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The Bradbury, Wilkinson 2s 6d Seahorses

Graeme Webster

Further to Robert Maushammer's recent article[1] and Bryan Kearsley's response[2] concerning the Bradbury, Wilkinson ('BW') printings of the KGV 2s 6d stamp, I offer a few observations based on my investigations to date, aided by Bryan, whose detailed knowledge of the plates and their characteristics is unsurpassed.

Mr Maushammer probably does not realise the 'can of worms' he is opening up, which makes it difficult to know where to start. The BW printings abound with myths and misconceptions that, over many years, have caused much confusion. Ongoing recent research has already gone a long way towards dispelling some of these. As the request for information concerns the 2s 6d value, I shall consider mainly that value. However, the 5s and 10s values are easier to unravel, as there are fewer plates and relatively more archive material[3] available. This has helped to point the way for the 2s 6d value.

The prime source of confusion is probably the use of philatelic plate numbers that bear no relationship to the actual plates and official plate numbers or their sequence of use. These philatelic plate numbers were allocated arbitrarily many years ago. For example, the left and right panes of the first 2s 6d printing plate used are Philatelic Plates 6 and 11 respectively. (Those of the 5s and 10s values are Philatelic Plates 2 and 4; and 5 and 9 respectively, although there were only ever four double-pane plates of the 10s value! Confused?). So, if like Mr Maushammer, one is considering Philatelic Plates 6 or 11, these are the left or right panes of the *first printing plate* used from December 1918 to March 1919

(to print 75,000 sheets) and from December 1919 to January 1920 (again 75,000 sheets). The next 2s 6d printing plate comprised Philatelic Plates 8 and 2 and was used from December 1920 to January 1921 and again a year later. (To avoid introducing further confusion, I do not propose to provide the official plate numbers here.) Given wartime skilled manpower shortages and lack of experience, it is hardly surprising that the first plate features more plate varieties than later plates. (Incidentally, the dates I mention are those of *printing* rather than of circulation, and my measurements have been rounded to 0·1 mm in the interest of clarity.)

Plates, Sizes and Dampened Paper (1918–24)

Another prime source of confusion has been references to 'Type A' and 'Type B' plates of various sizes and related 'dots'. This is a complete misconception and many exceptions have been reported over the years.

Contrary to popular belief, *all* of the 2s 6d plate impressions before 1930 were the *same size* (23 mm) and the differences in stamp sizes are due *solely* to variations in *paper shrinkage*. *All* the individual impressions on *every plate* before 1930 were the same size simply because they were all derived from the same die and all the plates were made the same way. (The slight variation in the later impressions is due mainly to a change in the method of production of the plates, which I will explain later.)

The guide dots, which were used on *all* plates, were *separately inscribed* onto the plates to assist in accurately laying down the stamp impressions. They usually, but not always, appear midway along the stamps. The process has been described elsewhere[4], but has also been extensively mis-described over the years! Guide dots appear in various positions relative to the stamp impressions, even on the same plate, but order and logic does emerge from this apparent disorder (but I will not discuss this here). Guide dots do not normally appear above the top row of stamps, as the dot associated with each stamp is the one *below*. Hence an additional row of these dots usually appears in the sheet margin *below the bottom row*. Some of the dots were successfully burnished out but they had a tendency to re-appear, or become more pronounced, or disappear as the (pre-1930) plates were worked. After 1930 removal was generally successful, as will become apparent. All things considered, the presence or absence of a guide dot on a *single* stamp usually reveals almost nothing.

Turning now to the stamps, until November 1924 these were printed on dampened paper, gummed after printing. When printing began in November 1918, paper produced under wartime conditions was used and the height of the printed stamps was 22·5–22·6 mm.

Bradbury, Wilkinson had presumably based their calculations and spacing on a measurement of about 22·5 mm, or a comparable Imperial equivalent, as this produces stamps in close registration with the perforation comb. I have examined some early examples measuring 22·5 mm but most measure closer to 22·6 mm. (Some examples of the first printing were perforated using a comb with 16 holes, rather than 15 holes extending from the baseline. This produced a distinctive overlapping or 'interrupted' perforation, contrary to specification, but this was quickly stopped by the Post Office. Examples can be found in the Post Office Collection and the 'Shaida' Collection included one example *(Fig. 1)* Improvements in the quality of the paper (and gum?) after 1918 almost certainly caused the increased height of 22·6 mm.

