

100 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

The Postage Stamps of Great Britain, Part 23 The Edward VII Issue

by W. Ward (From Mekeel's Weekly, August 11, 1917)

(I am indebted for information regarding the Edwardian issues to the lecture read by King George V when Prince of Wales at a meeting of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, March 4, 1914.—Author's Note.)

The death of Queen Victoria, January 22, 1901, strangely enough the first month of the new century, made an apt period for the conclusion of the Victorian Era and over sixty years of national advance in science, art, government and—penny postage.

So early as the month following the great Queen's death, many rumors as to the change in the postage stamps were essayed.

For several centuries it has been a rule that the present monarch of Great Britain and Ireland should have his profile presented on the currency of the realm facing the opposite direction to his predecessor.

As example, Queen Victoria faced towards the left on the coinage, King Edward VII towards the right, and King George V towards the left.

The postage stamps of Queen Victoria faced towards the right, would therefore the postage stamps of Edward VII follow the precedent of the coinage? There was no precedent for stamps, and it was held at the time that postage stamps were practically currency.

The government contractors submitted four designs for the one penny stamps with the head of Edward VII looking to the right and another four of the same designs with the head facing the left.

These were submitted to Edward VII for his selection, and he chose the design which was eventually adopted, with the profile to the left.



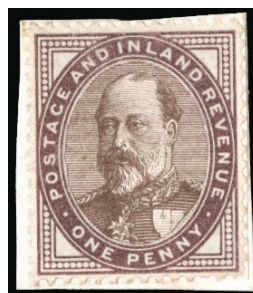
Penny Black, Edward VII Gold Sovereign and
1904 1/2d Yellowish green overprinted "SPECIMEN" Sc. 127S

Other Essays & Test Stamps

1901 Minerva Head dummy stamps unused o.g. imperforate block of four printed by De La Rue in deep carmine on gummed, chalk surfaced unwatermarked paper, top pair with graduated shading left to right and bottom pair with solid shading.



1901 1d "Transvaal" essay pair of bromide proofs of the type 1 essay one with the profile head and one with a substituted "Canada Head," as it appears on Canadian stamps, here the 1902 1c, Sc. 89.



1901 1d Composite "Paste Up" essay of the Victorian 1d lilac, a Series "A" essay with a lithographed three-quarter portrait of King Edward VII mounted on card and cut to slightly larger than stamp size, believed to be one of only two or three examples in private hands,



1902 2d King Edward VII Head and Duty Plate Essays in Black on Glazed White Card (Sc. 130P) cut to stamp size.

So early as March 11, 1901, and in reply to that great champion of Penny Postage, the late Sir John Henniker Heaton, the Secretary to the Treasury in the House of Commons stated that stamps were already in preparation, but some months must elapse before they could be ready for the public use. In that reply the Secretary to the Treasury added that it was not proposed to alter the color of the 1p stamp from mauve to red. It was then pointed out that such a change was necessary to conform with the regulations of the Universal Postal Union.

No more was heard of the projected issue until the question was asked Mr. Ansten Chamberlain in the House of Commons, May 24, 1901, whether the Treasury had entrusted the designing of the new stamps to a foreign artist, and whether no British sculptor was competent for the work.

He replied that the King had selected a profile portrait of himself made the previous year by an Austrian sculptor domiciled in London, but that it was not inferred that no British artist was competent for the work.

The artist referred to was an Austrian, Emil Fuchs, who probably got into hot water sometime afterwards on the discovery of a certain feature in his portrait of Edward VII, which I will refer to later.

A further question was asked June 7, 1901, as to whether the advice of the President of the Royal Academy or other distinguished artist had been consulted with regard to the new stamps.

The reply was in the negative and that the Postmaster General was the responsible official. He had consulted the views of the King, and that it did not appear necessary to seek further advice!

The contractors prepared the design and border embodying the selected profile of the King, and he himself selected the final design, but commenting "head leaning too far forward" and signing "Appd (approved) E. R"

This famous essay is now in the collection of King George V, his second son.

It is believed that Queen Alexandra also suggested a slight reduction in the width of the wreath upholding the Monarch's portrait.

