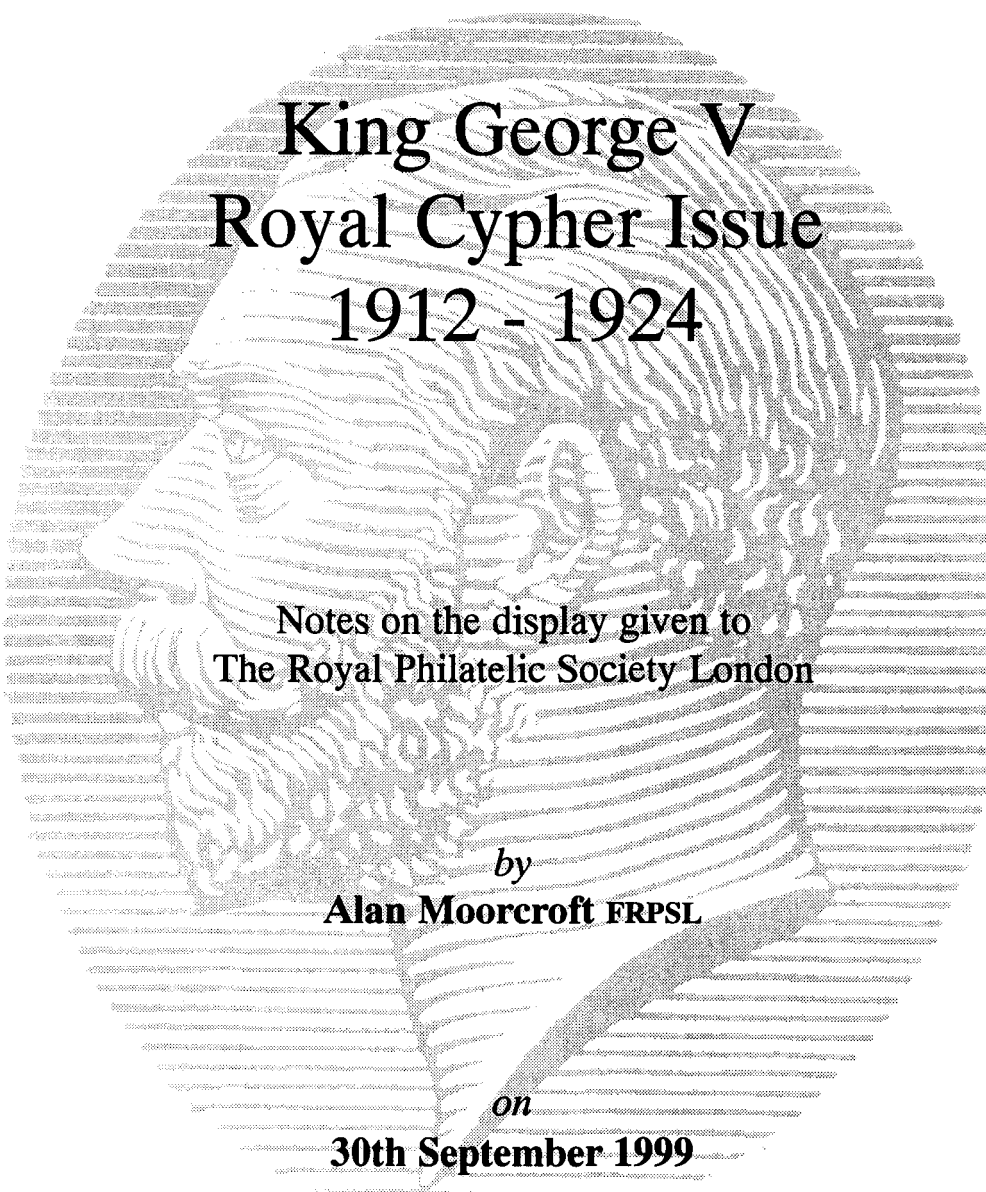


16/1999



**King George V  
Royal Cypher Issue  
1912 - 1924**

**Notes on the display given to  
The Royal Philatelic Society London**

*by*

**Alan Moorcroft FRPSL**

*on*

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## INTRODUCTION

The dissatisfaction with the Downey Head stamps issued on 22nd June 1911 led the Post Office to look for an alternative design. It was to take fourteen months before the new design would appear on an issued stamp. The design chosen was based upon the 'Coinage' and 'Medal' profile heads of the King which was the work of Bertram Mackennal.

