

STAMP DEFINITIVES

## GEORGE VI DEFINITIVES: LOW VALUES

1936-39



On 11 December 1936 King George VI came to the throne on the abdication of Edward VIII. It appears that the question of new definitives was given priority over projected Coronation stamps; A G Tydeman, the Controller of Stores, wrote to the designer Eric Gill on 12 December, requesting his 'valuable help' in preparing a set of ½d, 1d, 1½d and 2½d definitives (the four values in most common use) in time for the Coronation. Edward's crowning had been scheduled for 13 May 1937, and it was intended to keep to the same date. Gill had formerly produced designs for the 1924 Wembley Exhibition and 1929 PUC special issues; most recently he had worked on the projected Edward VIII Coronation series, and essays of his design showing Edward's head in a rectangular frame were now in an advanced stage. The new King had seen this design, and was not satisfied with it: 'His view is that the stamp is too plain; he desires that a fresh design be prepared with some ornamentation on it - in fact, something between the new Edwardian and the old Georgian designs.' Tydeman explained that there was no time for a formal effigy of the King to be made available, 'and a portrait as in the present Edwardian issue will have to be used, cut off at the neck in some way'. It was also proposed to omit '1937' from the new stamps and

restore the word 'revenue' beside 'postage'. Gill's advice, 'and, if possible, a suitable design', were solicited; the letter was sent to Gill in Italy where he was convalescing.

Gill's reply sent on 27 December is worth quoting at length:

The accession of the Duke of York to the throne may be taken to represent a return to previous conceptions both in art and politics ... it was symbolical of Edward VIII's short reign that the kingship, like the postage stamps, had been deprived of some of those ornamental accessories on account of which thrones and postage stamps had become ridiculous. I think the designs prepared for Edward VIII leave much to be desired in other respects but not in respect of their plainness ... I do not believe there is in reality any such thing as ornament except in the sense in which we call a sergeant's stripes 'ornaments', or as a medal is called a 'decoration', that is to say something proper and appropriate to the person or thing decorated. All other sorts of ornament are redundant and foolish unless they spring from the exuberance of the workman ... and even then a decent restraint should be observed. In our time when 'the exuberance of the workman' is a meaningless phrase ... there should be no ornament except such as is strictly required. Now in the case of the postage stamps ... if you say: please add some curlywigs or dolphins or roses or dandelions or shells or corinthian columns, or something ornamental, I can only say: but why? As a way out I suggest that you use the lettering to make a rich looking border ... the immediate legibility of the lettering is not of the first importance. It is desirable that the words be there but it is unlikely that they will often be read.

Gill attached four rough sketches illustrating alternative variations of his 'rectangular' design, of which more later.

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## APPROACHES TO MINT AND CAI

On 12 December, the day Tydeman initially contacted Gill, the Postmaster General (PMG), Major G C Tryon, wrote to the King's Comptroller and Equerry, Rear Admiral Sir Basil Vernon Brooke. He explained that the projected issue date of mid-May (as close as possible to the Coronation) for the four values necessitated the completion and approval of designs by the middle of January 1937; to this end he asked if an acceptable selection of full and three-quarter profile photographs for use as the effigy could be provided. On the evidence of material held in the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) various photographs by Bertram Park, Hugh Cecil, Landucci and Dorothy Wilding were rejected during December; three acceptable portraits by Bertram Park were finally supplied by the Royal Mint on 1 January 1937 - one full face, one left profile and one right. Even these were found 'not fully satisfactory' and on 22 January the Mint supplied photographs of both the crowned and uncrowned plaster models of the King's head produced for coinage by Humphrey Paget. A

replica model of the uncrowned head followed on 26 January; the Mint made a charge of £150.