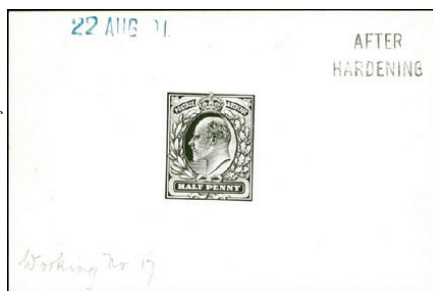
Some half dozen proofs of the 1p value were prepared in various shades of pink, lake and red, and two of mauve and purple on red paper, and the red was ultimately selected.



Left to right, 1906 1d Color Trial for Sc. 128, a perforated example printed in carmine-lake on gummed Crown watermarked paper; 1902 1d "Transvaal" essay type 2 printed in purple and mounted on a piece of small card; 1902 1d Pale green plate proof unused imperforate example printed by De la Rue on thin white card.



Left, 1906 1d Color Trial bottom right hand corner marginal imperforate example printed in carmine-rose on gummed, Crown watermarked paper; right, 1903 1d "Canada Head" Essay Color Trial (Die 2, large head) printed in dull orange on very thin high quality wove, ungummed, unwatermarked paper.



1901 1/2d Die Proof printed in black on white glazed card (92x60mm), endorsed "AFTER HARDENING" and dated "22 AUG 01."

It was decided to issue the stamps for public sale January 1, 1902, but four values of a unified design, the 1/2p, 1p, 2-1/2p and 6p were registered ready for use in 1901—the following being the dates of registration at Somerset House:

- 1/2p deep green, September 26, 1901.
- 1p scarlet red, October 16, 1901.
- 2-1/2p deep blue, December 3, 1901.
- 6p deep purple, December 3, 1901.



1902 1/2d-6d definitives set of four tied to piece by Portsmouth double ring cds's on the first day of issue, January 1, 1902.

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It was decided to issue the stamps for public sale January 1, 1902, but four values of a unified design, the 1/2p, 1p, 2-1/2p and 6p were registered ready for use in 1901—the following being the dates of registration at Somerset House:

- 1/2p deep green, September 26, 1901, Sc. 127.
- 1p scarlet red, October 16, 1901, Sc. 128.
- 2-1/2p deep blue, December 3, 1901, Sc. 131.
- 6p deep purple, December 3, 1901, Sc. 135.

A 1902 1/2d yellowish green pair, the lower stamp showing a double print variety, one of only thirteen possible examples.

1902 1d bright scarlet printed by De la Rue, overprinted "SPECIMEN"



1902 2-1/2d ultramarine, printed by DLR, overprinted "SPECIMEN"



1902 6d pale dull purple. 1902 6d Slate purple Right, Sc. 135 variety, 1911 6p bright magenta on chalk surfaced paper, perforated 14, Somerset House printing. This stamp was withdrawn from sale the same day it was issued.

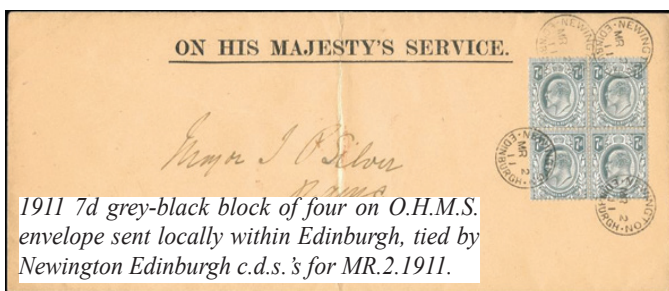


1902 6d Plate proof imperforate printed in black on thin white card.

1902 6d grey-black color trial o.g. example printed by DLR on the chalky paper salvage of the 1/2d Colonial issue perforated at foot with green marginal rule.



1902 2-1/2d set of eight bromide essays with various value tablets including the issued design, from the De la Rue archives.



1911 7d grey-black block of four on O.H.M.S. envelope sent locally within Edinburgh, tied by Newington Edinburgh c.d.s.'s for MR.2.1911.

In a post office circular of Christmas, 1901, Postmasters were ordered to make a requisition for the new stamps "not exceeding a fortnight's supply," but were specially urged to endeavor to dispose of the old stocks. Attention was also specially directed towards the color of the new 6p as likely to be confused with the then current 1 penny stamp.

For the other values of the series the old border designs were used slightly adapted to embody the Royal Crown above the King's portrait.

