

King George V Definitive Stamps of New Zealand

The Emergence of the New Zealand Penny Black

Andrew Dove looks at the story behind the first King George V definitive design

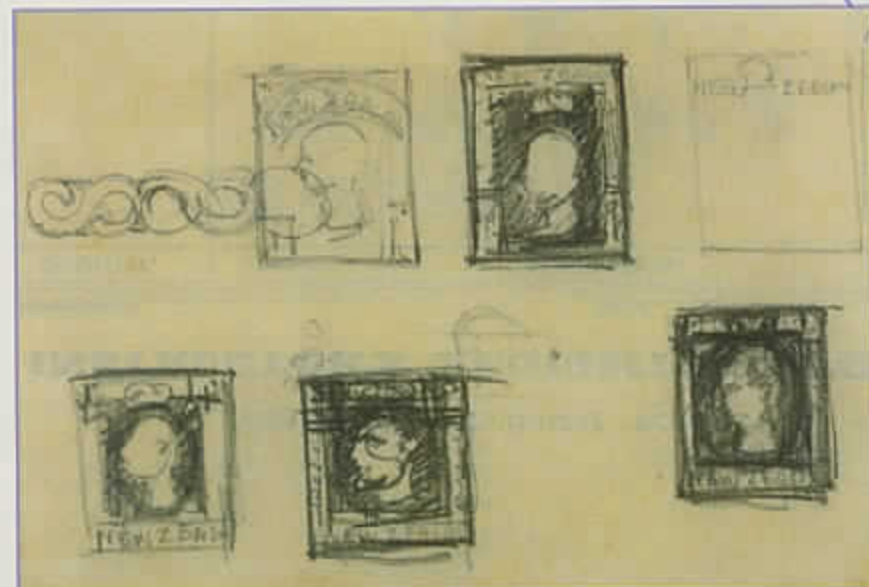


Fig 1 Preliminary sketches by Linley Richardson

When King George ascended the throne on 6 May 1910, the definitive stamps depicting the late monarch, King Edward VII, had been on sale since 9 November 1909. Although the set was only six months old, the Postmaster General agreed to the early production of a new series of stamps showing the new King. In his Annual Report published in August 1911, the specifications were clarified. The requirements included: 'The design will include a portrait of King George V, together with the lettering "Dominion of New Zealand Postage and Revenue", and the value in figures only. Only one design will be used for all values, the value being altered to suit. The design is to be suitable for reproduction by the intaglio process. The new stamps are to be exactly the same size as those of the present issue.'

The same publication also revealed that the commission had initially been offered to Mr Bertram Mackennal, Associate of the Royal Academy, sculptor, who was already designing new coinage for the Dominion of New Zealand and had already designed the 1/4d. and 1d. stamp showing the new King for use in Great Britain. Unfortunately, he declined due to pressure of work.

It was next decided to offer the commission to a local artist, Mr Harry Linley Richardson. Richardson was born in London in 1874 and studied at the Goldsmiths' Institute School of Art, Westminster School of Art and the Académie Julian in Paris. He was elected to the Royal Society of British Artists in 1905 and had a successful career in his home country, exhibiting widely, including at the Royal Academy. He emigrated to New Zealand in 1908 and took a position teaching art at the Technical School of Wellington. In later life, he became Director of the Art Department at

the Palmerston North Technical School in 1928 and died in January 1947.

His first thoughts for the new stamp are shown in Fig 1. These sketches are on the back of a Wellington Technical School Instructor's Requisition Form. The design was refined to that shown in Fig 2 in which the King is shown three-quarter face with two supporters, a Maori warrior on the right and Zealandia on the left. This essay is partly hand drawn, partly photographic print and partly photographic print retouched in China white paint.

Reference to Great Britain

The design concept was accepted and Linley Richardson prepared a further hand-drawn essay (Fig 3) with instructions to Perkins Bacon who had been selected to produce the dies. The reference to the Great Britain stamps is made clear as the colour is to be that of the King Edward VII 1d. stamp and an example of the new King George V 1d. is attached to show the high-

lighting on the portrait. There are also detailed drawings of the spear held by the Maori warrior supporter and the tattooing on his face.

The design was further refined with some changes to the portrait and frame surrounding the head and a final hand-drawn design with a photographic portrait insert produced (Fig 4). This was sent to Perkins Bacon & Co Ltd with instructions to engrave a die and submit it to the New Zealand Post Office authorities for approval. The Dies were produced and proofs submitted (Fig 5) to the High Commission in London on 8 August 1912.

The engravers at Perkins Bacon gave their opinion that the design was unsatisfactory because the portrait occupied too much space in the oval. The company, accordingly, submitted suggested amended designs (Fig 6). For two, a new engraving of the head was made with the uniform omitted and the neck extended. Two suggested frames were applied. For the third, the original portrait was modified slightly and the oval enlarged within the frame.