Later, when paper produced by Wm Joynson was introduced in 1922, following trials in 1920–21[5], the height of the stamps increased further to 22·7 mm or more. Thus, as Mr Maushammer and others before have observed, the same plate could produce stamps of different heights, the differences being due solely to paper, dampening and/or gumming variations. (Slight variations can also occur within a sheet.) These variations caused the perforation comb to move gradually out of close registration and produced a widening of the uppermost perforation tooth on each vertical side. Given that the correct width of a side tooth is about 0·65 mm, the widening of up to 0·25 mm can be quite noticeable *(Fig. 2)*. (With experience, this can be a useful visual indicator of period, size and, ultimately, plating options.)

Fig. 1 — Overlapping or 'interrupted' perforation on some first Bradbury, Wilkinson stamps (1918), produced by additional 16th perforation pin.

Fig. 2 — Wide upper vertical side perforation tooth especially noticeable on Bradbury, Wilkinson stamps printed from 1922 to 1924.

Between 1918 and 1924, four double-pane 2s 6d plates were made and used to print 575,000 sheets of stamps. (Bryan Kearsley refers to these as 'Series I' plates.) Complete double-pane proof sheets of the first and second double-pane plates in their original states are held in the Inland Revenue Archive at the British Library, enabling these to be correlated to philatelic plates. Around 1921, BW started to add additional perforation guide marks, giving rise to variations in the marginal markings within the same plate. A further two double-pane plates, which include Philatelic Plates 3, 5 and 12, were made in January and February 1922 and put to press immediately, but no proof sheets have come to light. These plates include the additional perforation guide marks.

All stamps printed on dampened paper can be easily and unmistakably identified as such.

Incidentally, plate identification is not straightforward. The Post Office Collection does not include examples from every plate and does not indicate the plates used. The central marginal crosses are often partially trimmed or obscured by perforations and the sheet trimming markings are rarely found complete, even on whole sheets as, for every trimming mark that remains visible, the opposite mark was almost invariably trimmed off when the sheets were cut to size 8 x 12 in.

'Dry' Printing (1925–29)

When printing commenced on undampened paper in December 1925, all the earlier plates became redundant due to the elimination of paper shrinkage. New plates were made for all three values, with the spacing, both horizontal and vertical, adjusted to compensate for the elimination of paper shrinkage. The height of the stamps printed from these first 'dry' plates therefore increased to the true size of the plate impression, about 23 mm, although there could still be slight variation due to gumming after printing, which continued until at least 1929. New 'mixed furnish' paper produced by Portals Ltd, was introduced in 1927. Like their predecessors, these new plates featured 'dots', as reported on various occasions over the years but not necessarily understood.

The first 'dry' printing (of all three values) is distinctive in that, for some unknown reason, some of it was perforated top feed rather than the usual bottom feed, resulting in the normal top and bottom marginal perforation configurations being transposed *(Fig. 3)*. Most examples found have been overprinted for use in Ireland. Upper or lower marginal unoverprinted (British) examples in mint condition are seldom found, although corner blocks of all three values are held in The Royal Philatelic Collection.

It was quickly realised that the absence of moisture and the greater plate pressure required for 'dry' printing resulted in increased paper abrasion and caused the plates to wear rapidly

Fig. 3 — *(top)* Top feed perforation on first Bradbury, Wilkinson stamps printed on undampened paper (December 1925). *(bottom)* Same plate but usual bottom feed perforation.

and require replacement. A further two double-pane plates were made in 1926, followed by one in 1927. Most of these were reported as having become worn and, in all, only 335,000 sheets were printed. Not all of these plates have been identified but some were considered defective by the Post Office on account of broken lettering (to which Bryan refers) which was traced to the transfer roller / roller punch, and action was taken to rectify this from the next plates, made in 1930.

Bryan refers to these as 'Series II' plates. However, for individual stamps, the prime difference is in the *process* rather than in the plates. Only multiple examples reveal the alterations to the spacing between the stamps, which was the main change to the plates.

New Plates (1930)

The problem of rapid plate wear was overcome by changing the method of production of the plates. Following experiments and the successful use of chrome-faced plates from 1928 for the 5s value and for the 1929 PUC £1 stamp, new chrome-faced plates for the 2s 6d and 10s values were made in January 1930. The metallurgy and characteristics of chrome-faced plates are quite different from those of 'traditionally' case hardened plates. The new plates were quite distinctive on account of the apparent absence of guide dots, the absence of the 'broken letters', the height *and spacing* of the stamp impressions and, at last, good registration of the perforations, probably Bradbury, Wilkinson's most enduring production shortcoming. (The broken 'S' of the 10s value was also rectified at this time.) Bryan refers to these as 'Series III' plates. These plates remained in use until BW's contract

was terminated in 1934, although the 1928 5s plate was re-chromed in 1931. It is not yet certain whether all three 2s 6d plates were put to press as there are no reports of worn plates and only 231,000 sheets were printed between 1930 and 1934.