In fact three different profile heads were required for this issue in the end and this display traces the development of these from the work of the engravers J.A.C. Harrison and G. Eve with sketches, progressive proofs, bromides and die proofs through to the issued stamps.

A feature of this issue is the range of shades found which occurs principally because of the shortage of certain ink supplies during and after the war. Examples, with controls, are shown to illustrate the range for each value. For many values special blocks of four impressions were used to print colour trials. Examples of imperforate blocks of these in the issued colour are shown. These are the only known copies in private hands.

Royal Cypher watermarked paper was used for this issue. However, an experimental printing of the ½d and 1d values with Multiple Cypher watermark paper was made and one of the two recorded control blocks of each are shown. Also an experimental printing of the 1d value on surplus Currency paper was made during 1913 and was subsequently used for stamps issued in coils. The bottom three rows from one of these sheets is shown.

Despite the controversial start the profile heads stood the test of time and lasted twenty two years. They probably have never received the recognition they deserve.

## FRAME 1 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE COINAGE HEAD

The display opens with an introduction and a photograph of King George V in what was his preferred stance very similar to the Downey three quarter portrait.

Much has been written about how poor the first Downey stamps were in comparison with the De La Rue Edward VII - **WERE THEY?**. The King got the head he wanted "a real likeness rather than an idealised impression" and with the improved die II stamps surely they compare favourably!! Whilst much criticism was made of Harrisons as inexperienced printers they showed in the provisional printings of the Edward VII stamps that they were as capable as De La Rue although many writers have stated the difference is apparent to the naked eye - **IS IT?**

The remaining sheets in the frame show the development of the Coinage head. With the rejection of the Downey head the Mint turned to the profile head sculpted by Mackennal for the coins of the realm. J.A.C. Harrison used the Mackennal model to first sketch and then engrave the head.

Die proofs were pulled at different stages of the engraving during January and February 1912 and examples are shown illustrating the development of the die.

Proofs of the final stage were made in black and the colour intended for the ½d and 1d stamps. The last sheet in the frame shows a set of these final proofs that were cut down and mounted in bevelled frames and presented to Bertram Mackennal by Sir Edward Rigg the Deputy Master of the Royal Mint.

## FRAME 2 - MACKENNAL'S WREATH FRAME 2d and 3d

Mackennal submitted five designs to the Mint for the new stamps 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. This design with little amendment was initially accepted for the 2d and 3d values and was subsequently also used for the 4d.

A proof of Mackennal's hand drawn Wreath design which came from the estate of Sir William Ellison-Macartney the former Deputy Master of the Royal Mint is shown along with an uncleared die proof dated 19th June 1912. Special plates of four impressions were used to produce colour trials and one of two known examples, in private hands, of the 2d in 'cadmium orange' is shown along with a plate proof.

The 2d value was the first profile head stamp to be issued on 21st 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 block overprinted 'cancelled' type 24 as a colour standard is shown and a range of the distinctive shades of this value including the 'intense bright orange'.

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 shown including an Imprimatur pair which came from the N.P.M. archive sales.

The remaining five sheets in this frame are devoted to the 3d value. The composite Wreath essay for the 2d and 3d is shown as well as the only known example of the colour essay which is endorsed 'Not selected' along with an imperforate colour trial block of four in the issued shade mentioned in the introduction.

### FRAME 3 - COINAGE HEAD - ½d

The Dolphin design was also submitted by Mackennal and this was accepted with only minor alteration for the ½d and 1½d values. ½d stamps are known overprinted 'specimen' type 26 but no detail has been published as to their source. Research at the British Library has shown that they come from a series of colour trials carried out during 1913 and a photograph of one of the sheets is shown.

The following page contains the bottom two rows of a sheet from control C13 overprinted 'specimen' type 26 and is from these colour trials. This sheet also contains a cleared die proof, an Imprimatur and an example of the colour standard.

