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The 'Downey Head' stamps were replaced with a design engraved by J A C Harrison, based on this profile of the King. This was modelled by Bertram Mackennal, from a photograph by Downey. The initials B M can be seen at lower right of the profile.



CONTENTS

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COINAGE HEAD	3
2D AND 3D: MACKENNAL WREATH FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD	4
½D AND 1½D: MACKENNAL DOLPHIN FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD	7
4D: MACKENNAL WREATH FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD	8
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDAL HEAD	9
1D AND 2½D: MACKENNAL LAUREL AND OAK LEAF FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD	11
ORIGIN OF MEDAL HEAD II	15
5D, 6D AND 7D EVE PILLAR FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II	15
8D: EVE PILLAR FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II	16
9D, 10D AND 1S: EVE WREATH FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II	17

The dissatisfaction with the 'Downey Head' stamps issued on 22 June 1911 led the Post Office to look for an alternative design. It was to take some 14 months before the new design would appear on an issued stamp. This series traces the development of the issue, drawing upon previously published works augmented with original research at The British Library Philatelic Collections (BLPC), British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) and Public Record Office (PRO).

The design chosen to replace the Downey Head was based upon the 'Coinage' and 'Medal' profile portraits of the King, which were the work of Bertram Mackennal. In fact by the end of the work, three different profile heads were required for this issue.

The work on the frames for all the stamps was well advanced during the Downey. However, it was to prove difficult to get all the parties to agree to the changes when a profile head was adopted. Remember we had the Post Office (PO) headed by the Postmaster General (PMG) who answered to Parliament, the Board of Inland Revenue who were responsible for the production of the stamps, the Royal Mint (Mint) responsible for the plates, the printers, the engravers, the designers, and the King who wanted to approve each design and colour. It is also clear that Mackennal would submit work direct to the King for approval, which caused some annoyance amongst the others involved. In consequence, it was to take some 14 to 20 months before all the values were issued.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COINAGE HEAD

Much has been written about how poor the Downey stamps were in comparison with De La Rue's (DLR) issue for King Edward VII, but were they? The King got the head he wanted – 'a real likeness rather than an idealised impression' – and the stamps from the improved die II surely compare favourably.

Whilst much criticism was made of Harrison and Sons (Harrisons) as inexperienced printers, they showed in the provisional printings of the stamps of Edward VII that they were as capable as DLR (see above). Many writers have stated the difference is apparent to the naked eye, but is it?

BPMA has a file containing complaints received about the Downey heads. This contains no letters from the public (did they notice?), but there are press cuttings and reports of questions raised in Parliament by certain MPs. Why? Was this a big political issue? Who advised the King that the colonies disliked the Downey portrait and would not adopt it, preferring the profile head? Who really wanted Harrisons to fail? Who was sitting with empty printing presses and idle staff? Whose Managing Director went to see Mr Nathan, the Secretary to the GPO, on two occasions offering to take the work over? Mr Nathan had sympathy with this – after all, his own father was for a long time a partner of the firm – yes, DLR.

Key to abbreviations

BLPC
British Library
Philatelic Collections

JACH
J A C Harrison
(stamp engraver)

PMG
Postmaster General

BPMA
British Postal
Museum & Archive

DLR had held the stamp contract since 1880, and were devastated when they lost it. However, the decision was not made by the PO, but followed an investigation by an inter-departmental committee, which found that DLR's prices were extravagantly high. This was proved when Harrisons tendered for the contract in the sum of £18,000; DLR had been charging £63,000. Indeed, DLR had grown very wealthy by the contract and certainly would have liked to regain it.

Some have sought to defend DLR and justify their charges. It was not until a court case in 1924 that it was revealed how profitable the contract was, and the lengths to which DLR went to ensure they kept it. They had been paying Waterlow & Sons £20,000 a year since 1888 to refrain from tendering, thus leaving the field clear for themselves. It was stated in evidence that the arrangement 'took the form really of a trade ring' and that the Managing Director of Waterlows 'in turn passed over to the other firm suitable sums'. After the passing of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1909, the payments to the Managing Director of Waterlows were reduced in 1909 to £500 which, to quote the evidence, 'did not leave much for the other firms' in the ring, with the result, as was admitted by the Defence, that the contract was lost by DLR when it was again put up for tender in 1910. (Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Government Printing Establishments, March 1927.)

With that background, there was no way the contract would revert to DLR. The virtual monopoly previously held by them was broken: from then onwards the stamp and stationery contract was split, with the Mint taking over the production of the plates and the printing of the 6d stamps. However, the Mint and Harrisons had to improve the quality of the stamp production to quell the political pressure raised by the Downey issue. While an investigation was underway into how the issued stamps could be improved – which led to the new Downey dies – the PMG on 3 November 1911 rejected the Downey head for the 4d to 1s, and decided to introduce a 'Profile' head.

Two weeks later, the King suggested that the Mint should adopt a Profile head as was being used by DLR for the Colonial stamps. The Mint was already using this head, which had been modelled by Bertram Mackennal from a picture, also by Downey, for the coins of the realm. So the decision was made to adopt this for the stamps. J A C Harrison (JACH, no connection with the printers of that name) was given a bromide of the original plaque sculpted by Mackennal, and he first sketched and then engraved the 'Coinage' head (Fig. 1).