There was a slight reduction in the height of the stamps printed from chrome-faced plates, almost certainly due to the use of a thinner, softer base plate. The use of pre-gummed paper, which would also have contributed to a slight reduction in height, appears to have taken place about this time. The usual measured height is about 22·9 mm, with very little variation. By its nature, the process of chrome-facing resolved the problem of effective and permanent removal of the guide dots (although faint dots can usually be found in the sheet margin below the bottom row of stamps).

Single stamps produced on undampened paper, using either 'Series II' or 'Series III' plates, are distinctive and can be easily and unmistakably identified as such (although not yet recognised in the SG *Specialised Catalogue*).

Other matters — 'Ribbed' Paper

Mr Maushammer also asked about the so-called 'ribbed' paper. All the available evidence points to this having occurred during the December 1920 – January 1921 printing (of all three values) and therefore involved Philatelic Plate 2 and its companion Plate 8, in the case of the 2s 6d value.

However, ribbed paper was not specified nor supplied at any time. On that basis, it has been suggested that the ribbed effect was a transient gumming defect rather than a paper variation, which it could equally have been. Personally, I do not readily subscribe to either explanation, mainly on the basis of its characteristics and variations and the presence of ribbing on used examples. I suspect overheating in the drying chamber after gumming, but I am also rather sceptical concerning its merit as a philatelic variety.

I hope these comments address some of Mr Maushammer's questions, without going into too much detail, and I would welcome comments from other members, either through the Editor or Leslie Wilkinson or in person at York later in July.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the kind assistance of Douglas Muir at Post Office Heritage, David Beech and Rod Vousden at the British Library, all of whom have allowed me, with great patience, to examine material in their care, Michael Sefi, Deputy Keeper of The Royal Philatelic Collection, Bryan Kearsley and Leslie Wilkinson. Several dealers have also provided me

with useful research material, usually at considerable personal gain to themselves and exorbitant cost to me, yet I remain grateful!

References

1. GBJ, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 2–11.
2. GBJ, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 52–55.
3. Various PO Archives files, mainly within POST 52.
4. *Postage Stamps in the Making* (re-written edition) by John Easton (1949) pp. 102–4 (also *The London Philatelist*, Vol. 66, pp. 148–50 by Cecil G. Shaw (1957)).
5. GBJ, Vol. 37, No. 6, pp. 104–111. ✉

Army Telegraph Stamps

Sam Lawrence FRPSL

I have been rather puzzled for some time as to why the British Army should require special stamps *(Figs 1 & 3)* printed for themselves, where other Government departments such as Board of Trade, Government Parcels, etc., made do quite comfortably with the postage stamps of Queen Victoria overprinted for their respective usages (although they did overprint the ½d value — see Fig. 2). One could probably make a case out for the War Office requiring the use of telegrams for inland communications, where time was not of such importance as it was to the Army in the field, but there again, in the heat of battle, the question arises, why use stamps when speed was vital? And it is ludicrous to suppose that the army in action kept tally of telgrams sent and *paid for them*!

Fig. 2

The reason why the authorities had the printers prepare and print special stamps for Army use only lies in the annals of the Royal Corps of Signals. It all started, as so many military innovations, in the field. Prior to the development of the telegraph system, a number of means of communications was used. During the early part of the 19th century when the

Fig. 1 — Army Telegraph stamps used in the Ashanti Campaign.
These stamps were printed, and overprinted, by De La Rue using some of the unappropriated dies.

British Army was spearheading the advance and conquest of the British Empire, notably in Africa, runners were used, as was semaphore and heliograph; in fact anything to speed up information was used to send and receive.

The invention and development of the telegraph changed all that for ever. When the Government nationalised all the small telegraph companies in the UK in 1870, the GPO found themselves extremely short of engineers to run the system. Arrangements were made with the War Office to recruit young men of 16-plus for training. These young men and other experienced engineers from the Royal Engineers, were formed into army units. This had two major effects: The GPO was able to use these men when the army was not in action abroad; and the army had a ready-made reserve of telegraph operaters as and when required for their expeditions and skirmishes as they were then called. The initiative was taken by a Col. Gossett of the Royal Engineers and so a number of special army units were formed.

At first, a telegraph detachment was formed into a platoon troop. This first troop consisted of two officers and 133 other ranks. The unit had 12 four-wheeled wagons, each loaded with three miles of 3-strand heavy cables rolled on half-mile drums, with the necessary iron poles to carry the wires. There were also four office wagons fitted with instruments and eight spare wagons. All the drivers of these vehicles were trained in the use of this equipment.