They made their appearance as required by the demand. One value was not considered necessary, the 4-1/2p, though why it should be thought no longer of use is puzzling as a registered letter abroad required a 4-1/2p stamp (2-1/2p for postage and 2p, the British rate of registration).

In the four high values the check corner lettering was dropped as useless and also thereby improving the appearance of the design.



Left to right, 1902 1/2d; 1911 1/2d; 1911 1/2d (Sc. 127, 133, 143)

The 1/2p stamp in its issued shade was not long in existence owing to its confusion in artificial light with the 2-1/2p. I remember several times receiving cards and letters bearing 2-1/2p stamps in place of the 1/2p.

The heavy use of the 4p value led to its being printed in one color in 1909 for economy's sake, and just previous to the death of Edward VII it was decided to likewise treat the 2p stamp in a similar manner. This latter 1909 4d pale orange, Sc. 144 was prepared but never issued, though a copy was used from a Strand, London, Post Office on a letter to the present King George.



1909 4d pale orange, Sc. 144



1910 2p unissued "Tyrian Plum" Trial Color Proof in Yellow-Ocher, perforated 14 on gummed paper. 100,000 sheets of the tyrian plum were printed, but it was decided to delay shipment to post offices until current supplies of the 2p were exhausted. With the death of King Edward VII on May 6, 1910, it was decided to destroy the entire

stock. Very few unused examples escaped destruction, and they are now considered major rarities of Great Britain.

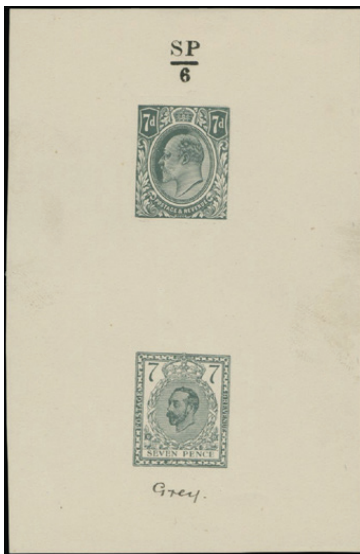
Two days before the death of the great Royal Diplomat and founder of the "Entente Cordiale," an entirely new value made its appearance in the 7p. By a strange and weird coincidence, the color was gray-black, a foreboding of the great loss Britain and



Sc. 145 pale gray shade

France would experience before the week was out! Probably no British stamp was more in demand and more speculated in throughout the world than the 7d "mourning stamp." Many persons who were not stamp collectors imagined it would certainly become a rarity! [2018 Scott catalogue value is \$42.50 mint, \$22.50 used.]

1911 se-tenant 7d grey color trials in Edwardian colors, with Edwardian design and proposed George V design printed on white wove ungummed paper, printed "SP/6" above Edwardian value and manuscript "Grey" below the George V value.

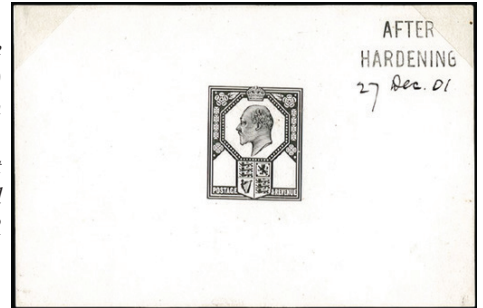


Right, 1901 5d Die Proof (Head Plate) printed in black on white glazed card, dated in manuscript "27 DEC 01" and endorsed "AFTER HARDENING".

Left, 1901 5d Composite "Paste Up" essay of the Victorian "Jubilee" series with a lithographed quarter face portrait of



King Edward VII facing left, mounted on a stout white card tablet; right, 1902 5d slate purple & ultramarine printed by De la Rue.



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For the other values of the series the old border designs were used slightly adapted to embody the Royal Crown above the King's portrait.



Left, 1901 4d Composite "Paste Up" essay of the Victorian "Jubilee" series essay with a lithographed three-quarter portrait of King Edward VII mounted on card and cut to slightly larger than stamp size, frame design similar to that used for the 1902 issue, Sc. 133; right, 1909 4d color trial, produced for the monocolour issue using the original bi-colored plates, Sc. 144TC.



Left, 1901 5d Die Proof Die proof (Head Plate) printed in black on white glazed card, dated in manuscript "27 DEC 01" and endorsed "AFTER HARDENING"; right, 1902 5d slate purple & ultramarine, Sc. 134.