JACH commenced engraving the die in January 1912 and continued until late February. Die proofs, in various colours, have been identified of seven stages of development. Proofs of the final stage were made in black and the colour intended for the ½d and 1d stamps, and a set is known which was cut down and mounted in bevelled frames and presented to Bertram Mackennal by Sir Edward Rigg, the Deputy Master of the Mint.

2D AND 3D: MACKENNAL WREATH FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD

Mackennal had originally submitted five designs to the Mint, one of which was a modified form of the 'Lion' frame, substituting a bow inscribed 'POSTAGE AND REVENUE' for the lion, and adding ribbons to the upper corners. The design with little amendment was initially accepted for the 2d and 3d, and was subsequently also used for the 4d. A proof exists of the hand-drawn Mackennal frame which came from the estate of Sir William Ellison-Macartney, former Deputy Master of the Mint (Fig. 4).

Fig. 1: A drawing by J A C Harrison, preparatory to engraving the 'Coinage Head'. This is based on the profile relief by Bertram Mackennal for use on coins of the realm.

Fig. 2: De La Rue printing.

Fig. 3: Harrison printing from die II of the Downey Head.

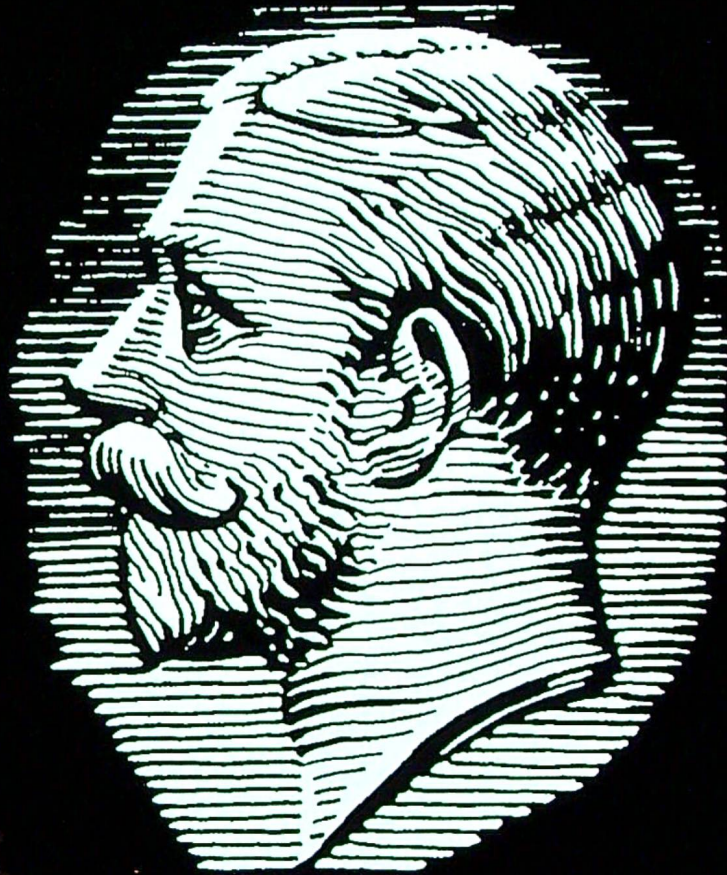


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

J10

B 13

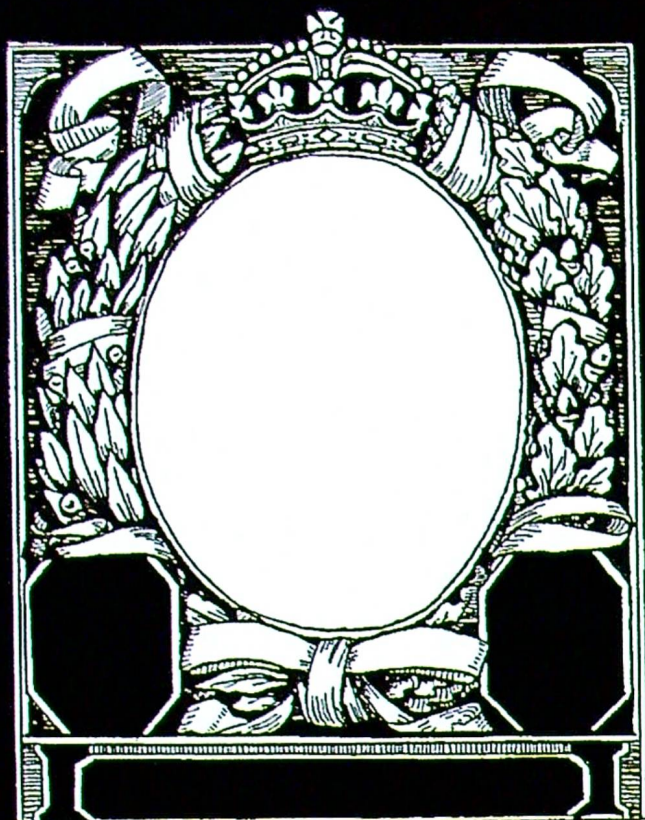


Fig. 4

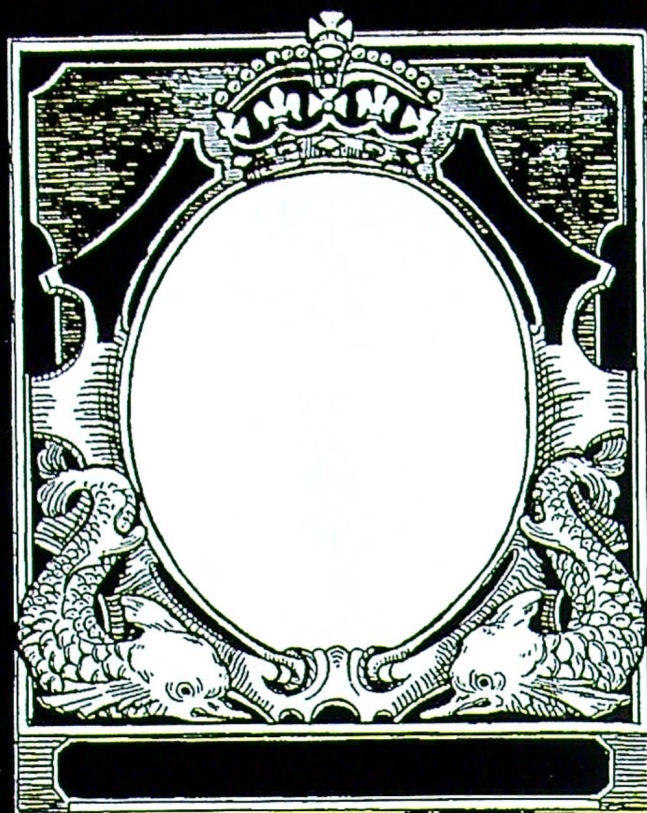


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Fig. 4: A proof of the hand-drawn Mackennal frame from the estate of Sir William Ellison-Macartney, former Deputy Master of the Mint.

Fig. 5: Bertram Mackennal's 'Dolphin' design, accepted for the ½d and 1½d values. This proof of the drawing is from the estate of Sir William Ellison-Macartney.

Fig. 6: 3d colour trial. One example of a perforated block of six with 'COLOUR ESSAY X.13' printed in the bottom margin and endorsed 'not selected' is known in private hands.

A die had been engraved by JACH of this frame incorporating the Downey Head. Accordingly a roller was made from this and the head and tint lines removed. The Coinage Head was then rolled into the die and JACH completed the engraving, with proofs being taken on 19 June 1912. Special plates of four impressions were used to produce colour trials and BLPC has examples of these mounted on card: the stamps are imperforate and have been overprinted 'CANCELLED'. An imperforate block of four is known which is described as a plate proof on surfaced paper, and two examples are also known of imperforate blocks of four in 'cadmium orange', these being in private hands (Fig. 7). BPMA has a series of single imperforate stamps in 19 different colours. These are mounted on cards, not overprinted, and dated 19 November 1912, and were probably produced for consideration of a colour change, mentioned below.



