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IT'S THAT MOTH AGAIN !

by Colin Hamilton

The report (by Jim Shaw in the April issue of the 'NZ Newsletter') of the recent astonishing discovery in the 4c Puriri Moth provides considerable food for thought. For convenience of reference, I now quote Mr. Shaw's report in its entirety:

"Recently four complete booklets were found in which one of the 4c panes was stitched upside-down (i. e. through the right-hand selvedge).

"The obvious explanation is that one sheet was placed in the pile upside-down before guillotining and stitching into individual booklets. So far so good. Closer examination, however, revealed that the upside-down pane had one of the colours printed upside-down. Each of the four 4c booklet panes, therefore, included six stamps with the Dark Green (wing veins) actually printed upside-down. This is a first for NZ stamps to our knowledge and will surely be one of the most sought-after and rare of all the varieties of the series".

On reading this, my own instant reaction - and that of everyone else, I imagine - was: "How on earth did that happen? " It seems to me that the following are, theoretically at least, all possible explanations:

1. That the dark green cylinder was removed from the press (for cleaning, perhaps ?), and was inadvertently re-fitted the wrong way round.
2. That the four other cylinders (i. e. all except the dark green) were fitted the wrong way round in the printing press.
3. That prior to the printing of the dark green colour, a sheet (or possibly more than one sheet) was rotated through 180° from the position in which the four other colours were printed.

Of these possibilities, nos. 1 and 2 presuppose that it is technically possible to fit cylinders the wrong way round in a press, and I am by no means certain that this can be done. Assuming it is feasible, however, the production of a sizeable number of sheets with the error would inevitably result, even if the press was run only for a short period. Present evidence indicates that only a very small quantity of error panes exist (probably all from a single sheet), so any kind of 'reversed cylinders' explanation appears most unlikely.

An additional factor against the first possibility is that over and above the error in positioning

the cylinder, it would require the sheet to be rotated after printing and before assembly into booklets. Bearing in mind that there would be nothing apparently amiss with the sheet as it lay (nothing, at least, that would be put right by inverting the sheet), any such rotation would have to be accidental - in combination, a set of coincidences too improbable to entertain.

That leaves possibility no. 3, and it, too, appears at first sight to be very unlikely if one accepts that modern multicolour photogravure printing - whether on a reel-fed machine or, as must be assumed here, a sheet-fed one - is generally a continuous process, rather than a series of isolated operations involving a separate pass through the press for each colour to be printed. A 180° rotation of the paper in the middle of an automatic and continuous process is inconceivable.

However, it is quite possible that in printing these stamps, Messrs. Harrison employed a press which had a capacity of, say, four colours only, and thus a separate operation would be required to complete a five-colour printing job. If the "odd colour out" was the dark green, everything would fall into place - there would in the circumstances certainly be an opportunity for the inversion of a sheet to occur, and if this escaped detection in any checking procedure, the booklets as described by Mr. Shaw would be the ultimate result.

Throughout its life, the 4c in both sheet and booklet form has been notable for the fickleness in the register of the veins in relation to the other colours - often they have been widely misplaced, and not infrequently omitted altogether - and this tends to support the contention that they were indeed printed in a separate operation. It seems to me, therefore, that this last is by far the most probable explanation.

Although we know a great deal about the plates and plating characteristics (thanks to the earlier work done by Messrs. Shaw and Capill), I can see no way of reaching a conclusion from the evidence of the stamps themselves.

However, if these variety booklets happen to be on watermarked paper (whether or not this is so is not stated) it should be possible to resolve the question with reasonable certainty as far as possibility no. 2 is concerned. Given a little thought, it will be evident that in this case the variety pane, as bound into the booklet, would have the wmk. normal (i. e. sideways inverted), whereas both of the other possibilities would result in the watermark being inverted from the normal.