Fig. 3 — Military Telegraph stamps were first used in the Nile Expedition of 1884.

In the following year, 1871, the establishment was brought up to the strength of five officers, 245 other ranks and 15 horses. For the next 13 years this group provided detachments, as and when the British Army was involved in their 'skirmishes' and expeditions.

In 1884, all these odd units were amalgamated in the Telegraph Battalion; and that was the position until the outbreak of the First World War. The units and later this Battalion saw service in the ASHANTI CAMPAIGN of 1873–74, in BECHUANALAND in 1884–85 and also in the same years in the NILE and SUAKIN EXPEDITIONS. The history of the British Army during the BOER WARS has been too well documented to mention here, but the Telegraph Battalion certainly played its part in those campaigns.

In all the campaigns, representatives of the press were present and they were able, via the Army Telegraph link, to send details of the campaigns swiftly to their newspapers. The officers and other ranks were also allowed to use the Army sytem to keep in touch with their folks back home. These telegrams had to be paid for: whilst the Army kept in constant touch with the War Office by telegram for which no charge was made, anything other than military matters that were sent required records kept and payment made.

There was, however, an exception made in the use of stamps produced and printed for the British Army: two Cape of Good Hope values *(Fig. 4)* overprinted 'Military Telegraphs' were brought into use by Sir Charles Warren when he entered Vryburg in Bechuanaland on 7 February 1885 and were never used for civilian purposes.

Fig. 4

During the second ASHANTI war of 1896 the Army sent a total of 13,992 telegrams, an everage of 300 per day, but unfortunately there are no records of how many were 'private' telegrams.

It can now be seen why some of the high values of these stamps were needed, up to the £5 value, as the press corps, filing copy of the various battles, must have send telegrams of astonishing lengths.

In conclusion, I must confess that I cannot see why these stamps are classed as 'Cinderellas' because they served just as good a purpose as any other means of communiacation employed by the GPO.

Sources

With the advent of the telephone, the Telegraph Battalion became (and still is) The Royal Corps of Signals. Their HQ and museum is now in Blandford Forum. The museum's Web site is at www.royalsignals.army.org.uk/museum/main.htm

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NALDER, Major-General R. F. H. CB, OBE *The Royal Corps of Signals: A History of its Antecedents and Development (c.1880–1955)*. London: Royal Signals Institution, 1958.

STANLEY GIBBONS, *Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue*, Volume 1: Queen Victoria. London and Ringwood: 2001 (12th edn). ✉

1841 1d red-brown Plate 10 with Inverted Watermark

When preparing his *Essential Guide to the Great Britain Line Engraved 1d and 2d Stars 1840–1864*, Dr Ken Statham requested members to supply him with details of inverted watermarks in their collections. Among the items I submitted to him was this example from Black Plate 10 in red-brown. Dr Statham confirmed that this was the only example from this plate known to him. The stamp has a BPA certificate (1998) and has been included in the listing for this plate (as SG Spec. AS69h) in the recently published 12th edition of Volume 1 of the SG *Specialised* catalogue.

DAVID LEWTHWAITE

Early Use of Penny Black Plate 1b

This Penny Black Plate 1b CL (with non-coincident re-entry) on cover *(Fig. 1)* was sent in by **Geoffrey Eves** who suspected that it was posted on 13 June 1840, making it a very early usage. The postmarks are unclear but the red octagonal paid d.s. *(Fig. 2)* is clearly dated the 15th and (not so clearly) '8Mg', i.e. 8 o'clock in the morning. The day on the black evening duty c.d.s. *(Fig. 3)* is not clear, but the month (June) is.

The date codes for the evening duty c.d.s. for June 1840 (derived from W. G. Stitt Dibden's *London Date Stamp Codes* published by The Postal History Society in 1958) are given in the table (see *May Dates*, p. 12 for a similar table for May 1840). The date code on the evening duty c.d.s. *(Fig. 3)* is a poor but distinguishable 'W' so the date must be 13 June 1840.

Fig. 1
(reproduced from an intentionally dark photocopy to show up the postmarks)

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Date (1840)	Code letter
1 June	O, P, Q
2 June	R, S, T
3 June	U, V, W
4 June	X, Y, Z
5 June	A, B, C
6 June	D, E, F
7 June	Sunday
8 June	G, H, I
9 June	J, K, L
10 June	M, N, O
11 June	P, Q, R
12 June	S, T, U
13 June	V, W, X
14 June	Sunday
15 June	Y, Z, A
16 June	B, C, D
17 June	E, F, G
18 June	H, I, J
19 June	K, L, M
20 June	N, O, P
21 June	Sunday
22 June	Q, R, S
23 June	T, U, V
24 June	W, X, Y
25 June	Z, A, B
26 June	C, D, E
27 June	F, G, H
28 June	Sunday
29 June	I, J, K
30 June	L, M, N