The GPO had already been in touch over the question of new definitives with the Council for Art in Industry (CAI). The Edward VIII stamps issued in September 1936, while generally pleasing to the public, had also come in for much dislike as well as praise. On 22 September Frank Pick, Chairman of the CAI and an energetic campaigner for higher artistic standards in public design, wrote to the Director General (DG), Sir Thomas Gardiner, as to 'whether we cannot get better stamps ... which may have merit, or, at any rate, may express something other than the mere accumulation of the elements of a design'. This led to a series of informal discussions between Pick and the GPO during which the PMG welcomed the CAI's offer to obtain designs from artists of its own choosing and submit them for consideration. In a letter to the DG on 2 December Pick confirmed that stamps would be discussed at the CAI's meeting on 10 December and steps taken to liaise with Tydeman of GPO Stores and A R Kidner of the Mails Branch, who were responsible for most matters relating to stamps. It was on 10 December that Edward VIII abdicated, so no plans could be carried through until it was possible to establish the new requirements. Pick wrote again on 18 December, however, to advise the DG that a CAI Stamp Committee had been formed comprising himself, E McKnight Kauffer, Sidney Lee, F V Burrige of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and Geoffrey Holme of The Studio.

Sir Thomas replied on 24 December, briefing Pick on the new requirements, that the four values of the Edwardian issue be replaced by stamps of the new reign in time for the Coronation, following them generally in design but 'somewhat more ornamental'. He continued: 'The matter must now proceed with extreme rapidity ... it will be necessary to obtain approval of the new designs by about the 22nd of January.' The GPO was taking other steps to prepare designs with that date in mind and he hoped the CAI could do the same. Pick answered on 30 December that the first Stamp Committee meeting would hopefully be on 1 January 1938 and that it would endeavour to meet the GPO's deadline, although 'I fear if we work in a hurry we shall not be successful.'

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## RECOMMENDATIONS ON DESIGN

The Committee met as arranged; Kidner and Tydeman were present on behalf of the GPO and stated that the effigy, crown, 'postage' and 'revenue', and denomination in lettering, figures or both, were essential. The stamps would be produced in photogravure as before, in the current size and colours; the meeting felt, however, that the colours should be improved in tone, especially the brown of the 1½d which Pick said 'was bad and must be altered'. Pick explained that the deadline of 22 January demanded by the GPO meant 'there will be little or no opportunity to correct a false start' - artists would therefore be asked to

model their designs on known stamps and use standard fonts for lettering. He asked the meeting to examine a selection of classic British and foreign stamps with a view to choosing the best examples to use as a base and the most appropriate designers in each case. The following recommendations emerged:

Medallion style - with the head in a round or oval frame like a miniature; this could be given the effect of a portrait in relief, by a sculptor such as (first choice) Charles Wheeler or (second) R Skeeping.

Early Victorian - the chosen model was the 1840 Penny Black (although the actual specimen seen was an 1841 Penny Red) and was best treated by an engraver such as (first) Meredith Frampton, (second) Robert Austin, or Stephen Gooden.

Lettered frame or decoration - the specimen was a triangular Dutch stamp with the head framed in a circle of words, issued for the tercentenary of Utrecht University in 1936; a lettering expert such as (first) Stanley Morrison or (second) Eric Gill was recommended.

Later Victorian - the model was a Tasmanian 6d stamp, and treatment by the wood engraver Agnes Miller Parker recommended.

Kidner advised the Committee that the PMG might wish to show any designs produced to the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC). Pick urged against this as postage stamps fell under the category of industrial art which the CAI had been formed to address; he did not consider the RFAC qualified on the topic and wished to avoid a clash of opinions. Despite Kidner's explanation that there had been a promise to the House of Commons in December that consultation with the RFAC would be borne in mind, and although Pick had been told a week earlier that the GPO was also looking elsewhere for designs, this may not have been fully appreciated. In his report on the meeting to the DG, Kidner noted: 'The Committee hardly seemed to realise that their designs were subject to the approval of the Postmaster General and of the King, though every opportunity was taken during the discussion to make this plain to them.' (In a subsequent memorandum to H Napier, Secretary to the Post Office Board, on 27 January, Kidner noted about the CAI, 'their qualifications are not too clear'.) On 5 January the GPO supplied the Committee with copies of Bertram Park's left-facing profile portrait of the King, received from the Mint; these were passed to the chosen artists together with specimens of the stamp each was to use as a model and a set of detailed instructions. In addition to stipulating the essential elements, this explained that the King's head must be the central feature; apart from this the design should follow the 'general character' of the model stamp attached rather than copying it closely. The design should feature the 1½d value. The overall size of the printed stamp was to be 0.95 inches deep by 0.8 inches wide overall and the design face 0.855 inches by 0.705 inches; artwork should be six times the latter size in sepia or monochrome and suitable for reproduction in