Fig 2 The first design was based on the recently-issued British stamps designed by Bertram Mackennal. The essay is partly hand-drawn and partly photographic print retouched with China white paint



Fig 3 The second hand-drawn essay (reduced)



Fig 4 Final version of the first design. This essay has a hand-drawn frame and a photographic print of the King's head. It was produced for the guidance of the engraver; the two drawing pin marks show how it was positioned on a drawing board

Fig 6 Essays submitted by Perkins Bacon. The engravers were unhappy with the first design and new suggestions were submitted along with the die proofs of the first design

Fig 5 Die proofs in red and black of the original design



A pre-eminent philatelist

The climate had changed in New Zealand in 1912 when Sir Robert Heaton Rhodes was appointed Postmaster General. As well as being a skillful and successful politician, Sir Heaton Rhodes was a pre-eminent philatelist. During his period as Postmaster General (1912-15), he was also President of the Philatelic Society of New Zealand, a post he again held between 1921 and 1936, following his return from overseas political postings.

The new Postmaster agreed with Perkins Bacon that the first design was unsatisfactory but did not approve of their suggested alterations. His first suggestion to Linley Richardson was to consider adapting the design of the first New Zealand stamp, the 'Full Face Chalon'. A copy of the 3d. was obtained and overpainted to show King George V in his coronation robes. This, too proved unsatisfactory.

Sir Heaton Rhodes' next suggestion was that a design should be produced based on the British Penny Black. A drawing was produced by the end of 1912 and forwarded to Perkins Bacon for a die to be produced. The engravers believed that the initial design (Fig 7) required modification and produced a half-block die rather than going to the expense of engraving a die (Fig 8). The changes were agreed and Richardson made an amended drawing with 'POSTAGE AND REVENUE' placed above 'NEW ZEALAND', the crown altered in shape and the design used for the side borders extended into the top border. The inner border in the final design was derived from an adapted Maori rafter pattern.

Perkins Bacon accepted the modified design and produced a die. The first stage in the production was to cut the background to the portrait (Fig 9) using the same machine as had been used to cut the background of the Penny Black. Next, the frame was added and the lines of the portrait hand engraved (Figs 10 and 11). The last step was the addition of the value: the first die cut was for the 3d. (Fig 12).



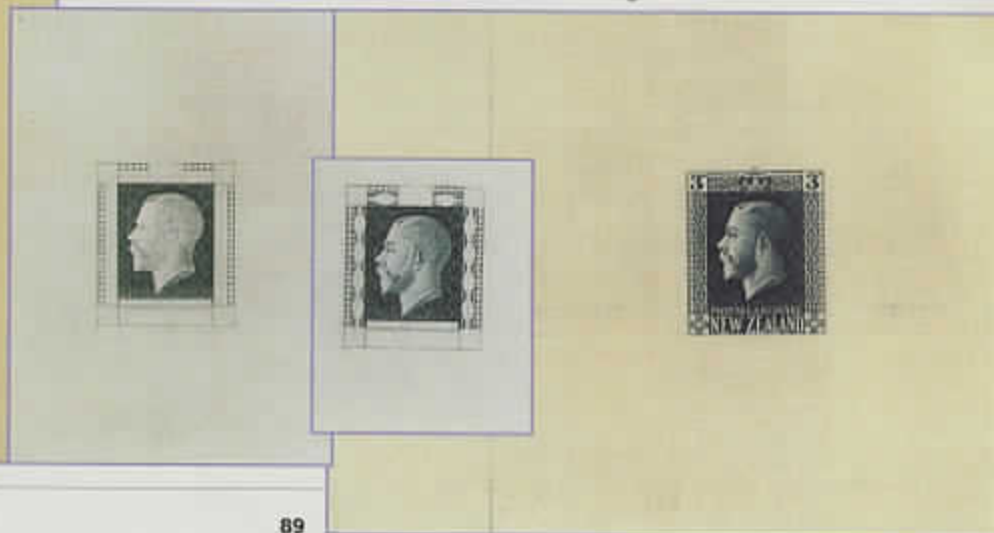
Fig 7 The new design. The second design was developed by overpainting photographic prints with China white paint. This print has a label on the reverse scheduling delivery for 25 March 1913 (reduced)



Fig 8 Half block die proof of the second design

Figs 9 (background), 10 (frame added) and 11 (portrait engraved). Proofs were pulled at successive stages of the cutting of the master die. The background was cut using the same Rose machine used to cut the background of the Penny Black

Fig 12 (below right) The completed die was delivered on 5 December 1913. It was approved subject to the corner stars being recut



Approved

Proofs from the finished die, before hardening, were sent to New Zealand, arriving on 5 December 1913. The High Commission was informed that, subject to strengthening of the corner stars, the die was approved.