501

FIRST SIDEFACE DIE PROOFS

A brilliant group of die-proofs of all six values which comprised the set as originally issued on Jan 2nd 1874. The proof impressions are immaculately struck in black on rectangular glazed white cards, each inscribed in black type 'BEFORE HARDENING' and dated. The set is made up of the 1d (dated OCT 17, 1872), 2d (OCT 24 1872), 3d (OCT 17, 1872- this is the only date recorded in the Handbooks), 4d (OCT 24, 1872), 6d (OCT 16, 1872), and 1/- (OCT 25, 1872). Condition is absolutely immaculate throughout, and such material represents the ultimate addition to any collection.

The complete set of six superb die-proofs PRICE ON REQUEST

QUALITY SETS

502

Full-Face Queens, Imperf. Simplified set of five used (1d, 2d, 3d, 6d, 1/- - S.G. nos. 97, 36, 40, 43, 100 respectively). Condition well above average; colours beautifully bright and fresh; appearance lovely. For the cancellations enthusiast, the 6d has a fine impression of the distinctive marking listed on page 85 of Volume 3 of the Handbooks as Unidentified Type 21. A classic set to grace any album page £110. 00

- 503 Full-Face Queens, Perforated. A fine long set of the 1864 - 67 issues with Large Star watermark, comprising S. G. 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 122a, 124, 125. A wonderful blaze of colours. Condition and appearance range from very good to really outstanding - the 4d rose in particular is an exceptionally good looker. The used set of 14 Chalmers £112. 50
- 504 1906 Christchurch Exhibition. Fine fresh mint set of 4 ($\frac{1}{2}$ d - 6d), all stamps having sideways inverted watermark. This set has lately been climbing towards something more like its true value - as we have warned more than once, this was bound to happen sooner or later. The fine set (now Cat. £107+ as normals) £100. 00
- 505 1913 Auckland Exhibition. An equally fine mint set. Precisely the same comments on price mentioned above apply here too - in fact recent auction realisations indicate a continuation of the trend. The mint set £120. 00
- 506 (a) 1920 Victory. Set of 7 ($\frac{1}{2}$ d - 1/-, incl. the 2d on $\frac{1}{2}$ d surcharge), finest mint £15. 00
- (b) As above. Another set, without the 2d on $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Only slightly less fine than (a). The set of 6 mint £13. 50
- (c) As above. First grade used set, composition as set (a), all with light c.d.s. (not parcel cancels). The used set of 7 £14. 75
- 507 (a) 1935 Silver Jubilee. Complete set in superfine mint (unhinged) blocks of 4. The set of 3 blocks £24. 50
- (b) As above. Set in singles, superfine mint £6. 00
- 508 1935 Air Stamps. A lovely set of five blocks of 4, including two fine shades of the 1d (both of these are corner blocks, with plate number 1 and sheet serial number - at no extra charge), two equally fine shades of the 3d, and a block of the 6d. The set of "Bell Block" blocks, all superfine mint £15. 75

MISCELLANY

- 509 1d Universal. A used (dated) single of the Reserve plate issue, with mixed perfs. (C.P. G6d, S.G. 351b). A fine example, showing both the original misplaced perforations (perf. 14) and the corrective strike (perf. 11). The used rarity, Cat. £65+, and excellent buying at £32. 50
- 510 K. G. V 1/- Imperf. Unused pair, in orange-vermilion, completely imperforate, and with large margins all round (C.P. K12bX, S.G. 495a). Some slight gum disturbance, and one stamp has a faint crease (invisible from the front), but neither of these minor defects mars the magnificent appearance of a very scarce variety pair, and a rare opportunity at ... £35. 00
- 511 (a) Life Insurance Dept. Issues. Set of 10 used stamps, $\frac{1}{2}$ d - 6d, between S.G. L24-L31. Complete except for S.G. L28 (2d bright purple) £8. 00
- (b) As above. $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d, 6d values on the 1937 Wiggins Teape paper, with registered watermark (C.P. X7d, X8f, X12c). The three mint stamps, complete £3. 10
- (c) As above. Similar to lot (b) above, but on the later W. T. paper with multiple wmk. All five values, $\frac{1}{2}$ d, 1d, 2d, 3d, 6d are included (C.P. X7e, X8g, X10e, X11c, X12d), mint £5. 00