A block of four of the 'very yellow Cyprus green' is shown which came from the one sheet originally found and was later cut up. On the same sheet is a D14 control block which the 1956 certificate states this to be "yellow green. Is not the Cyprus green but a contemporary experimental printing in metallic ink"!

Examples of the ½d overprinted 'cancelled' type 24 are known from controls D14 and E14. It has not been possible, to the present time, to find any official record of these being printed. An example of the D14 printing is shown along with a block of 30 with this overprint.

To illustrate the problems the printers were having in keeping to the colour standard the final sheet shows a range of shades found during 1915.

#### FRAME 4 - COINAGE HEAD - ½d AND 1½d

During 1916 chemical tests were carried out on the ½d stamps to check the fastness of the ink. Four examples from these tests are shown which bear reference numbers on the reverse.

Trials with ink dyes supplied by Imperial Chemical Group were made during 1916 to see if they were suitable for stamp printing. Three shades of green were tested. Although two shades were considered close to the colour standard they were not accepted. A vertical pair overprinted 'cancelled' and an imperforate block of four which came from these trials are shown.

A small printing of the ½d was made on Multiple Script watermark paper under control C13 to provide stamps for issue in coils. An example of a coil strip and leader is shown along with one of two recorded control blocks from this printing.

The ½d section is completed with booklet stamps which were printed from special plates. Examples of 'cancelled' and 'specimen' panes are shown along with one of three recorded imperforate 'tete-beche' pairs.

The remaining sheets in this frame are devoted to the 1½d which also used the Dolphin frame. A proof of Mackennal's hand drawn design is shown which came from the estate of Sir William Ellison-Macartney the former Deputy Master of the Royal Mint. On the same page is shown a cleared example of a die proof which is believed to have come from the printers day book. It is the only known example.

A range of the distinctive shades is shown including control blocks of six of the 'brown' and 'pale brown' and a control single 'yellow-brown' printed in varnish ink. An example of the '18' control with the deliberate omission of the 'K' is also shown.

## FRAME 5 - COINAGE HEAD - 1½d AND 4d

The first sheet completes the 1½d value with examples of the booklet stamps including an imperforate 'tete-beche' pair being one of two recorded examples.

The development of the 4d stamp is perhaps the most fascinating of all the values. Eve's Wreath frame is shown from the original design during the Downey period. This was modified several times and in May 1912 trials were made using the Coinage head. During June Eve made further modifications. Bromides of these are shown with examples of the colour trials also carried out. Further amendments to the background and ribbon were made during July and a proof of this is shown along with examples of further colour trials.

The amended design was approved and a die engraved. Progressive and final die proofs are shown. With the die complete and approved by the King the P.M.G. then decided the Coinage head was too large for Eve's Wreath frame and chose to use the completed Mackennal Wreath frame instead!

A transfer roller of the completed 2d die was used to lay down a fresh die from which the values were removed. The 4d values were then engraved. A plate proof in 'grey-green' is shown along with an essay for colour only in 'pearl green' the colour finally approved by the King on the 14th December 1912. An imperforate block of four of a colour trial in the issued colour, referred to in the introduction, is also shown.

To complete this frame are examples of the colour standards and shades including a 'grey-green' varnish ink control single along with a colour trial carried out under control B.13.

## FRAME 6 - MEDAL HEAD 1d

When it was decided to adopt a profile head in place of the Downey 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 was asked to produce a new design with the lion removed. In early February 1912 he produced a clay maquette of an 'Laurel and Oak Leaf' design. This was approved and an original photograph, taken by the Royal Mint, of this is shown.

The P.M.G. then raised doubts concerning the size of the Coinage head in this new frame! It was decided to ask Mackennal to produce a new larger head for this design. Mackennal on this occasion turned to the Medal head he had produced to commemorate the first Parliament of the Union of South Africa in 1910 - and not the Coronation medal as is often stated. For in this the King wears a Crown!

From the new clay model prepared by Mackennal, J.A.C. Harrison first sketched and then commenced engraving the head and design. Progressive die proofs of this are shown along with the final proofs taken in the colours for the 1d and 2½d.

A series of eight colour trials were carried out in September 1912 and examples of these are known in private hands bearing a handstamp "Colour Trial" and lettered "A" to "H" on the reverse. A set of these are shown.