Left, 1910 7d Die proof, Sc. 145P, uncleared example printed in black on white glazed card. The 7d die proofs are by far the scarcest of all the Edwardian values; right, 1910 7d Color trial printed in pale blue on gummed, Crown watermarked paper. Produced for the monocolour issue, Sc. 145.



Left, 1901 9d composite Paste Up essay of the Victorian Jubilee series with a lithographed quarter face portrait of King Edward VII facing left, mounted on a stout white card tablet; right, 1902 9d slate purple & ultramarine, Sc. 136.



Left, 1910 10d dull purple and scarlet imperforate plate proof printed on poor quality buff paper; right, 1906 10d Dull purple & scarlet, Sc. 137.

1910 10d used, No cross on crown variety printed by De la Rue, Sc. 137d

In the four high values the check corner lettering was dropped as useless and also thereby improving the appearance of the design.



1902 1sh King Edward VII, De la Rue Printing, Sc. 138, without numerals in corners or sides as in lower values.

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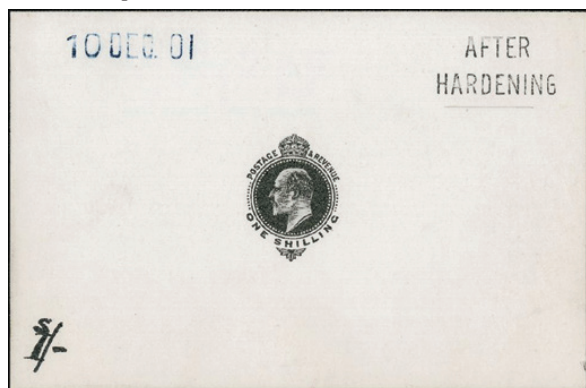
The Postage Stamps of Great Britain, Part 26 The Edward VII Issue

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In the four high values the check corner lettering was dropped as useless and also thereby improving the appearance of the design.



c.1910 "Minerva" head stamp essays, set of four corner marginal bi-colored essays on chalk surface paper, printed by De La Rue as promotional samples.



1901 1s Die proof of the Head Plate printed in black on white glazed card (92 x 60mm), dated "10 DEC 01", endorsed "AFTER HARDENING" and bearing a manuscript "1s/-" at foot.



Left, 1901 1s composite "Paste Up" Series A essay of the Victorian "Jubilee" series with a lithographed three-quarter portrait of King Edward VII mounted on card and cut to slightly larger than stamp size, believed to be one of only two or three examples in private hands; right, 1901 1s Composite "Paste Up" Series B essay of the Victorian "Jubilee" series, with a lithographed quarter face portrait of King Edward VII facing left, mounted on a stout white card tablet, believed to be one of only two or three examples in private hands.



1902-10 1sh King Edward VII, De La Rue Printing



1902 2s6d Lilac printed by De la Rue overprinted "SPECIMEN."

The paper for the British stamps for many years had been made by the firm of Turner & Co., of Chafford Mills Lordcombe, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent, and was pulped from cuttings of Irish linen.

In the early years of Edward VII's reign several prosecutions had taken place, both in Britain and the Colonies for fraud in cleaning

cancellations: After trials to meet this attack upon the revenue, a paper possessing a chalky surface was selected, which prevented tampering at all with the stamp. The 1/2p, 2p, 3p, 4p, 5p, 6p, 9p, 10p, 1 shilling and 2sh 6p values were printed on this "safety" paper, but before it was actually put in use, reports were made by the Crown Agents of Straits Settlements and Hong Kong that many cases of cleaning the new "safety" paper had been detected in those colonies.



1902 2sh6p Slate Purple on Chalky Paper printed by De la Rue.



1911 2sh6p Dull Grayish Purple, Somerset Printing

In many cases the stamps were not tampered with at all by man, even though he happened to be the accessory before the act. It was discovered that the sun's rays would destroy such aniline colors as violet, etc. For obvious reasons and probably chiefly on account of the "soft" cancellations applied to stamps used on parcels, the chalky paper, for home use at any rate, was dropped as not satisfactory. It has also been said that the rubbing of the stamps against the pages of the post office stock books gave the appearance of having been tampered with.