- (d) As above. One of each mint of the 1947 Pictorial issue (S. G. L42-L49, C. P. X13a - X20a) 8 stamps £1. 95
- (e) As above. The 1967 Decimal provisional issue, absolutely complete mint, including all existing issues on the three different papers. The scarce complete set comprising - 1c (3), 2c, 2½c (2), 3c, 5c (3), 10c (3) (C. P. X21a - X26c) £6. 00
- 512 Official Leaflets. Official post office leaflets issued to publicise:
(a) The 1935 Pictorials - all 14 designs are described, the chosen colours being highly descriptive; and (b) The 1947 Pictorial Life Insurance issue, covering not only the lighthouses and their history but also the achievements of the Life Insurance Dept. The two leaflets, excellent write-up material £3. 00
- 513 (a) Arms types on cover. A registered cover from Christchurch to England, bearing a block of 4 of the 1½d Surcharged Arms type (M17a), and dated AUG 1950, the month after the issue of the stamp. Philatelic, but still nice £2. 50
- (b) As above. Air mail cover from KOIKOHE to England, dated 22 NOV 56, bearing a 1/3 Arms type with blue lettering (Z30eZ) and a 6d Q. E. 'Head'. This Arms Type error stamp used on cover is scarce £5. 50

1960 PICTORIAL PLATE BLOCKS, ETC.

Continued from last month's listing.

- 514 (a) 8d Rata. Imprint/plate 111 and the rare 1121. The set of two blocks (8 stamps each), unhinged mint £85. 00
- (b) As above. Sheet value ('£8') block of 4, mint £1. 50
- 515 (a) 9d Flag. Plate 14A14 (block of 4) and Imprint (block of 6), from the same plates. The two blocks, superfine mint £4. 80
- (b) As above. Plate block of 4 only (from pl. 14A14). Now Cat. £2. 40, a bargain in perfect mint condition at £1. 85
- 516 (a) 1/- Timber. Plate blocks (of 4 stamps each) from 9B9C and 10B10C. The stamps show clearly the differences which are characteristic of printings from these plates. The two blocks, superfine mint £7. 20
- (b) As above. Plate block of 4 from 10B10C only. Mint £3. 00
- (c) As above. Sheet value block of 4 ('VALUE £8') from 9B9C. Mint ... £1. 35
- 517 1/3 Trout. Sheet value block of 4 ('VALUE £10') in the deep blue shade. Mint £2. 20
- 518 (a) 1/6 Tiki. Two plate blocks of 4 (each with plate nos. 6D6E) on very distinctive papers. Both are unsurfaced, but the differences in both tone (cream and white) and thickness are as evident as night and day. The two blocks £9. 50
- (b) As above. Plate block on the thin white paper only £4. 50
- (c) As above. Sheet value block of 4 ('VALUE £12') on thin white paper .. £2. 50

519	<u>1/9 Multicolour.</u> Imprint block of 4, mint	£4. 75
	(Note: No plate blocks exist in this value).	
520	(a) <u>2/- Rock Drawing.</u> Two sheet value blocks on unsurfaced paper, one having the original (erroneous) sheet value '£4' obliterated by two black bars and the correct value '£12' surcharged; the other block shows the '£4' removed and the correct value '£12' inserted by retouching. The two interesting blocks, mint	£10. 00
	(b) <u>As above.</u> Plate block 1A1C (4 stamps) on the later chalk-surfaced paper	£7. 20
521	(a) <u>2/6 Butter.</u> Plate 2A2B in mint block of 4	£6. 00
	(b) <u>As above.</u> Sheet value block of 4 ('VALUE £15'), mint	£5. 50
522	(a) <u>3/- Sepia.</u> Corner block of 4, with printer's imprint in bottom selvedge. Unhinged mint (now Cat. £24 <u>as singles</u>)	£22. 50
	(b) <u>As above.</u> Marginal block of 4 with plate no. 5 in left selvedge. Again unhinged	£22. 50
	(c) <u>As above.</u> Sheet value block of 4 ('VALUE £18'). Condition as before, unhinged mint	£22. 50
523	<u>3/- Multicolour.</u> Printer's imprint block of 4, mint	£15. 00
524	<u>5/- Sutherland Falls.</u> Imprint/plate block of 6 (plate no. 3) on chalk-surfaced paper (Cat. £45), mint	£37. 50
525	<u>10/- Glacier.</u> Corner block of 4 on the original paper, with printer's imprint in bottom selvedge. The mint block	£13. 50
526	<u>£1 Geyser.</u> Imprint/plate block of 6 (plate no. 12), including the extensive sky retouch on R2/1. The mint block	£55. 00