Research at the British Library has revealed that another series of colour trials were carried out during 1913. These have not previously been recorded. A photograph of a part sheet from these trials is shown and an example of the trial stamps is in the next frame.

**FRAME 7 - MEDAL HEAD - 1d**

This frame opens with a block of 24 1d stamps overprinted 'specimen' type 26 printed under control C13. This block undoubtedly comes from the colour trials carried out in June 1913 of the which the photograph in the last frame gives the details.

On the same page is shown a block of 36 stamps overprinted 'cancelled' type 24 which comes from a 1915 experimental printing using surplus Currency paper. This paper was stouter and of better quality than stamp paper and had been produced especially for printing Currency notes during 1914-1915. A surplus of some 228 reams was offered to the Stamping Department and the experiments were 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. This piece comes from one of four complete sheets of the overprinted stamps discovered in 1940! The sheets were printed without control numbers.

Imperforate 1d stamps are known overprinted 'cancelled' type 24 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 stated they were from wartime paper trials. Examples of these are shown.

During 1916 trials were made using British dyes when supplies from Germany ceased. Two blocks of 12 of these are shown one being in the distinctive Paranitraniline red. During 1918 a further series of ink trials were carried out using Manders inks. A control block of 8 from these trials overprinted 'cancelled' and initialed by Alexander King is shown.

## FRAME 8 - MEDAL HEAD - 1d and 2½d

Special plates were prepared for the 1d booklet stamps with two panes each of three rows upright and three rows inverted. An imperforate 'tete-beche' pair, the only known copy in private hands, is shown along with 'cancelled' and 'specimen' panes.

A small printing of 1d stamps was made during 1913 upon paper with Multiple Script Cypher watermark. These stamps were issued in coils and shown is a coil leader with five stamps. However, a few complete sheets or part sheets appear to have been issued and one of two recorded control blocks from this is shown.

In 1921 an experimental continuous printing of stamps for coils was made and a strip from this is shown along with an example overprinted 'specimen' type 30 which appears to be the colour standard.

The 2½d die was produced from a roller impression of the 1d die which had the values removed. J.A.C. Harrison then engraved the 2½d values. A die proof of the frame without values is shown which was pulled in the colour for the 2½d. On the same page is an imperforate block of four of a colour trial in the accepted colour, referred to in the introduction, and an example of the colour standard overprinted 'specimen'.

Harrisons had trouble in matching the colour standard during the war because of the shortage of ink supplies. A new colour standard was issued in 1917 and an example of this, printed under control J.17, is shown.

The problems of ink supplies continued after the war and this resulted in a variety of shades during 1920 and 1921 including the well known 'indigo-blue' and 'dull Prussian blue' which are also known on toned paper. The background to these two shades is given along with control strips of both and single examples of the toned shades.

## FRAME 9 - MEDAL HEAD II - 5d and 6d

Eve's Wreath and Pillar designs had already been accepted for the 5d to 1/- values during the Downey period. When the decision was made to adopt a profile head work continued with Eve's frames but initially working with the Coinage head. This was then considered too large and trials were then carried out with a smaller version of the Medal head. When this was approved J.A.C. Harrison then engraved a new head, Medal Head II, this being a smaller version of the Medal head.

A sketch of the head and progressive die proofs are shown. A trial of the 5d Wreath frame with the Coinage head is shown and then trials of the 5d Wreath and 5d Pillar design with Eve's interpretation of the smaller head. Die proofs of the completed 5d and 6d Pillar frame are also shown.

Special plates of four impressions were used to carry out colour trials and an example of the 5d value in the issued colour is shown, referred to in the introduction, and a range of the 5d shades including a control block of 6 of 'bistre-brown'.

The 6d section includes an Imprimatur and a control block of the 1913 colour standard overprinted 'specimen' type 26. Almost immediately after the issue of the 6d in August 1913 there was a deliberate change of colour to 'reddish-purple' to avoid confusion with the 3d stamp. Examples of the two shades are shown and a block of four of the new colour standard.

Late in 1920 the 6d appeared perforated 14 x 14 (instead of 15 x 14). It is believed the Somerset House perforator broke down and the old machine used for the Edward VII issues was brought back into use. Printings were made with this perforation under just two controls and examples are shown. A later colour standard and shades are also included.