Fig. 7

Fig. 7: A 'cadmium orange' imperforate block of four.

The 2d was the first Profile head stamp to be issued, on 21 August 1912. The first printings did not bear control numbers. During 1913 the colour was officially changed from 'orange' to 'reddish orange' for stronger visual effect. A new colour standard was printed and overprinted 'SPECIMEN', and at least one complete sheet of this is held by BLPC. There are 2d stamps known overprinted 'CANCELLED', which are thought to be from the new colour standard produced by Harrisons, and at least one block of these are known in private hands. There is an interesting range of shades of this value, including the 'intense bright orange' which occurs during later printings.

In 1921, increased demand for the 2d stamps, when this became the letter rate, required the production of extra plates. When the old master die proved unsatisfactory, it became necessary for a new one to be engraved. Stamps from Die II are distinguished by the fewer background lines above the head. It appears that in preparation for the change Somerset House prepared a series of 'ESSAYS FOR COLOUR ONLY'. Blocks of four imperforate stamps in seven colours were printed and sent to the PO on 24 April 1920. A set of these is now in the collections held by BPMA.

For the 3d value, a transfer roller from the completed 2d value was taken in June 1912 and the values removed. A new impression was taken and JACH engraved the 3d values. The finished die was proofed on 20 August 1912 and the stamps were issued on 8 October 1912. The confusion between the 3d 'reddish violet' and the 6d 'purple' led to the change of the colour to 'bluish violet' in August 1913. Trials of three colours were produced in perforated sheets (Fig. 6). The examples held by BPMA have the official colour printed in the bottom margin and were compared with the existing shade, a block of which was overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. BLPC has complete sheets, various blocks and singles of stamps all overprinted 'SPECIMEN', some endorsed 'old colour' and 'new colour'. An imperforate block of four of the new colour, and the trial above, are known in private hands. Amongst the range of shades for the 3d is a 'very pale violet' found during 1916/17.