RECENT ISSUES

7/4/76	<u>Vintage Farm Transport.</u> 6c Gig, 7c Thornycroft Lorry, 8c Scandi Wagon, 9c Traction Engine, 10c Wool Wagon, 25c Cart. Set of 6 stamps, mint	60p
	Imprint/Plate blocks (6 stamps each block). Complete set of 12 blocks (two different each value)	£8. 00
	Imprint/Plate blocks. Set of 6 (one of each value)	£4. 10
	Official illustrated First Day Cover (Wanganui postmark)	70p
No Fixed date of issue	<u>25c Hauraki Gulf National Park.</u> Imprint/Plate block (of 6 stamps) with new plate nos. 2a3a4a2a3a. This has been expected for some time, and brings the number of plate combinations used for this value to ten (five pairs with and without "a's") - a remarkable profusion for a relatively high-value stamp. The plate block	£1. 80

For those collectors who missed the earlier plate numbers, we can supply as follows:

1111 (block of 6)	£1. 80,	1a1a1a1a1a (block of 8)	£2. 40
(both of the above are available in very limited quantities).			

22222, 2a2a2a2a2a, 23323, 2a3a3a2a3a, 23423, 23523, 2a3a5a2a3a,
each block (6 stamps each block) £1. 80

1975 Rose 7c. New plates are already in use for this value, no doubt to cope with the increased demand for 7c stamps (now the standard inland postage rate). We can supply as follows:
Imprint/Plate block 2Ax5 or 2Bx5 (10 stamps each block), each 70p

1975 Rose 8c Variety. R4/1 (plate 1A) "Torn petal" at upper left. A prominent and attractive variety, in mint corner block of 8 stamps 75p

Special Cancellation on Cover.

1 APRIL 1976 Murchison Centenary, 1876 - 1976 14p

Postal Stationery.

Some new items to hand following the recent increases in N. Z. postal rates.

8c Envelope. "Stamp" printed in dull claret from a stereotyped cliché (unembossed), on a white envelope which itself is of a new size (195mm x 91mm) and design 12p

4c + 4c LetterCard. The now-obsolete 4c orange-vermilion-on-blue item, surcharged "Additional 4c/Postage Paid" in black below the 'stamp' 13p

38c Registered Envelope. 'Stamp' printed in vermilion on cream, with additional lettering, etc. in bronze-blue 50p

PANPEX 77 SOUVENIR SHEET

We have obtained a further limited supply of this extremely attractive production, featuring reproductions of the 1906 Christchurch Exhibition Set (including the 1d Claret) in colours as issued. Our earlier stock sold out very quickly, so we advise ordering early. The sheet, price (post paid) 47p

K. G. VI MINT

- | | C. P. No. | | |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 527 | (a) | M1a $\frac{1}{2}$ d green. | Set of 3 shades, as Catalogued, mint 54p |
| | (b) | " As above. | Plate no. 2 in left selvedge, mint block of 4 £1. 20 |
| | (c) | " As above. | Plate no. 17 in both right and left selvedges. The two mint blocks of 4 £2. 40 |
| | (d) | " As above. | 6 pieces all from slot machines, comprises three wrapping papers, one strip of 4 stamps with stamp join, and two centre papers. An album page in the making for someone's collection £4. 00 |
| 528 | (a) | M1b/c/d $\frac{1}{2}$ d chestnut. | Fine HM, Fine VM, and Coarse VM papers. One of each mint (blocks pro rata) 16p |
| | (b) | " As above, | but all Catalogued shades. The five mint stamps .. 31p |

(To be continued next month)