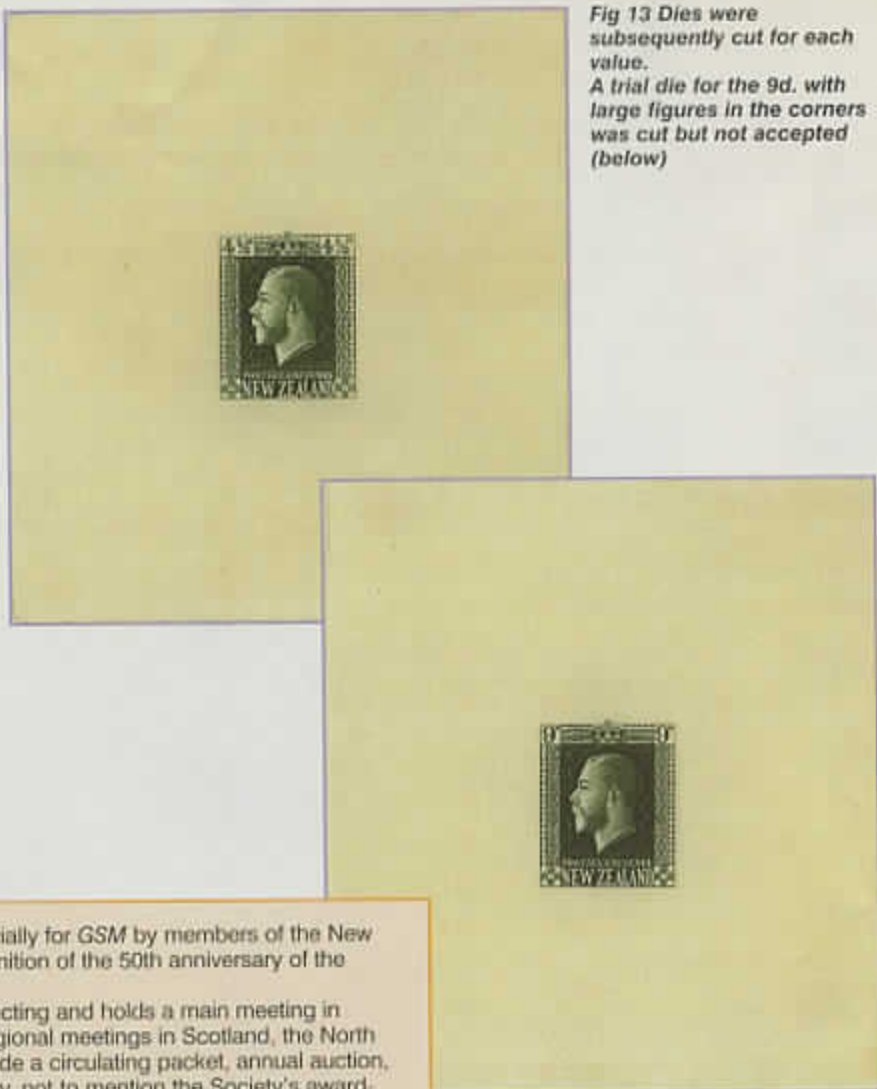
The 3d. die was hardened and three impressions were taken on the periphery of a transfer roller. One impression was used to lay down the 3d. plate. The value was cut away from the other two with two sizes of value tablets: one of the values without the 3d. and the other for values with a 3d. such as the 4d. (Fig 13).

The original set was put on sale on 30 July 1915 and consisted of 11 values, 3d., 1½d., 2d., 2½d., 3d., 4d., 4½d., 6d., 7½d., 9d. and 1s. The 1d. Dominion was retained. The 1½d., 4½d. and 7½d. were required for parcel post purposes and it was not thought necessary to continue with the 5d. and 8d. values which had been included in the previous definitive issue.

All values except the 3d. were printed by the intaglio (recess-printed) method. Because the demand for the 3d. was likely to be much greater than the other values, the decision was made to print it by the surface-printing method (Fig 14).

Thus was born one of the classic stamp designs from New Zealand. Although nearly four years in gestation, the result amply repaid the time spent and care taken.

Fig 13 Dies were subsequently cut for each value.
A trial die for the 9d. with large figures in the corners was cut but not accepted (below)



This article is one of a series written specially for GSM by members of the New Zealand Society of Great Britain in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Society in 2002.

The Society caters for all levels of collecting and holds a main meeting in London every other month, as well as regional meetings in Scotland, the North and the Midlands. Member benefits include a circulating packet, annual auction, competitions and a comprehensive library, not to mention the Society's award-winning bi-monthly journal, *The Kiwi*.

For further information please contact the Honorary Secretary, Keith C Collins, 13 Briton Crescent, Sanderstead, Surrey, CR2 0JN; telephone 0208 657 4566 or through the Society's website: www.cs.stir.ac.uk/~rgc/nzsgb/

Fig 14 Of the original set, only the 3d. was surface-printed.
Shown here are die proofs with uncleared surround and an extra strike in green (below), final version of the die proof (far right) and plate proofs