1/2D AND 1 1/2D: MACKENNAL DOLPHIN FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD

In addition to the frames described above, Bertram Mackennal also submitted a 'Dolphin' design, and this was accepted with only minor alteration for the 1/2d and 1 1/2d values (Fig. 5). In May 1912, after the decision to change from the Downey to a Profile head, a roller impression was taken of the 1/2d Downey Die

and the head and values removed along with the backgrounds and foreheads of the dolphins. A fresh die was then laid and a Coinage head rolled in. JACH then engraved the values and completed the work to the Dolphins. The first die produced was for the 1½d and later another die was prepared for the ½d, and examples of the completed die proofs of both are known in private hands.

No less than 18 shades are catalogued for the ½d value of which the 'very yellow Cyprus green' is the scarcest. It is believed only one sheet of this shade existed which was later cut up, and at least one block of four is known in private hands. Sixteen shades are recorded for the 1½d of which the 'pale brown' is perhaps the most sought after. The variation in shades was due in part to the shortage of ink supplies during the First World War.

Examples of imperforate ½d stamps are known overprinted 'SPECIMEN' and although no detail has been published, to date, as to their source, personal research at the BLPC has shown that they come from a series of colour trials carried out during 1913. BLPC hold five imperforate sheets printed, under control C13, in various inks, two of which were supplied by Shakell Edwards & Co, and the others 'prepared by Messers Harrison & Son'. These sheets were overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. Examples of these are known in private hands as well as perforated

stamps overprinted 'CANCELLED' from controls D14 and E14, but at present no official record of these printings has been discovered.

During 1916 chemical tests were carried out on the ½d stamps to check the fastness of the ink. The imperforate stamps bear reference numbers on the reverse and several of these are known in private collections. Trials with ink dyes supplied by Imperial Chemical Group were also made during 1916 to see if they were suitable for stamp printing. Three shades were tested. Although two shades were considered close to the colour standard, they were not accepted. An imperforate block of four which appears to come from these trials is known (Fig. 8), as well as a few examples of stamps which bear a distinctive 'CANCELLED' overprint.

A small printing of the ½d was made on paper watermarked 'Multiple Script' under control C13 to provide stamps for issue in coils. However, a few complete sheets or part sheets appear to have been issued, as multiple pieces are known including two control blocks.

4D: MACKENNA WREATH FRAME WITH COINAGE HEAD

Fig. 8: An imperforate block of four which appears to come from trials of ink dyes made during 1916.

The development of the 4d stamp is perhaps the most fascinating of all the values. It was planned to have the Eve 'Wreath' frame and so the first action, in May 1912, was to produce a bromide of the Eve frame with the Coinage head pasted over the Downey head. Eve then carried out various amendments to the frame, including a repositioned Crown and a new value tablet, during May and June 1912. Bromides and trials, produced by the Miller & Motley Printex (Printex) machine, are known of various stages of this work. The King was shown a bromide of the design and he thought the shading too black and the background too dark.

Accordingly Eve amended the design and trials are known of this in various colours. Imperforate singles mounted on cards dated 11 July 1912 in five shades are held by BPMA, and BLPC holds several imperforate blocks of four in black and some singles in colour which have been overprinted 'CANCELLED'. It seems possible that some of the colour trials were produced in these blocks of four. The King approved the amended design and requested a die be engraved. Because JACH was busy Lewis, his assistant, carried out the engraving, and progressive die proofs, which differ in detail from Eve's amended design, exist that were pulled in September and October 1912 (Fig. 10). The King approved a proof from the completed die on 12 October 1912.

The PMG then decided that the Coinage head was too large in Eve's Wreath frame. So, despite the fact they had an engraved die approved by the King, the PMG decided to use the Mackennal Wreath frame already adopted for the 2d and 3d values. A transfer roller of the 2d die was used to lay down a fresh die with blank value tablets. The value was engraved and a roller taken up to produce a new 4d die. This was first proofed on 1 November 1912 and a copy sent to the King for his approval on 16 November 1912. At least one other example of this proof exists in private hands and BLPC has an example overprinted 'CANCELLED' which is most unusual.

Colour trials in three shades of green were made and imperforate examples mounted on card were submitted to the King. He approved 'pearl green' on 14 December 1912. BLPC and BPMA hold a set of each and at least one example of each of the shades is known in private hands (Fig. 9) along with an imperforate block of four in the issued colour. Stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN' come from the colour standard prepared under control c13 and at least one example of stamps in an unusual 'bluish grey-green' is known which comes from a printing under control B.13, which may have been a further colour trial. The 4d stamps were issued on 15 January 1913 and seven shades are listed for this value. A new colour standard appears to have been prepared during 1919 and the stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN' of which examples are known in private hands.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDAL HEAD

The explanation of how the requirement arose for an alternative to the Coinage head is given in the introduction to the 1d and 2½d values. The books all refer to the Medal head as being that used on the Coronation medal. However, if one inspects this medal, it can be seen that the King wears a Crown and this cannot be the origin of the Medal head. Personal research at the PRO has revealed that Mackennal had designed a medal to commemorate the opening of the first Parliament of the Union of South Africa in October 1910. Just 550 medals were struck and they bore a head drawn from a sculpture by Mackennal. In fact the Mint had tried to use this head for the coins, which came after October 1910, but the mould was not deep enough. Hence, Mackennal had to produce another head, the Coinage head, and that is why we have two distinct heads.