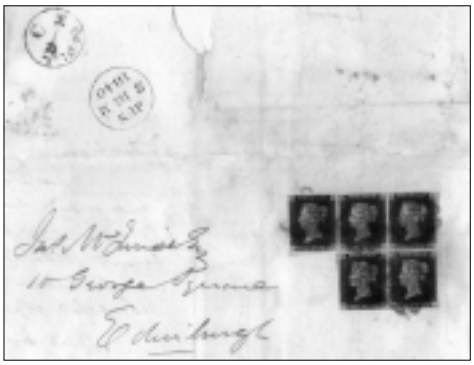
Earliest known use of Plate 1b

The SG *Specialised* catalogue, 1st–12th edns (1963–2001), gives 12 June 1840 as the earliest known date of use of Plate 1b, as do Statham's *Essential Guide* (1995), Seymour & Gardiner-Hill (1967), Seymour, 2nd edn (1950) and Nissen (1922); but Proud's *Penny Black Plates* (1985), Litchfield's *Guide Lines* (1949) and Robson Lowe (1952) all give 8 June 1840. Can anyone clarify this situation?

MJ

Earliest 1840 Twopenny Blue Block used on Cover

George Gati



At the recent sale of Dr Pichai Buranasombati's collection by Shreves in London on 15 March 2001, I purchased Lot 224, an 1840 Twopenny Blue block of five used on cover, cancelled by red Maltese Crosses. I noticed this lot because I had never seen a block of this stamp on cover cancelled with *red* Maltese Crosses. I knew it was rare but didn't yet realise just how rare. My first attempt to find out was to search through the great GB sales of the past, which included Seymour, Victoria, Daisy, Maximus, Adams, Tes, Wills, Atkinson, Griffiths, Manzi, Shaida, Fisher and Grunin, all of which were of world class, but to my astonishment found that not a single example of a Twopenny block on cover with red Maltese Crosses had been recorded in these sales.

My next 'port-of-call' was to look into smaller general sales of GB and speak to knowledgeable researchers in this field. Catalogues yielded nothing, but my friend Nicky Hiliman told me that he recalled a very badly damaged block of four in the Joseph Silkin sale (Harmers, June 1971). Nicky's great knowledge and superb memory paid off; it was Lot 44, a very damaged block on a wrapper to Canada. The wrapper was dated 'AUG 31 1840', and when I told Nicky, he made a suggestion that got me fired up by saying 'I wouldn't be surprised if your cover, which is dated 16 June 1840, is the earliest recorded example of the Twopenny Blue in a block and used on cover, irrespective of red or black Maltese Cross cancellations'. The importance of Nicky's suggestion was that because red cancellations came first, if this is the earliest with red cancel then it must be *the earliest recorded example per se*.

My next move was to contact another great student of GB philately who is renowned for his expertise, Andrew Claridge, formerly in charge for many years of the GB department at Phillips. Andrew responded with a characteristically quick reply; first congratulating me on getting the lot which he said should have been bought by someone else who 'fell asleep' at the moment it was knocked down and 'would have paid a considerably higher price', but be that as it may, he knew of one other such item, which was in his own Auction (Grosvenor 29 June 1999). He immediately looked it up and and found it was a block of six on cover with red Maltese Crosses, but to my great relief was dated 26 June 1840.

My hopes were now high, only three items located, and my one being by far the earliest. The next step was to look into Mike Jackson's *May Dates* and Robson Lowe's *The British Postage Stamp*, both of which had to be carefully examined. Mike's book is a superb study and record on all usages in May 1840 and Robson Lowe's book is based on the collection made by the late R. M. Phillips which was presented to the Nation in 1965 to found the National Postal Museum. Neither books yielded any information to pre-date my new find.

My final step before claiming the new cover as being the earliest recorded usage of the Twopenny in a block on cover was to contact Karl Louis in Germany, who is a renowned keeper of records of GB philatelic material which he has compiled over many years. He has over 50,000 index cards devoted to tracing and recording GB stamps, covers, proofs and postal history as to where they were sold, what they fetched and any other important information on provenance and condition.

