

Unknown Variety? – The Silver Jubilee Stamps of King George V

You might not realise there are differences!

To commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V, The General Post Office issued a set of four elaborate stamps within Great Britain as well as overprinting these same stamps for use in select areas under British control but this did not include the commonwealth which received stamps as a part of an omnibus edition. Below is an example of a first day cover.



Within the Scott catalogue is a cryptic note that states the following, “Inverted watermarks on the three lowest values are usually from booklet panes.” While this is true and accurate, it does not state any values or indeed varieties. Stanley Gibbons Specialised Catalogue provides considerably more detail and notes that inverted watermark stamps from sheets “Are worth considerably more” again cryptic in nature since no values are listed. So the rub is how to identify the varieties.

Let’s start with the 2½d blue. It was only ever produced in a sheet format (Die 1). Apart from the rare error of colour (Separate article to follow on this subject) there are some flyspeck varieties but these are minor. For the remaining values, ½d green, 1d red, 1½d brown, there was in fact three dies used to print these stamps.

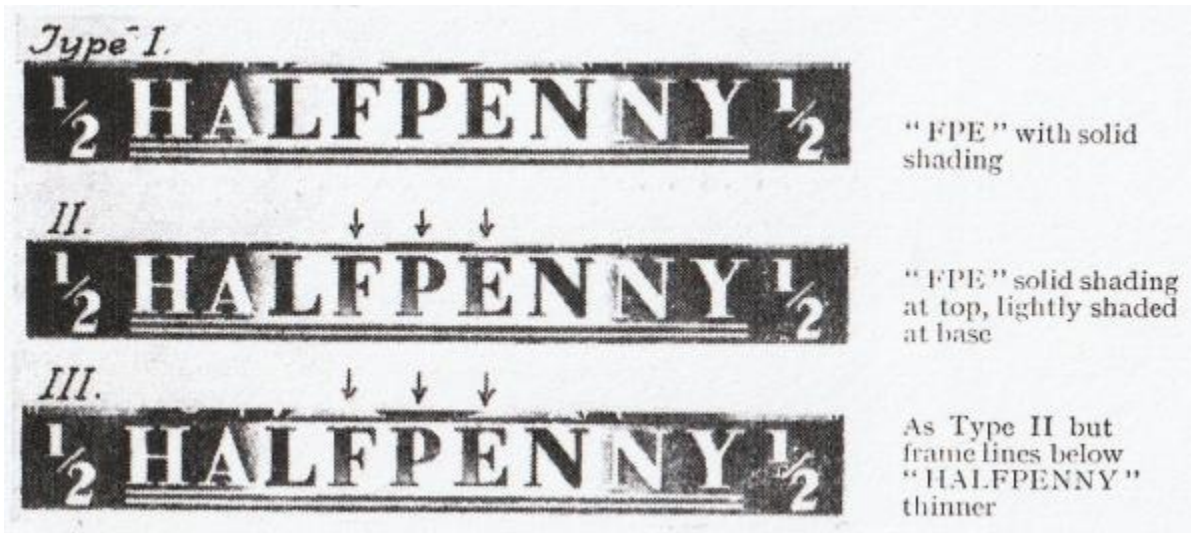
Die 1 was produced for sheet stamps exclusively.

Die 2 was used to print booklet stamps with the watermark inverted.

Die 3 was used to print booklet stamps with the watermark upright.

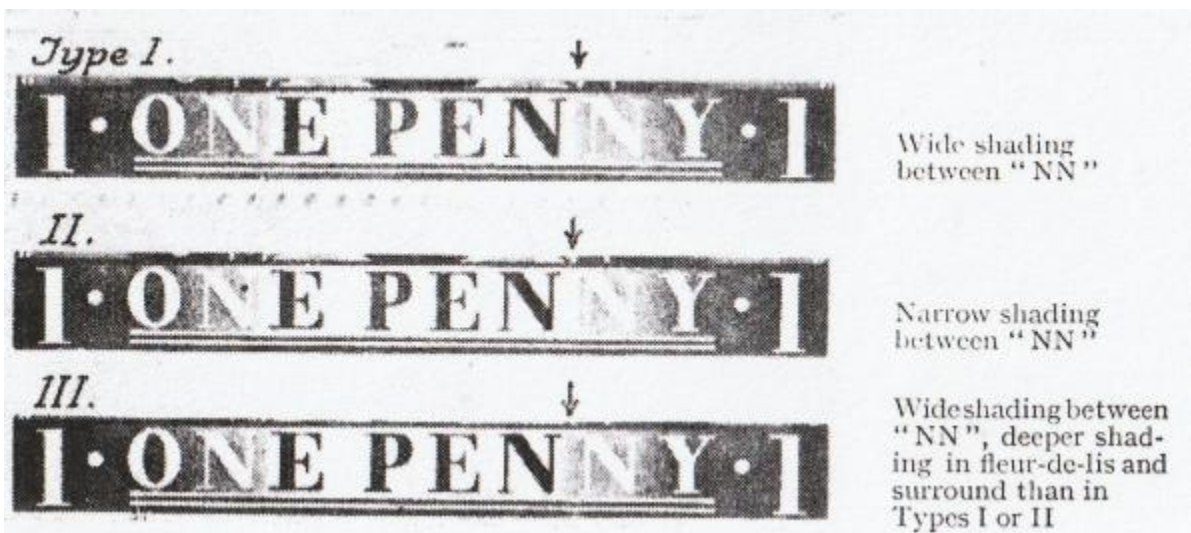
So sorting these we can easily identify the stamps so long as we know what to look for. The real “Paper Chase” is to identify Die 1 stamps with the inverted watermark since these are true (& scarce) errors that commend substantial premiums in the market place. A cautionary note within the S.G catalogue states that these rare stamps (Die 1 watermark inverted) are best collected with sheet selvage to authenticate their heritage. This being said, any of these rare stamps is a collectors dream. Let the hunt begin!