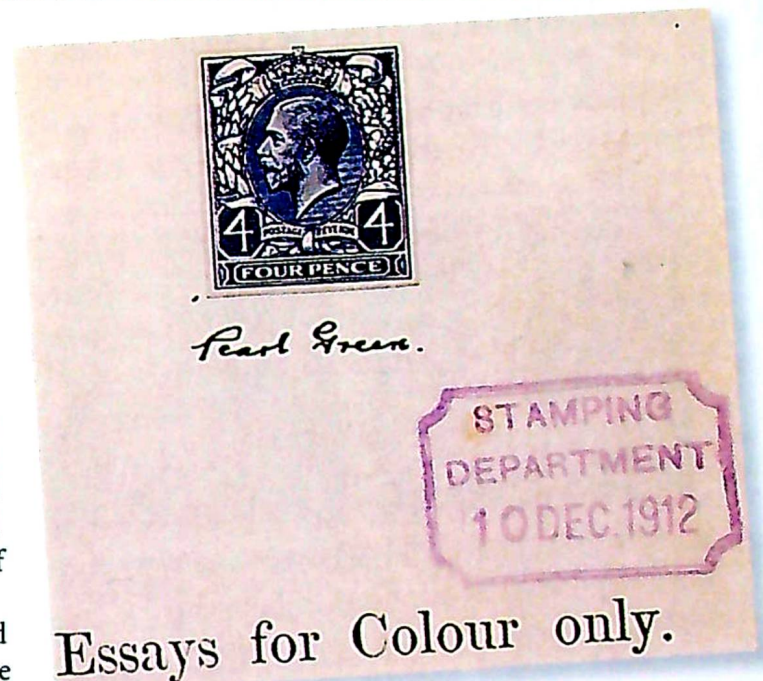


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Fig. 9: A colour trial 'pearl green', one of three shades of green submitted, approved by the King on 14 December 1912.

Fig. 10: One of the progressive die proofs pulled in September and October 1912.



Bertram Mackennal's medal for the Coronation, left, is not the original for the Medal head, as the King is wearing a crown. However, a medal for the opening of South Africa's first Parliament in 1910 bore a head drawn from a sculpture by Mackennal. The same head was later used for the Naval and Military medals, above left, and can be distinguished from the Coinage head.

JACH did not engrave a separate Medal head as he had with the Coinage head. Here, he was presented with a composite photograph of the Laurel and Oak Leaf design with the Medal head inserted. He first made a sketch of this, from which he engraved a die of the head with the frame for the 1d value. The development of the die is covered in the next section.

1D AND 2½D: MACKENNAL LAUREL AND OAK LEAF FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD

When it was decided to adopt a Profile head in place of the Downey head, a trial was carried out, inserting the Coinage head in the Lion frame for the 1d and 2½d values. The head was considered too cramped in the frame, and Mackennal first tried to amend the frame and the head to make it fit, both without success. Mackennal was then asked to produce a new design with the Lion removed. In early February 1912, he produced a clay maquette of a 'Laurel and Oak Leaf' design. In this he produced a new Medal head which the King had indicated he preferred to the Coinage head. The background to this is given above. JACH commenced his engraving in April 1912 and at least six stages of proofs exist in collector's hands, in various colours (Figs. 11, 12 & 13). The die was completed with the 1d values engraved on 5 June 1912.

A series of eight colour trials was carried out in September 1912 for the 1d value. Complete sheets were submitted to the King in September 1912 and 'bright scarlet' was chosen; these sheets are still in the Palace collection. BPMA has at least one complete sheet and several part sheets of the approved colour, which have been overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. A further sheet of each colour was broken down by a dealer and, with the exception of the bottom two rows, he handstamped the reverse of each stamp 'colour trial' and lettered them 'A' to 'H'. Stamps produced for the colour standard were overprinted 'CANCELLED', and examples are known in private hands. Personal research at the BLPC has revealed that another series of colour trials was carried out during 1913. The collection has nine imperforate part sheets printed under control C13 in different shades. The sheets are annotated with the details of the ink used. The stamps are imperforate and are overprinted 'SPECIMEN', and again examples of these are known in private hands.

During 1915 an experimental printing using surplus currency paper was made. This paper was stouter, and of better quality, than stamp paper, and had been produced especially for printing currency notes during 1914-15. A surplus of some 228 reams was offered to the Stamping Department, and experiments were carried out to see if it was suitable for printing stamps. Following the experiments, it was decided to use the paper, and the stamps printed were sold in rolls for vending machines. Apparently four complete imperforate sheets, overprinted 'CANCELLED', were discovered in 1940 and at least the bottom three rows of one of these exists intact.

Imperforate 1d stamps are known overprinted 'CANCELLED' from controls D14 and E14 and perforated stamps under control E14 and F15. No records have been found to date to explain the reason for these, although Beaumont and Stanton (*The Postage Stamps of Great Britain, Part 4*, by Beaumont & Stanton, RPSL 1957) state they arose from paper trials during the First World War.

During 1916, trials were made using British dyes when supplies from Germany ceased. Experimental printings in three colours were made of the 1d, also of the ½d as previously mentioned. Harrison's reported the inks produced were not successful. Examples of these are known overprinted with a distinctive 'CANCELLED' including the notable 'paranitraniline red'. During 1918, a further



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

Fig. 11: J A C Harrison's die proof of the head with the frame for the 1d value in deep rose red.