Mr Louis promptly responded with great efficiency and sent me photocopies of the above two (Silkin and Grosvenor) covers plus another block of four used in September 1840 cancelled with red Maltese Crosses (Harmers sale 10/18 November 1947). Of the four located covers mine was still by far the earliest. To sum up the dates, I will list the relevant four covers:

Blocks of Twopenny Blues used on cover		
Date of posting	*Size of block*	*Auction details*
16 June 1840	Block of five	Shreves, 15 Mar. 2001, Lot 224, 'Dr Pichai Buranasombati'
26 June 1840	Block of six	Grosvenor, 29 June 1999, Lot 240
31 August 1840	Block of four	Harmers, 14–16 June 1971, Lot 44, 'Silkin'
19 September 1840	Block of four	Harmers, 10–18 Nov. 1947, Lot 141

The important thing to bear in mind here is that RED Maltese Crosses were introduced first (on 6 May 1840) and used for about four months, before BLACK Maltese Crosses were introduced (the earliest recorded example of the black Maltese Cross is 31 August 1840), therefore the earliest block of Twopenny Blues on cover with RED Maltese Crosses must be the earliest use of any Twopenny block on cover.

Recently a lot of publicity was given in the philatelic press that the Queen's Collection acquired the earliest block of Penny Blacks on cover, which was a block of ten on a 6 May 1840 (first day) cover. I am thrilled at the thought that I may now own the earliest known Twopenny block used on cover. ✉

KEVII One Penny Varieties

Terry Pusterla

Collapsed plate

In Tony Wiseman's book *The De La Rue Years, Vol. 1* he describes and analyses a number of plate varieties, one being the collapsed plate. The rarity of this condition meant that very few examples have been found. Those quoted in his book did not include the 1d value. I have just come into possession of a copy showing the left outer, inner and margin lines bowing in and out, clearly shown in Fig. 1. Is this the first to be found on this value?

Fig. 1

Unrecorded retouch?

It appears that extensive retouching has occurred at the base of the King's bust. The area affected looks to be too large to be due to a mechanical fault. The base of the King's bust has lost its curvature with some neck lines being thickened. In addition, below the bust further thickening of the lines is apparent. The right loop of the bow has lost the top two folds, and the inner loop below has lost its shape. Fig. 2 shows the variety, alongside a normal stamp for comparison. Can anyone duplicate this variety?

Fig. 2

The 'Wattses' underprint

Having found seven of the above underprints, two have the recorded 18 mm wide print (see SG *Specialised Catalogue*, Vol. 2, 11th edn, p. 463) whilst five have an unrecorded 17·5 mm print. Could both dimensions occur on the same plate? The underprint is recorded in black only: Fig. 3 shows a 17·5 mm wide print in *red*, dated -E.19.06. Any comments would be appreciated. ✉

Fig. 3

Focus on GB

1884 6d 'lilac and green' issue 'SPECIMEN' watermark sideways-inverted

I have in my possession a copy of the 1884 6d dull green lettered JK, overprinted 'SPECIMEN' (SG Spec. K24s, SG 194) but with watermark sideways-inverted. The normal, unoverprinted stamp with sideways-inverted watermark is unpriced in the SG *Specialised* catalogue so seems to be quite rare. Can any member throw any light on it? Have I got a find?

J. W. M. BASS

KGV Shades

I want to express my thanks to Vic Currie for initiating the conversations in the Journal concerning GB shades. While I don't know the answers to the issue of repeatability of scientifically developed color measurements as it relates to shades, the discussion has triggered an interest for me in KGV.

Collecting shades in older US stamps was once a popular aspect of the hobby here. The cost of many Washington-Franklins or other older series having become prohibitive for many of us, it is a pleasure to find that KGV is still reasonably priced, except for the most rare shades. Arthur Ryan has been able to provide many fine examples for me and has expanded my KGV collection beyond the 'one-of-a-kind' approach.

I recently noticed that the Murray Payne catalog states *'. . . it is borne in mind that shade designations are fixed in relation to stamps in the same set.'* It is probably too much to expect that reflectivity measurements could work across a continuum of stamp sets with colored paper or other variables (though maybe not). It would be nice, however, to have a definition within a set of 'yellow-green', as an example, that is better than the subjective.

A calibration set of shades would be a 'must' if results are to be shared across machines and variable conditions of instrument setup along with some sense of how the calibration table itself changes with age. Does such a color table exist for colors and shades listed in the Stanley Gibbons catalog? I would appreciate any information on what exists today in this area.

Thanks again to Mr Currie for sparking my interest in this collecting arena. Whatever the color measurement readings, my album pages of KGV shades are gorgeous!

STEVE McGILL, USA

1937 Coronation Stamp

Robin Restall's article (GBJ, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 79) on 'A Flaw on the 1937 Coronation Stamp' prompted me to look at the collection on this stamp put together by my father, Reg Powell, a task I hadn't done for a number of years!

