

THE STAMPS OF BRITISH NEW GUINEA.

The following notes on the stamps of British New Guinea may be of interest to collectors of Australasian stamps. No claim is made as to their being exhaustive, and in certain cases the conclusions drawn are purely conjectural.

Post offices were established in the territory as early as 1891, and the current Queensland stamps were used. The following values are known: ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d, 4d, 6d, 1s, 2s, 2s 6d, 5s, 10s; and used copies are easily distinguishable by the very distinctive postmark—a barred oval, in the centre of which are the letters B. N. G. The stamps are also to be found with the Port Moresby postmark. In the writer's opinion it seems a little questionable whether the high values were ever dispatched officially to New Guinea although there may possibly have been a demand for them for fiscal purposes.

In 1901 the territory was deemed worthy of a special series, and accordingly values were issued of a distinctive design, the central portion of which is a representation of the "lakatoi," a species of double canoe used by the natives for trading purposes. Seven values were issued, the denominations being ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d, 4d, 6d, 1s, and these were supplemented by the issue of a 2s 6d stamp in 1905.

There are several interesting points relating to these stamps, which, up to the present, have not been recognised; and it is noteworthy that in the large collection which was shown at the recent Exhibition of the Junior Philatelic Society, no distinction was made as to the very notable differences in the printings, which will be found detailed below.

The difference in the thickness of paper upon which modern colonial stamps, from the office of Messrs. De La Rue & Co., have been printed, has been frequently remarked upon of late in the philatelic press.

The thicker paper is used almost entirely for the manufacture of stamps printed by the steel or copper process, this process being that by which the British New Guinea stamps were prepared. The reason has been officially stated that the wetting necessary in printing by this process tries the thinner paper too much.

That the thick paper was used originally for printing by this process can be instanced by such stamps as the Commemorative 2½d Grenada, and 2d Trinidad. Then trials seem to have been made with the ordinary thinner paper, on which, for example the Barbados Nelson Commemorative issue was printed. Finally, recourse was had again to the thicker paper, as in the multiple issue of the Barbados Nelsons and the recent permanent series for Brunei.

The New Guinea stamps were originally issued on thick paper, and the



first printing is easily distinguishable by this fact. Further, the gum is also thick, and has the appearance of being spread in layers. The Rosette watermark is found (according to the writer's experience) invariably sideways in this

printing; that is to say, the greatest breadth lies horizontally.

The ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d, 4d, 6d, 1s values on this paper are by far the commonest varieties, but the 2s 6d value is scarcer than the 2s 6d on the thinner paper described below. Dealers' supplies of the lower values consist almost exclusively of this printing, as the stamps were naturally imported at the time of their issue. On the other hand, the two printings of the 2s 6d were probably dispatched at the same time or, at any rate, very closely together, as both varieties were obtainable from dealers' supplies.

It is on the whole improbable that there were more than two printings of the 4d, 1s, and 2s 6d values, but of the other values there is good reason to suppose that intermediate supplies were received from Messrs. De La Rue.

The intermediate printings may be termed second printings, and are found on thick paper, which, however, is not so thick as that of the first printing; the gum is usually toned, no doubt owing to climatic influences, and the watermark is upright.

The ½d, 1d, and 2½d values are distinguishable by shades, the colour of the 2½d being especially marked, a dull milky blue as against a bright blue in the first printings. The 2d value probably occurs in this printing, but the writer has not seen a copy, while the 6d value can only be attested by a block of four, surcharged "Papua," Type 1.

The third printing is absolutely unmistakable, being on very thin paper through which the watermark, which is upright, shows transparently. All values occur, although the writer has only seen the 1d and 2½d values in the surcharged state. The shades, of the values 2½d to 2s 6d are also distinctive. It may be remarked that stamps of this printing are exceedingly rare unsurcharged, as they can have only been in use a very short time in this condition. Moreover, as far as is known, only one European dealer received a supply.

The 2½d value of this printing surcharged "Papua," which is mentioned above, shows the watermark sideways. This may, perhaps, be counted as the exception to prove the rule, but conceivably there may have been a further printing of this value. Mention has been made in philatelic journals of a 2½d dull blue, and if this is not the stamp already described under the intermediate printings it may belong properly to the third printing.