Let us continue our quest with the 1/2d value. We can see the differences in the image below:



This is a tricky one to spot since the frame line thickness difference necessitates the use of a loupe. It is easy to confuse Die 2 from Die 3 but once you spot one then it becomes readily apparent. Note: The arrows within the illustration are placed incorrectly, they point to the top and not the bottom frame lines?

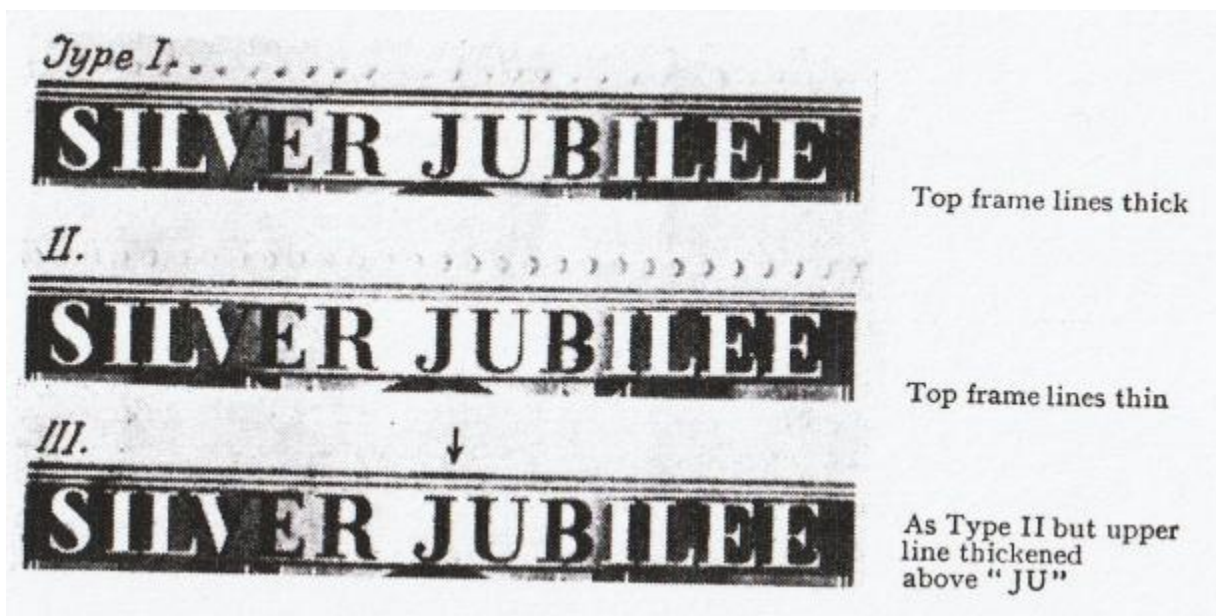
For the 1d value, again we refer to this image below for visual detail:



This time it's a little easier. The key spotting feature is the amount of red shading between the N letters. On the Die 1 and 3 variants, the shading almost touches the left hand side letter N whereas in die 2 there is a large equal white gap between the letters with the red shading being 25% - 50% of the space between the letters. For the Die 3 identification the fleur-de-lis area is shown in the yellow circle below:



The last one for us to find is the easiest. The 1½d brown again has the 3 dies thus:



The thickened frame line above the letters JU can be seen with the naked eye. It's a fatter blip in the line itself and is easily identified (And this time the arrow is in the correct location within the illustration!).

These are common stamps and supply is plentiful. Happy hunting.

Mark Cooper.