Among the control blocks I have of Cylinder 19 no stop, was a well advanced example of the blotch of dark brown on the edge of the Queen's right cheek, beside the earring, just as illustrated in the article, and described by Robin as occurring on R19/2. Looking through the used material I have with various minor varieties, none of them mentions this brown blotch, and there was no comment against the control block example I have. However, this flaw is obviously there, and should be watched for on this stamp produced 60 years ago!

JOHN POWELL , Canada

Re-use of Line-Engraved Plates

I have been reading this correspondence with interest. Whilst I am not an engineer, I have an interest in old tools and the following may be of interest. Winston Hollins mentions 'plane' marks (GBJ, Vol. 39, No. 2, p. 22). In victorian times a metal planing machine was not uncommon before the arrival of milling machines. It comprised a flat work-table mounted on a carriage, which moved the work repeatedly under a tool-bit, which in turn was moved incrementally at each successive pass of the work under the tool. While such a tool would produce an acceptably flat surface for many applications, it would not compare to hand-scraping or surface grinding. As the tool effectively gouged a small channel on each pass, I imagine it would have imparted a pattern of 'stress' lines into the resultant 'flat' surface. Subsequent hand scraping would not affect these. The later application of a transfer die, which displaces the surface layer, would be thus be operating on a surface of uneven consistancy.

NICHOLAS THOMAS

Plating Postage Due Controls

Leslie Wilkinson

I found the article by Dr Jean Alexander in GBJ Vol. 39 most interesting and congratulate her on making a start on this neglected area of philately. I can only add one piece of information to her study. The single 1d Plate 1 K29 matches Plate X L29.

A total of 43 plates was made for Postage Due values up to 1s of which 33 were converted for use by Waterlow, as shown in the table.

POSTAGE DUE PLATES MADE AND CONVERTED

Value	Plates made	Converted
½d	6	6
1d	7	6
1½d	3	1
2d	7	5
3d	3	2
4d	6	5
5d	7	6
1s	4	2

No new plates were made for use by Waterlow other than the 2s 6d Plate 1/44 which was made on 29 May 1924. It should therefore, theoretically, be possible to identify the same plate used by different printers.

Although the above table indicates the total number of plates made, and converted, at this stage it is not known if all these were actually used for printing. More research is still needed on this aspect. ✉

Book Reviews

TRAVELLING POST OFFICES & BAG TENDERS OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND, AN OPERATIONAL HISTORY FROM 1839 TO 1959. Allan Harvey MM, TD. Softbound, xii + 83 pp. Published by the TPO & Seapost Society 2000. ISBN 09518726-3-X. Obtainable from Chris Bartlett, 41 Paxton Gardens, Woking, CU21 5TS. No price quoted.

Allan Harvey spent the last 13 years of his Post Office career in departments connected with TPO working, an occupation that took him over the whole network and provided him with the documents, time tables, Post Office Circulars and the experience that form the basis of this very informative and comprehensive book.

The index lists the names of over 300 services but many are just changes of name; this can be confusing but the author sorts them out and gives when and why the changes were made.

The book provides detailed timings of the trains as well as staffing of the vehicles and the depots from which the personnel were obtained. Included are the special arrangements needed to deal with industrial action, Sunday working and wartime conditions, the latter including modifications to the running of the Irish Night Mail in 1918 due to U-boats in the Irish Sea. Accidents, postmarks, the late-fee box and pouch transfer apparatus all have their mention and in the case of TPOs starting at ports, the overseas towns from which they received mail are listed.

Rowland Hill is mentioned in connection with the London & Exeter TPO when in 1855, because of the bad timekeeping of the scheduled trains, he arranged for special trains to be run exclusively for the use of the Post Office.

When railways began to run from London to Scotland, this note appended to a Time Bill of the Caledonian Railway Company demonstrates the effect they had on traditional local affairs: *'The Public are requested to take notice that, in consequence of instructions received from the General Post Office, it is intended, on and after the 1st day of December next* [1847] *to adopt London Time.'*

Allan explains what the Sunday Sorting Tenders were for: in 1849, in order to reduce the labour force required in London on Sundays, Down Mail Trains on Saturday nights took up letters from towns near London, sorted them and later transferred them to the Up Mail Trains for return to London.

The book is clearly laid out and well produced, but I must warn readers that times between midnight and one o'clock in the morning are sometimes referred to as p.m. and sometimes as a.m.; if this is overlooked some trains appear to have peculiar timings.

This work is a 'must' for all postal historians who attempt to trace the routes taken by covers in their collection and we must be grateful to the TPO & Seapost Society for publishing this work.