1902 5sh Deep Carmine



1902 10sh Ultramarine top right corner selvage single

The watermarks throughout were the Imperial Crown. All issues of British stamps are known with inverted watermarks, but during the present issue under remark, booklets of penny, and halfpenny and penny stamps were issued.

The get-up of these booklets caused half of the sheets to be printed upside down to the other half in order to allow for binding. Blocks up to six (three horizontally by two vertically) are therefore fairly common with the watermarks inverted.

The first booklet issued consisted of 24 penny stamps, and was sold at 2sh 0-1/2p [2 shillings, 1/2 pence]. The second contained 18 penny and 12 half penny for a total of 2sh 0-1/2 p. As there was often a difficulty in balancing accounts because of the odd half-penny, a single 1/2p stamp impression

was removed from each booklet—the space being filled in with a colored diagonal cross, thus the contents 18 penny and 11 halfpenny were included in the third booklet for sale at 2 shillings. It was then decided to make no charge for the booklets, as it was urged that the majority of people would purchase booklets for the cost of the stamps alone, thereby saving the time of the postal clerks by making one sale instead of a dozen or more sales of individual stamps. The fourth booklet was similar in composition to the second, but sold at the price of the stamps only, i. e., two shillings.



1906 1/2d yellowish green booklet pane of five plus St. Andrews Cross label

In 1910, after several debates in the House of Commons it was decided for the first time for thirty years to put the expiring contracts for the postage stamp printing out for competitive tenders. For no fewer than 55 years had the firm of Messrs. de la Rue manufactured the surface printed issues of Great Britain and for thirty years held the monopoly.

Various great stamp making firms tendered, and the contract was let to the firm of Harrison & Son of London, at a great reduction on the old contract.

1911 4d Orange Harrison color trials in Edwardian colors, a pair of se-tenant color trials of the Edwardian design and proposed George V design printed on white wove un gummed paper, with printed "W/20" above Edwardian value and manuscript "Orange No.16" below the George V value.



This firm, however, could not immediately take upon itself the task of setting down machinery to cope with the enormous quantity of stamps required by such a great commercial nation, so it was for a time decided to print the two-colored values and the 6p at the great government department, Somerset House, Strand, London.

The new contracting firm took over the plates, and part of the machinery of de la Rue's. Among the new machinery installed was a perforating machine that gauged 14-1/2-15x14 in the comb. One of the stamps printed by this firm in aniline pink (1 penny) and perforated 14-1/2-15x14 is extremely scarce. All the Harrison printings and all the Somerset House



1p aniline pink, Sc. 128d



1911 3d Grey on lemon (Perf 15x14) Harrison printing.

printings with the exception of a few 6p stamps are on ordinary paper.

They are fairly easy to detect from the earlier de la Rue printings on ordinary paper, by vividness of color, rough and blotchy impression. In the unused specimens the gum is very thin and streaky, and barely adhesive.

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[Although we have completed the text for the Edward VII issue, we still have these various overprints to present. JFD.]



1902 9p Ultramarine & Violet Govt. Parcels Official, Sc. O42



1902 1 shilling Carmine Rose & Green Govt. Parcels Official, Sc. O43



Left, 1903 1-1/2p Violet & Green Admiralty Official, Sc. O80; right, 1903 3p Violet on Yellow Admiralty Official, Sc. O83. As noted in Scott, there are two types of this overprint. They differ principally in the shape of the letter M. Notice in the left stamp it is thinner and longer.



1902 1p Carmine O.W. (Office of Works) Official, Sc. O50

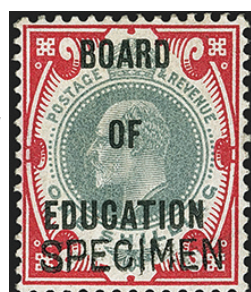


1903 6p Dull Violet Army Official, Sc. O62



1902 1/2p Gray Green, R.H. (Royal Household) Official, Sc. O63

1902 1sh Carmine Rose & Green Board of Education Official, also with "Specimen" Overprint, Sc. O71S— one of the rarest of all the Departmental issues. The stamps currently carry a Scott catalogue value of \$180,000. Examples with Specimen overprints are rarities in their own right.



British Offices in Turkey 1906 1 pi on 2p Green & Carmine Beyrout Provisional, Sc. 25



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