Figs. 12 & 13: Proofs of Harrison's engraving of the 1d value in the planned colours of the 1d and the 2½d.

series of ink trials was carried out using Mander's inks. A control block of eight from these trials is shown (Fig. 14).

The 1d stamps were issued on 8 October 1912, and sixteen shades are catalogued of which the 'pink' and the 'deep orange-vermilion' are perhaps the scarcest. During 1913, a small printing was made upon paper with watermark 'Multiple Script Cypher'. These stamps were issued in coils. However, a few complete sheets or part sheets appear to have been issued and two control blocks are recorded. In 1921 Somerset House experimented with continuous printing of stamps for coils. These stamps are distinguishable by the very coarse impression, as the paper appears to be rougher and of a different texture; possibly it was not plate glazed. A few of these stamps are known overprinted 'SPECIMEN', which are thought to be from the colour standard.

The 2½d die was produced from a roller impression of the completed 1d which then had the values removed. This was hardened and then a fresh die produced which JACH engraved with the values on 30 July 1913. A proof exists in the Adam's Collection at the Royal Philatelic Society with the values engraved but with the head removed. The origins of this are not known. Colour trials in seven shades of blue were made in October 1912, but the only official example seen is a sheet of the approved colour held at BLPC. This is endorsed in the bottom margin 'COLOUR ESSAY STAMPING DEPARTMENT' and the stamps are overprinted 'CANCELLED'. The only item known outside the institutions which appears to come from these trials is an imperforate block of four in the selected colour. The colour standard was produced at Somerset House under control A.12, and Harrisons produced another under control C 13; both are overprinted 'SPECIMEN' (Fig. 15). Examples of both are known in private hands.

The 2½d stamps were issued on 17 October 1912 and nineteen shades are catalogued with the 'pale milky blue', 'dull Prussian blue' and 'indigo-blue'; the scarcest and of particular rarity are the latter two shades on toned paper. Harrisons had trouble in matching the colour standard during the First World War because of a shortage of ink supplies. A new colour standard was issued in 1917 and examples of this in the BLPC are overprinted 'SPECIMEN' under control J.17, while copies are known in private hands which do not have the overprint. Stamps are also known overprinted 'CANCELLED', which come from a 1917 experimental printing of a worn plate alongside a new plate (Fig. 16).

No official explanation has been discovered concerning the so-called toned paper. Other values are known that purport to be printed upon toned paper, but these are not recognised by all specialists and have not attained catalogue status. Research at BPMA has revealed that the PO complained to Harrisons during 1919 concerning the colour of several of the stamps, particularly the 2½d value, and several tests were made upon samples of the printed stamps. It appears that the problem with the 2½d value stemmed from Harrisons inability to obtain blue ink supplies from Germany and that the ink they were using did not compare favourably with the pre-war colour, but was close to the standard produced during 1917. However, the Government chemist discovered during the analysis of the ink that it contained a small amount of arsenic. In consequence Harrisons were obliged to find a suitable blue free from arsenic. This led to several experiments with different inks and dryers, and it is speculated that the varieties known as printed on toned paper arose as a consequence. The problems with the shade were finally resolved during 1921, when a new colour standard was produced; the stamps were overprinted 'SPECIMEN' and examples of these are known in private hands.

Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

Fig. 14: A control block of eight from the Mander's inks trials, overprinted 'CANCELLED' and initialled by Alexander King, Secretary to the PO.

Fig. 15: A colour standard of the 2½d value produced by Harrisons.

Fig. 16: Stamps from an experimental printing of a worn plate alongside a new plate, carried out during 1917. Known examples are imperforate.

Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 17: J A C Harrison pen-and-ink sketch of Medal head II, 19 March 1913.

Fig. 18: Proof of completed die pulled on 13 May 1913.

ORIGIN OF MEDAL HEAD II

The original intention was that the 4d to 7d values would be in the Eve Wreath. The need for a third engraved head arose following the decision of the PMG in October 1912 that the Coinage head was too large for Eve's Wreath frame for the 4d value. Accordingly Eve continued work on his Wreath and Pillar frames using an interpretation of a smaller head. It was not until March 1913, when these frames had been approved, that JACH was able to commence engraving a new head. The King had stated his preference for the Medal head and so JACH made fresh drawings (Fig. 17) of Mackennal's plaster cast of the Medal head; two examples of these are known which came from his estate. He then commenced engraving, working from the sketches, and the first proofs were taken on 17 March 1913. He continued to work on the engraving during March and early April, and at least four stages of the die can be distinguished from existing proofs, all in black, a few of which are in private hands. The completed die was proofed on 3 April 1913 and it was hardened the following day. Impressions were taken from the hardened die, and one of these was rolled into the completed Pillar frame during May 1913. Another of the roller impressions was used by Lewis to engrave the Wreath frame for the 9d value.