HD

GREAT BRITAIN ROAD TAX DISCS 1921–2000. R. H. Champion, E. J. Hitchings & M. Bruce. Size A4, paper cover, 19 pp., 25 b&w illustrations & 4 coloured plates. Published by The Revenue Society of Great Britain. Obtainable from Tony Hall, 57 Brandies Road, Letchworth, Herts SG6 2JA. Price £4 plus postage. No ISBN.

Before you castigate the editor of the GBJ for publishing something on such rubbish, note how the authors introduce their monograph: *'An article on vehicle tax discs may seem a long way from conventional stamp collecting. Nevertheless we feel that these vehicle receipts for a duty paid are well within the remit of revenue philately. Most such discs have indeed been printed by the same security printers who produce revenue and postage stamps.'*

The history of taxes on road vehicles goes back a long way. Hackney carriages were taxed in London from 1637, horse-drawn private carriages from 1747 and steam-driven road vehicles from 1770. The first internal combustion motor car appeared on English roads in 1894 and came under Acts of 1861 and 1865 which had taxed *'every locomotive propelled by any power containing within itself the machinery for its own propulsion'*.

It was not until 1921 that such self-propelled vehicles used on public roads were required to display a visible sign that the tax had been paid — and so the ubiquitous tax disc was born.

After enlarging on this history the authors describe and illustrate the various designs, colours and other features of the discs up to the present day. Besides the discs for private cars there have been triangular, diamond-shaped and rectangular ones for trade plates as well as special ones for agricultural machinery, environmentally-friendly HGVs and for emergency use. There are discs with overprints and handstamped or manuscript additions. In 1925 the reverse carried an advertisement for Shell Motor Spirit and Oil (like the Pear's Soap underprint on the reverse of a Victorian postage stamp this experiment was not repeated). You will already have noticed that the modern discs have security perforations interspersed with elliptical holes — just like postage stamps. For Cinderella philatelists there are the £5 Vehicle Licence Saving Stamps to collect.

This monograph is attractive and well-produced, but it was spoilt for me by some errors that a proof-reader should have noticed: the Gregorian reform of the calendar certainly did not adopt 25 March as New Year's Day; the caption to Fig. 9 erroneously implies that there was another Shell advertisement in 1991; and the printed letters are not 22 metres high!

Even if you throw away your annual licence as rubbish I am sure you will be as interested as I was in what the authors have presented you with here.

HD

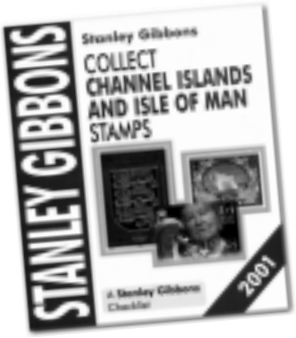
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE GREAT BRITAIN LINE ENGRAVED 1d AND 2d STARS 1840–1864. Volumes 11 & 12. Kenneth William Statham. Size A4, wire-bound. Published by Eric Paul 2001. Boxed sets of volumes 11 & 12, price £100 per set plus p&p. Available from Eric Paul Ltd, P0 Box 44, Marple, Cheshire SK6 7EE.

The sixth bite from this rich feast takes in perhaps the most neglected area of the line-engraved issues: the perforated Plates 178 to 204 and Reserve Plates 1 to 6. The format remains constant, as one would expect of a professional research scientist, and the discipline is as tight as ever. Ken's drawings continue to be clear and helpful, I only wish this series of books had been available when I first started my tortuous path into this particular forest!

No doubt in such a large work there are still items overlooked or still to be uncovered, which is one of the joys of philately. It seems very few have surfaced as yet, but I am sure Ken is waiting there to field them. Let him know, he is a nice man, does not bite and positively would welcome them I'm sure. We could perhaps one day use this Journal's goodwill and have them published here. Meanwhile we now await the next course, the Die 2 issues, perhaps to confirm our favourite finds.

WPB

SG COLLECT CHANNEL ISLANDS AND ISLE OF MAN STAMPS, 17th combined edition, 2001. Size 195 x 165 mm, softbound, 304 pp. Published by Stanley Gibbons Publications, 2001. Price £12·50. ISBN 0-85259-502-6.



This latest edition of SG's popular checklist has been fully revised and updated to include all stamp issues up to the end of 2000. Fully illustrated in black and white.

MJ

SG GREAT BRITAIN CONCISE STAMP CATALOGUE, 16th edition, 2001. Size 210 x 160 mm, softbound, 352 pp. Published by Stanley Gibbons Publications, 2001. Price £17·50. ISBN 0-85259-506-9.

The new edition of SG's *Concise* has completely revised prices throughout. It contains definitive and commemorative stamp issues up to Spring 2001. The catalogue is mainly produced to SG's usual high standards, although the quality of many of the illustrations is poor, especially in the Victorian section.

MJ