Summary.

First printings (thick paper, thick gum, wmk. sideways). ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d, 4d, 6d, 1s, 2s 6d.

Second Printings (thick paper, thinner than last, wmk. upright, gum often toned). ½d, 1d, 2d, (?) 2½d, 6d.

Third printings (thin paper, wmk. upright). ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½, (?) 4d, 6d, 1s, 2s 6d; wmk. sideways, 2½d.

These stamps are printed in sheets of 30 (5x6), and although the margin is usually clipped too close for the plate number to be seen, it is known that the ½d, 1d, and 2d exist with plate numbers 1 and 2. It is probable that the first printings of all values are from Die I, and the third printings from Die II, although the dies are probably indistinguishable.—R. ANTHROBUS, in *Gibbons Weekly*.

Various notes upon the stamps of this colony have been published during the last few months showing the existence of varieties which have not yet been listed in the Catalogue of Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, Ltd., and as there seems

to be a certain amount of doubt as to the proper description and philatelic position of those varieties, it may be of some use if an unprejudiced outsider endeavours to review the case impartially, and to ascertain what is the true nature of the varieties that have been found. I should premise that I propose to confine myself to the variations in the stamps themselves, and not to take any notice of the overprint that has been applied to them.

In the number of this magazine for 9 May last is a very interesting article by Mr. R. Anthrobus from which I, at all events, learned for the first time that there were some very distinct variations in the paper upon which these stamps are printed, and that these variations are accompanied, and may possibly be multiplied, by variations in the position of the watermark. Curiously enough in *Ewen's Weekly Stamp News* of the very same date a similar article appeared dealing with the same subject from a rather different point of view, and this coincidence led me to examine a set of the stamps, including an entire sheet of the ½d which I had obtained from Mr. Ewen in April, 1902, and subsequently to obtain from the same source specimens showing the varieties of paper which are referred to in both the articles.

The designs of the stamps, and of the watermark in the paper on which they are printed, are shown in the annexed illustration. The watermark consists of quaterfoils or rosettes, which, unfortunately, are not square or circular, but are longer in one direction than in the other, and the rows are spaced differently in correspondence with the shape of the rosettes; thus, looking at the paper with the longer diameter of the rosettes horizontal, as shown in the illustration, there is greater space between the rosettes in the horizontal rows than there is between those in the vertical rows; and this leads to the listing of the stamps with "watermark sideways" and "watermark upright," as given by Mr. Anthrobus, or with "wide rosettes" and "narrow rosettes," as given (I think erroneously) by Mr. Ewen. The latter maintains that the watermarks must be considered different because, in the earlier printings, the stamps with the watermark sideways (the longer diameter horizontal) appear to be always (?) on thicker paper than those with the watermark upright. But even if this were the case the theory founded upon it seems to me to be untenable, because no apparent difference in the texture of the paper can alter the fact that the watermark itself is identically the same in all, and may well have been produced by the very same dandy-roll.

Mr. Anthrobus' description of the papers is as follows:—

"First printings (thick paper, thick gum, watermark sideways).

"Second printings (thick paper, thinner than last, watermark upright, gum often toned).

"Third printings (thin paper, watermark upright)." and "watermark sideways, 2½d."

Mr. Ewen's original description was:—

"Wmk., wide rosettes, thick paper."
"Wmk., narrow rosettes, thin paper."

But he afterwards adopted the arrangement of Mr. Anthrobus, and his later description is:—

"Wmk., wide rosettes, thick, opaque paper."
"Wmk., narrow rosettes, thick paper."
"Wmk., narrow rosettes, thin paper."

I do not copy the lists of values under the different headings in either case, because I wish to confine myself for the present to the papers.

About the third paper there can be no doubt, it is distinctly thinner than the others, and appears certainly to have been the last used. The stamps on this paper do not invariably show the watermark upright, but only one value (the 2½d) has at present been found on thin paper with watermark sideways. The question is whether there is any appreciable difference between the other two, apart from the difference in the position of the watermark, and whether in any case they denote different printings, and if so, which was the earlier variety.

