a slight movement of the roller die or through creeping of the metal of the plate during the operation of laying down the impressions. Only one frame-plate was used throughout the life of this stamp and all the varieties are constant on all sheets.* The paragraph is quoted in full as, it is almost certain that, the cause of nearly every example of doubling to be found on the stamps of this series can be accounted for in the same way. The eight varieties to be found on the 2½d. are as follows:

R1/3. There is slight doubling of the top frame-line and the shading of the scroll end in the top right corner (*Fig. 1*).

R1/8. The centre of the bottom frame-line shows duplication. This could be a retouch

as there is no other trace of doubling (*Fig. 2*).

R2/4. The upper left frame-line, the cross on the crown and the adjacent pearls all show doubling.

R2/5. The left frame-line, the scroll, the left side of the crown, the cross and the pearls are doubled (*Fig. 3*).

R2/6. The cross and pearls show very slight doubling.

R5/5. The bunch of fruit and leaves in the top right corner display very strong doubling of all the major lines. Doubling also affects the horizontal and diagonal lines of the frame design all the way down to the words PICKING LIMES. The vertical frame lines are doubled adjacent to the bunch of fruit — the outer one being the more prominent. With a strong glass traces of doubling can be seen elsewhere and they and the others already mentioned are illustrated at *Fig. 4* — comparison with *Fig. 1* clearly shows the areas affected by doubling on R5/5.

R5/7. Slight doubling occurs in the south-east corner (*Fig. 5*), and fairly strong doubling affects the vertical lines in the south-west corner (*Fig. 6*).

R5/9. The horizontal lines in the right frame panel are slightly duplicated.

½d. The bottom horizontal frame line on R4/4 is markedly stronger than on any other stamp. There is no trace of other duplication on R4/4 which leads to the possibility that it is a retouch (*Fig. 7*).

1d. In the January 1984 issue of *Geosix* (the quarterly journal of the KGVICS), H. Mason drew attention to twenty instances of doubling on the 1d. value and confirmed, that, like the other values, such duplication occurred on all printings. Extensive doubling of the right-hand vertical frame line on R4/7 is the most noticeable variety mentioned.

1½d. Four examples of strong doubling occur on the 1½d. at R1/6 and R3/9 and R5/5. The first three show duplication of all vertical lines in the south-west corner (*Fig. 8*) and have been given footnote status in the *Commonwealth* catalogue. R5/5 appears, at first glance, to be similar to the probable

retouch on the ½d., as the bottom line is doubled. However, use of a good glass shows that the lettering of 'PICKING LIMES' is affected and it is, therefore, more likely to be a shift like the others (*Fig. 9*).

2d. The horizontal lines in the top right corner of R6/10 are all doubled (*Fig. 10*).

3d. R4/2 shows heavy duplication of the vertical frame lines and the trunks of the two near-by palm trees (*Fig. 11*). This is another variety noted in the *Commonwealth* catalogue.

6d. The 17 March 1951 issue of *Stamp Collecting* described the very strong duplication occurring in the lower right corner of R2/10 as a re-entry (*Fig. 12*). It is fair to challenge this as once again the doubling occurs in the corner of the stamp which leads us back to the suggestions in *GSM* concerning similar examples on the 2½d. quoted in an earlier paragraph. Whatever the cause, it has gained a mention in *Commonwealth* and, with the others, is valued at about six times normal. To complete the record another minor example of horizontal doubling occurs on R4/6. with slight vertical doubling on R4/8.

2s. The 2s., rather like the 1d., shows many instances of very slight duplication. The most noticeable examples reported are, first R3/1 where doubling affects the upper left and lower right vertical frame lines. Secondly, the adjacent stamp at R3/2 has doubled frame lines in the south-east corner, while the adjacent stamp at R3/3 has a duplicated upper horizontal frame line. Fourthly, R4/1 has doubling of the right outer vertical frame line and finally, R5/3 shows doubling in the north-east corner of the horizontal frame lines.

2s.6d. *Commonwealth* notes that R3/7 shows a 'Re-entry' in the lower left corner.

I am confident that other minor varieties can be found on the values not mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, but regretfully shortage of material limits my list. Oh, for the days when sheets of KGV low value definitives were regarded by dealers as wall-paper! To-day sheets are hard to find and research inevitably suffers.