

Under the Magnifying Glass: No.13 Identifying the KGV 1912-1920 Watermark Crown CA 1/- by Malcolm Barton and Kim Stuckey

When we started the Under the Magnifying Glass series some three years ago, we thought our research would be limited to new varieties post World War 2, as many philatelists had already spent much time on the earlier issues. However, we have been pleased to see both our correspondents and own contributions have covered earlier stamps and postmarks, right the way back to Queen Victoria. With the opportunity to have a colourful column this time, we use it to discuss a tricky subject from the KGV era.

The 1/- printings of the first King George V definitives are often wrongly described in dealers' stocks and in auction lots. It is important to be able to distinguish them. Gibbons mint catalogue prices vary from £32 to £90 for mint and similarly from £4.50 to £45 in War Stamp form. Used examples show similar differences. So the question is, in what category would you put this block of four?



Figure 1 – The mystery block of four.



Figure 2 – the 1912, 1919 and 1920 printings of the 1/-

It appears to be not either of the 1912 printings which are of a different shade, so is it 1919 or 1920? The shade is most similar to the 1919 SG65a “pale bistre brown” printing and it does not seem to match the SG65b “brown” shade of the 1920 printing. Indeed Gibbons catalogues used to split the 1920 printing into SG79 Brown on Greyish paper and SG80 Deep Brown on Greyish paper. The deepest shade is usually found among the War Stamps. It certainly looks like our block is from the 1919 printing. So all seems well!

However, turn the block over and compare that to the backs of the three printings.

If you look at the watermark of the 1920 printing, it is much less clear than the 1912 or 1919 printings. As well it is on a stiff greyish paper, rather than the thick toned paper of the 1912 printing or the thin white paper of the 1919 printing. Therefore everything about the reverse of the block indicates that we have a 1920 printing here.

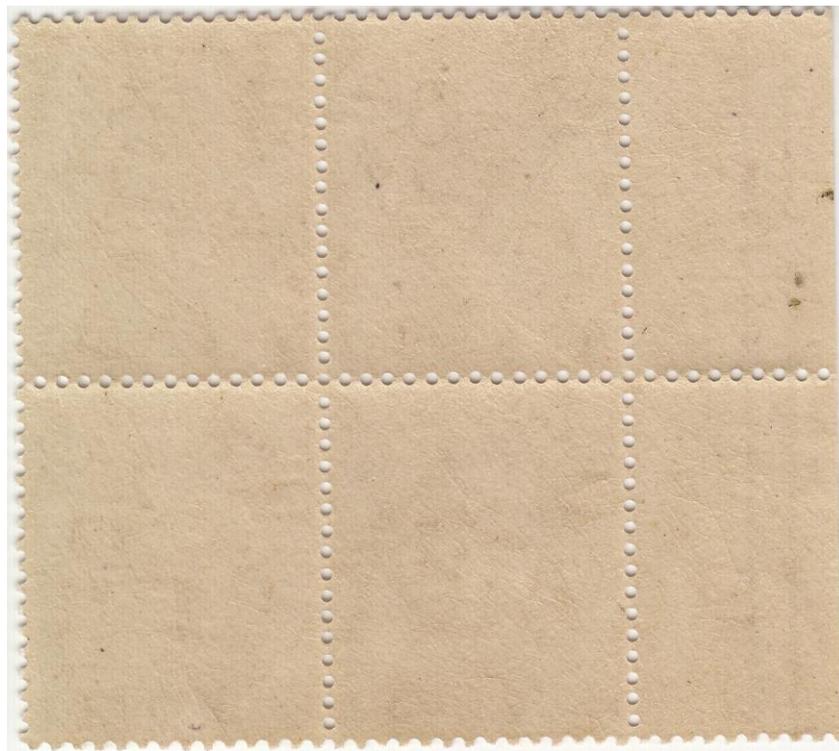


Figure 3 – The reverse of the mystery block.



Figure 4 –From left to right - the reverse of the 1912, 1919 and 1920 printings – thick toned paper, thin white paper and thick greyish paper

In fact what we have here is what Ewen’s called the “Pale Fawn” of the 1920 printing and Stewart Douglas sold it as such. It is much scarcer than the other shades.

In reviewing the 1/- printings, there is something else which is often overlooked and it is where the magnifying glass plays a part.

The 1/- plate was scratched in several places between the 1912 and 1919 printings and are numerous in the central part of the plate, which helps with plating



Figure 5 – The plate scratches from positions 25 and 26 – the top two stamps of our block - scanned at 1200 dpi

These scratches are more visible on the 1920 printing than the 1919 one. There is a useful illustration of this on page 63 of John Bunt’s book, the De La Rue Definitives of the Falkland Islands, from research by Tony Lovelock.

Being able to plate the 1920 1/- War Stamps with double offsets could promote a "SH37cv2 double offset on reverse" to a "SH36cv1 double overprint, one albino, with double offsets", a catalogue difference of £1,000! Especially as the double impression on the left hand side of the sheet is easier to detect than on the right hand side and more likely to be awarded a certificate.

We look forward to hearing about your experience of separating out the printings of this difficult stamp and whether you have "beaten the dealer"!

Reference: The De La Rue Definitives of the Falkland Islands 1901-1929 by John Bunt (plate research by Tony Lovelock).