5D, 6D AND 7D EVE PILLAR FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II

The original intention was that the 4d to 7d values would be in the Eve Wreath design but, as already described, it was finally decided to issue the 4d value in the Mackennal Wreath design: Eve had been working on his Wreath design for the 5d and 7d values during June 1912. He produced Printex trials of the frame with a 12mm Coinage head, and copies of these exist in various colours and some of the 7d values are known overprinted 'ESSAY'. When the PMG decided the Coinage head was too large for the Wreath frame in October 1912, Eve then produced some Printex trials for both the 5d and 7d values using a reduced-size Coinage head and then later with his interpretation of a smaller Medal head. Copies of these are known with various amendments to the frame during October and November 1912.

Attention then focused upon the background shading to the King's head and the PMG requested trials be prepared showing the effect of a partially shaded and a solid background. 'Printex' trials were made, in January 1913, for the 7d value with Eve's Wreath frame with the two types of background (Fig. 19). They were produced in imperforate blocks of four stamps in black and five different colours. They were mounted onto cards and endorsed 'ESSAYS FOR COLOUR ONLY' and examples of these are known in BLPC and BPMA, and several of the complete blocks, as well as singles, are known in private hands. It should be noted that no background trial was carried out for the 7d value with graduated shading, and references to this in some publications actually refer to an earlier stage with the Coinage head.

The PMG then decided, in February 1913, to adopt Eve's Pillar design in place of the Wreath for the 5d, 6d and 7d values. This change was made to help emphasise the difference between the 3d and 6d stamps. The development work for the Pillar frame was done under the 8d value and is described below. Bromides of the completed frame are known for the 5d value with Eve's interpretation of the smaller Medal head dated 29 April 1913. JACH completed the engraving of the Pillar frame during May 1913 and roller impressions were taken from this into which the newly engraved Medal head II was inserted and the values added. Die proofs of the 5d were pulled in early May (Fig. 18), the 6d in late May and the 7d

Key to abbreviations

BLPC
British Library
Philatelic Collections

JACH
J A C Harrison
(stamp engraver)

PMG
Postmaster General

BPMA
British Postal
Museum & Archive



Fig. 19

Fig. 19: 'Printex' trials for 7d value, January 1913.

in early June 1913. The Mint produced a special nickel plate of four impressions of the 5d value on 31 May 1913, which Somerset House used to print 29 colour trials on 6 June 1913, and six trials on coloured papers the next day. BLPC and BPMA hold examples of these and in addition a few examples are known in private hands. The 5d stamp was issued on 30 June and the 6d and 7d values on 1 August 1913. The colour standards produced for all three values were overprinted 'SPECIMEN' and a very few examples of these are known to exist outside of public institutions.

The 5d value is recorded in six shades, of which the 'ochre-brown' is the scarcest, this being catalogued for 1916 printings, but examples are known from 1917 printings and it appears to occur again during some 1921 printings.

The Mint printed all the 6d value stamps, which were used extensively for fiscal as well as postal matters. To help prevent any attempt to remove the cancellation, they were printed on chalk-surfaced paper in doubly fugitive ink. As mentioned earlier, the similarity with the 3d shade led to a change in the 3d and 6d shades in August 1913. The 6d was changed from 'dull purple' to 'reddish purple'. Eight shades are listed for the 6d value of which 'slate-purple' is the scarcest occurring during the 1913 printings. In September 1920, and for some months following, this value appeared perforated 14 x 14, instead of 15 x 14. It is believed the Mint perforator broke down and the old machine, which was used for the Edward VII issues, was brought back into use. Printings were made under just two controls, Q.20 and R.21.

The 7d value was introduced for parcel and telegram work. Following the postage increases during 1915 and 1918 there was little demand for it and it was discontinued in August 1918. Consequently only four shades are recorded for this value.

8D: EVE PILLAR FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II

The Eve Pillar frame had been approved for the planned Downey 8d to 1s values. With the change to a profile head, trials were carried out using the 8d value in October 1912 using the Coinage head. In November, Eve carried out further trials using a reduced Coinage head and the frames were amended with even shading to the background. Examples of these trials are known in various shades and some of the examples were overprinted 'ESSAY'. When the King decided he preferred the Medal head, Eve carried out a further series of trials with his interpretation of the Medal head. In these trials, Eve again amended the frame, increasing the space for the head and altering the layout of the words 'postage' and 'revenue'. In common with the 7d value, background trials were carried out during January 1913. In this case four different backgrounds were trialed: solid, part solid, graduated shading and even shading. They were produced by the Printex process in imperforate blocks of four in black and three other colours. These were submitted to the King who selected the graduated background on 3 February 1913.

Sets of these background trials are held by BLPC and BPMA, and examples are known in private hands with some of the graduated shading examples being overprinted 'ESSAY'. The sources of stamps overprinted 'ESSAY' are from two colour schemes put together by the Stamping Department on 10 December 1912 and 20 May 1913. In the first of these, a single 2d and 4d plus two 7d and four 8d stamps were used in different colours. In the second, three 7d and four 8d stamps were used (Fig. 19). In both cases other value stamps were used but they were overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. The 7d and 8d stamps were taken from the Printex trials mentioned above for this purpose and specially overprinted to identify



Fig. 19

Fig. 19: Trials of the Eve Pillar frame with reduced Coinage head and even shading in the background, overprinted 'ESSAY'.

them. The two schemes with the selected colours endorsed in manuscript are now in the collections of BPMA.

