

## Under the Magnifying Glass: No.30 The Birds Issue Revisited by Malcolm Barton and Kim Stuckey



The recent Grosvenor auction prompted us to look again at the 1960 Birds definitive issue and the monograph produced by Hugh Osborne in 2000.

The monograph mentions under the section "Plate Reconstructions" (page 31), Study Group research into what is called a "substituted cliché". This is where the plate has experienced wear in a particular area and one of the frame die positions is flattened out and a new impression of the die made. The result is a design that will look far more strong (normally darker) than the surrounding designs. The most familiar substituted cliché is seen on Frame Plate 2 R12/4 Position 59, often seen in combination with the "weak entry" in Position 60 in a bottom right hand corner pair or block of four.

A very strong substituted cliché can be found in an awkward position on the sheet, R7/3 or Position 33. This is on the 1/2d value Frame Plate 1 only on the 1968 printing and is the only known work performed on this older plate. Despite being in the middle of the sheet it can be found, as 1-2 sheets can be purchased at relatively low cost.



The R7/3 substituted cliché is illustrated above as the top stamp, where you hopefully are able to see the darker shading of the Queen's head and shoulders of the green frame design.

There is a marked difference in the shading between the Waterlow and De La Rue Queen's head (due to plate wear) as shown here in an illustration from the Heijtz catalogue. When you have a substituted cliché it appears as if you have a Waterlow stamp in the middle of a De La Rue sheet.

The Birds monograph also has a section titled "Misplaced Vignettes". This is where the vignette (on this issue the bird design and value) has moved from being centred within the frame (the coloured design including the Queen).



There is a fine distinction between the slight misplacement and that of a significant shift worthy of catalogue status. Take for example the pair of 6d stamps above, the right hand stamp is certainly misplaced lower than the centred design on the left, but does not have a dramatic enough effect on the eye to be included in the catalogue in our opinion. It does however make a pleasant challenge for collectors to find these oddities.



Likewise the 5/- and 10/- values shown to the left have been used as examples of misplaced vignettes, but probably do not merit catalogue inclusion.



The June 2019 Grosvenor sale had a left marginal example of a vignette shift (we use here the term “shift” to distinguish from the less dramatic “misplacement”) on the 1/2d value, that sold for what might seem a large amount, £250. However this was not out of line with a right marginal pair probably from the same sheet that sold in Grosvenor in December 2016 for £400. The pair is illustrated here. You can see that the Falkland Islands Thrush is attempting to peck at the Queen’s head, a treasonable offence!

We would contend that this and other dramatic vignette shifts, obviously appreciated by collectors according to prices paid, are worthy of catalogue status.



Three other examples are shown above on the 1d, 6d and 9d values with sinking gulls and grebes and an elevating albatross. The upwards shift of the plate number as well on the 6d value is particularly appealing.



Finally we look at a shift on the 1/- value, where the vignette is shifted lower into the bottom part of the frame.

What makes this example very interesting is that the “PIED OYSTERCATCHERS” shows the stamp probably to be an example of SH132v1, the doubling of this writing at R2/4, Position 9. This doubling is not seen on all positional blocks (which is the best way to collect the variety) so it is either a re-entry part way through the printing or some other paper movement.



A slight change of subject, but we should report a remarkable find in a collection formed by our past Chairman, Reg Leppard. This discovery does not even need a magnifying glass.



Often, due to the plentiful availability of material and the need for further research, one of the areas of pages in a collection rapidly turned over is the 1944 Dependencies Overprints section. In reviewing this collection, something caught the eye. This was a plate block of the 3d for South Shetlands with plate number 1-2 amongst other plate blocks of the South Shetlands set. This is catalogued as “scarce” and from £150 in the Heijtz catalogue. This is seldom seen offered for sale, as the vignette plate change happened late in the issue and the blocks are indeed scarce. Carrying on through the page turning to Graham Land, there was a plate 1-2 3d for Graham Land. Next was the South Orkneys plate blocks and there was also a plate 1-2 3d for South Orkneys. Both these blocks again are “scarce” and individually catalogued from £150.

The final page turn was remarkable. There was the 3d Plate 1-2 for South Georgia. The Heijtz catalogue reads, “only 1 copy known in Royal Collection”. Well here was the second copy!

Thanks to Bill Leppard, Hugh Osborne and Grosvenor Auctions.

Reference: The Birds Definitives of the Falkland Islands by Hugh Osborne – FIPSG Monograph No. 6 June 2000. Specialised Stamp Catalogue of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies 6<sup>th</sup> Edition by Stefan Falkland Heijtz