**FRAME 10 - MEDAL HEAD II - 7d AND 8d**

The first two pages of this frame show some of the work to the Wreath frame that was carried out during October 1912 in common with the 5d value. Trials were made using the Coinage head at first, then with a smaller head and finally using a die from an earlier stage. Examples of these are shown.

A series of background trials were carried out during December 1912. Examples are shown of a partial shaded background and a solid background. Research has shown that contrary to what has been published no trial was made of this stage of the 7d with graduated background shading.

In February 1913 the P.M.G. decided that the 7d value would be issued in the Pillar design. A die proof pulled in early June 1913 is shown along with a strip of four of the colour standard overprinted 'specimen' Type 26. A range of shades of this short lived value are shown, it being discontinued in August 1918.

The 8d value was used for much of the trial work for the Pillar design. In common with the 5d and 7d values the design was first trialed with the Coinage head. A bromide and a die proof pulled 7th October 1912 is shown. Subsequently trials of various layouts of 'postage' and 'revenue' were carried out and examples of these are shown along with essays which show the approved design on the 9th April 1913. Infact a minor amendment was subsequently made.

Trials of various backgrounds were carried out for the 8d and examples are shown including two of the graduated shading which are overprinted 'ESSAY'. It has not been possible, to date, to establish the reason for these although they appear to have come from the June 1913 colour trials.

A die proof of the 8d value pulled on the 8th May 1913 is shown together with an Imprimatur which came from the N.P.M. archive sales. The final sheet shows examples of the shades and the change of paper that occurred during 1917.

**FRAME 11 - MEDAL HEAD II 9d, 10d AND 1/-.**

Eve's Wreath design prepared for the Downey 4d but modified during the 5d profile head trials of November 1912 was finally accepted for the 9d, 10d and 1/- values in late April 1913. A die of Medal Head II was prepared and Lewis, J.A.C. Harrisons assistant, engraved the frame around it.

For the three values a die proof along with an imperforate block of a colour trial in the issued colour, referred to the introduction, is shown. Colour standards and a range of the distinctive shades of each are also shown including an example of the 10d and 1/- in so called varnish ink.

In 1922 it was decided to change the colour of the 9d from 'agate' to 'olive green'. Colour trials were made at the Stamping Department of Somerset House using a special plate of four impressions. Only three examples of these colour trials are known in private hands and one is shown. An example of the colour standard overprinted 'specimen' type 23 is shown along with examples of the recorded shades of this value.

**FRAME 12 - EXPOSURE TESTS, TONED PAPERS, UNCALENDERED PAPER AND THE 1½d PENCE FLAW**

Experiments with various types of paper for printing stamps were carried out during the years 1922 to 1926 with a view to finding a cheaper 'mixed furnish' rather than 'all rag' paper.

Part of the experiment was to expose the paper and the printed stamps to the light from a mercury vapour lamp for varying periods to see if any appreciable colouration occurred. An example of one of these test sheets bearing pairs of ½d, 1d and 1½d values is shown.

The 2½d 'indigo' and 'dull Prussian blue' on toned paper were shown earlier in the display. Whilst these are accepted by most specialists not everyone agrees that toned papers are found on other values. There appears to be examples during 1916 and some are shown in the display with a suggestion that these may have occurred when some old stock of paper was used up as the mill sheet size changed during that year.

During 1920 and 1921 further examples to those already mentioned are found although to a varying degree. No explanation has been found for the toning but it is clear from the Post Office files that Harrisons were having problems in maintaining the colour standards during this period as some ink supplies were still being affected following the disruption of the war. Examples are shown with various degrees of toning.

The technique by which the paper is smoothed using steel rollers during the printing of postage stamps is called 'surfacing' or 'calendering'. If when the paper to be surfaced is obstructed by a paper fold or another piece of paper then the area covered will lack the smoother finish and this will show up when the stamps are printed as a coarser printing. Some examples are shown.

The final two sheets are devoted to the 1½d Pencil Flaw. Speculation has continued for many years as to the number of plates this flaw occurred on. Research at the British Library shows that just two plates were involved. Examples of both are shown and information of the printings made from them is given which updates what has been recorded before.