The position of the watermark depends, of course, simply upon the way in which the paper is put into the press, and this probably depends upon the way in which the large sheets of paper are cut up. The sheets are not exactly square; the dimensions of the pane of stamps, measured to the outer rows of perforation, in the case of my sheet of ½d are 166x175 mm., while the paper measures 196x201 mm. (more nearly square). But it would seem that the margins of the sheets were trimmed after printing, as specimens have been found with a plate number, which must usually have been cut away; so that it is possible that the sheets of paper as put into the press were nearly square, and could have been printed upon either way, making the position of the watermark purely accidental. On the other hand, if they were not square, it is easy to understand that all the paper for one printing would have been cut in the same way, and in that case a certain printing might be recognized by the position of the watermark.

According to a letter from Mr. Ewen, to whom I am indebted for a good deal of information on the subject, "the issue took place at Port Moresby on 1st July, 1901, and in London about April, 1902." I saw the stamps in September, 1901, and they were advertised for sale in the *Monthly Journal* for that month, showing that Stanley Gibbons, Ltd., had received a supply. If any one of

my readers have sets which they can trace back to that date, I should much like to know which way the watermark is placed, and what is the nature of the paper, as that should decide the question as to the first printing of the stamps.

In April, 1902, they were put on sale in London, and according to *Ewen's Weekly Stamp News* its publishers then obtained their first supply, which presumably formed part of a second printing that had never left London. In that same month I obtained a set from Mr. Ewen, the contents of which are as follows:—

½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d, 4d; watermark upright.
6d, 1s; watermark sideways.

The supply of April, 1902, was therefore a mixed lot, so far as the position of the watermark is concerned, and I confess that I can find no appreciable variation in the thickness of the paper of the various stamps of this set, or any difference in that respect between these stamps and specimens of the 6d and 1s with the watermark sideways, which are shown me as being on the thickest of the varieties of paper. The paper of the 6d and 1s in my set may be a little more opaque than that of the other values, but I do not think I should have noticed it if I had not been looking for it. The paper of the other specimens shown me displays rather more difference in this respect, due, I think, to the fact that the gum is browner, and as these are copies with the large "Papua" overprint, it is probable that the tint of the gum is due to a few years' sojourn in an unfavourable climate. And if there is any real difference in the thickness of the stamps, I am inclined to attribute it to the thick gum mentioned by Mr. Anthobus. I am fortunate enough to possess two values on the thick paper with upright watermark, the 2d and 4d, which do not appear to be known to either of the authorities quoted above.

A curious point is that the 2s 6d, which was not known to collectors un-

til 1905, is stated to exist upon the first variety of the thick paper and not upon the second. Mr. Ewen suggests that perhaps it was in existence all the time, but nobody asked for it. This seems improbable; if the stamps were put on sale in London it was for the purpose of raising money, and the existence of the value calculated to produce the most profit would hardly have been concealed for three years. The evidence seems rather to indicate that the stamps on thick paper with the watermark upright were the first and those on similar paper with the watermark sideways the second, unless we are to suppose that the paper was really cut up and used sometimes one way and sometimes the other at various periods. One fact, however, may be admitted, namely, that the stamps with watermark sideways (or the majority of them) have gum which apparently is thicker and less transparent than that of the other stamps; but this appearance may possibly be due to climatic influences.

In regard to the thin paper, which must have come into use after the printing of the first supply of the 2s 6d, it seems only necessary to say that the watermark is always upright, except in the 2½d, which has been found with it both ways, and this seems to point to a special printing of the value on one occasion unaccompanied by other values.

On the whole, I should recommend a division of the stamps into thick paper and thin, only, with subdivision under watermarks upright and sideways, for those who wish to go so far.

I may add, for the benefit of the specialist, that almost all the stamps I have on thick paper are perforated with a single-line machine, gauging exactly 13 4-5, but those on thin paper and the 2½d on thick paper with small "Papua" overprint are done with a vertical comb machine, gauging rather more nearly 14, but I take no special pride in this discovery.—EDWARD B. EVANS in *Gibbons Weekly*.