With the design now agreed, JACH proceeded to engrave the frame, which he completed and proofed for the 8d value on 8 May 1913. The colour standard for this was printed under control c.13 and overprinted 'SPECIMEN', of which a few examples, including at least one control strip, is known in private hands. The stamps, issued on 1 August 1913, were printed on yellow paper at first but this was changed to a yellow buff paper containing many impurities, generally known as granite paper, during 1917. Shades of the 8d are not recorded, only the printings on the two papers. However, an intense black is also known on both papers. With little usage of this value and the higher cost of the coloured paper it was decided to discontinue printing 8d stamps when the stock of paper was exhausted, which occurred towards the end of 1918.

9D, 10D AND 1S: EVE WREATH FRAME WITH MEDAL HEAD II

The development of Eve's Wreath frame has been dealt with under the 4d, 5d and 7d values. By February 1913, when these values were switched to the Pillar design, the Wreath frame had been approved. Because JACH was busy, his assistant Lewis engraved this die. He was provided with a roller impression of Medal Head II and it appears he engraved the Wreath frame for the 9d round it. The die was proofed on 2 May 1913 and an example of this is known on paper with the simple cypher watermark sideways. Further minor amendments were made; proofs are known dated the 6th and 7th, and it was finally completed on 13 May. Roller impressions were taken from this in which the value was removed, and then fresh impressions taken into which the 10d and 1s values were engraved. Examples of an uncleared die proof of the 10d and 1s are known, and recently a 10d, in the final state on white glazed card, and a 1s, which appears to have been taken before the final amendments (Fig. 23) were made on white glazed card, came onto the market.

The Mint produced a special nickel plate of four impressions of the 9d value on 31 May 1913, which Somerset House used to print colour trials. Twenty-nine colours were printed, and six trials on tinted papers; they were mounted imperforate on card, endorsed 'ESSAY FOR COLOUR ONLY'. Examples of these are held in BLPC and BPMA. Imperforate blocks of four of the 9d, 10d and 1s in the issued colours exist, once thought to be from these trials. However, no such trials were carried out using the 10d or 1s, and it now appears that these are imprimaturs (Fig. 20). The colours selected were first printed by Somerset House under control B.13 for the 9d (Fig. 21), and c.13 for the 10d and 1s values, and stamps exist from these printings overprinted 'SPECIMEN' which come from the colour standards. A few examples are known of the three values overprinted 'CANCELLED' which appear to come from colour standards prepared from the first printings made by Harrisons during 1914.

Fig. 20: Imperforate block now thought to be imprimaturs.

Fig. 21: Somerset House colour standard overprinted 'SPECIMEN'.

Fig. 22: An imperforate block printed for 1922 colour trial.

Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



The 9d was issued on 30 June, and the 10d and 1s on 1 August 1913. Four shades are recorded for the 9d value, five for the 10d and ten for the 1s, of which a late printing of the latter in 'Deep bronze-brown' is the scarcest.

In 1922 it was decided to change the colour of the 9d value from 'agate' to 'olive green'. Colour trials in six shades of green were made at the Stamping Department using special plates of four imperforate impressions. BPMA has examples of these mounted on card and endorsed 'ESSAY FOR COLOUR ONLY'. Three of these have had a single stamp removed and it appears these were submitted to the King. Three examples of the blocks mounted on cards are known in private hands (Fig. 22). The approved colour was registered on 11 October 1922 and BLPC has two complete sheets, printed under control T22, overprinted 'SPECIMEN' which was the new colour standard. This value in the revised colour was issued during September 1922 and is recorded in three shades.

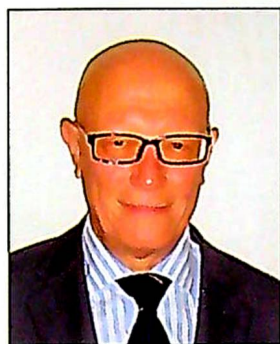
All current values in 1922, of the Royal Cypher issue, are known overprinted 'SPECIMEN' and sheets of these are held by BLPC. These were new colour standards printed that year; a few of these are in collectors' hands.

Fig. 23: Die proof taken before final amendments.



Fig. 23

THE AUTHOR



Alan Moorcroft started stamp collecting with the desire to achieve his Scouts' badge: this meant Saturday morning visits to a local stamp shop, using his pocket money to buy the low values of Commonwealth new issues. These were properly mounted and written up in loose-leaf albums which he still has. Alan returned to collecting in his late 20s, specialising in Channel Islands issues, and subsequently Channel Islands postal history. This collection has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and

has won several gold medals. He has also collected Essex postal history and the British Campaign of the Napoleonic Wars.

However, in more recent times he is best known for his collection of George V Royal Cypher issues and the extensive research he has carried out, resulting in an article in *The London Philatelist*, later published in the *British Philatelic Bulletin* and now reprinted in this booklet.

Alan was Treasurer of the Royal Philatelic Society London and is currently the Society's popular President in this Festival of Stamps year. His family are involved in philately, elder son Paul is the Office Manager at the Royal Philatelic Society, and younger son Simon a noted thematic collector and writer of several *Bulletin* articles.

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