photogravure. Each artist was invited to submit between three and six designs - however, although the instructions did not make this clear, it appears that the CAI's intention was to choose for the GPO one design only from each of the four artists. A fee of 15 guineas (£15.75) was payable for each design submitted to the GPO and 50 guineas (£52.50) for designs approved by the King. The deadline was 16 January.

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## FIRST ARTWORK EXAMINED

The artists approached by the CAI were Wheeler, Frampton, Morrison and Agnes Miller Parker; Miss Miller Parker does not seem to have contributed any designs and Robert Austin was called as a reserve choice. Edmund Dulac and Mark Severin, who had each approached the CAI independently via Mr Holme, also submitted designs. (During January Dulac was also working on a stamp design for the GPO entirely on his own account.) The Stamp Committee met on 18 January and examined submissions by all six artists; Wheeler, Frampton, Morrison, Austin, Dulac and Severin were each subsequently paid 15 guineas by the GPO on 29 January, on behalf of the CAI. Three designs were selected as worth pursuing:

Wheeler:

a design in the 'medallion' style as described on 1 January.

Severin:

the head framed in a circular 'collar' on a background of waves.

Dulac:

based on the 'early Victorian' style as described on 1 January, known later as Dulac's '1840' design.

All three were seen again on 25 January after minor changes, when it was decided that the Dulac and Severin designs came first and second in order of merit and that Wheeler's should not be proceeded with. Tydeman took the Dulac design as it stood, to hand over to the printers Harrison & Sons for colour essaying; Mark Severin was asked to make a slight modification to the crown in his design, after which it reached Harrisons for essaying on 27 January.

Harrisons had been working during January on the variations by Eric Gill of his 'rectangular' design which he supplied to Tydeman in his letter of 27 December; on 4 January drawings of these, partly modified from the originals by E Carr of the Stores Department, were handed to Mr Rhodes (Harrison's Works Manager) by R Fanshawe, the Vice Controller of Stores, 'to prepare proofs with certain suggested additions to the design to make it less severe'.

Further description followed in a written summary of the discussion between Rhodes and Fanshawe:

Sketch 'A' (known subsequently as the 'diagonal heading' design) incorporated 'postage' and 'revenue' in diagonal headings at Carr's suggestion and noted that national floral emblems (rose, thistle, shamrock and daffodil) should be placed in the borders.

Sketch 'B' (the 'plain' or 'rectangular' design) included merely the basic changes required for the new reign as described by Tydeman in his letter of 12 December; a version of 'B' 'with richer surround' was also requested, but it was emphasised that the King's head was 'of first importance' and 'not to be dwarfed by boldness of lettering'.

Sketch 'C' was again a modification of the basic design with notes that floral emblems should be placed in the four corners.

Tydeman specified on 12 December that the King's head be shown 'cut off at the neck in some way', although this feature of the Edward VIII stamps had been much criticised, giving the impression of the head floating in a void. Gill thought 'the only reasonable way is to include the collar and shoulders and let the portrait come down to the bottom line', and executed his original sketches accordingly. Despite this it was decided to retain the cut-off neck, with what the notes call a 'Hogarthian curve' to make it more acceptable. Meanwhile Harrisons was also developing the 'Scottish' design using the motif of a coin with the King's effigy; this was based on a sketch for a proposed Edward VIII definitive first submitted on 31 January 1936 by Brigadier W E R Dickson of the Scottish Philatelic Society. It was also in early January that the printers of the high value stamps, Waterlow & Sons, submitted proposed essays for low value definitives, using different Bertram Park photographs of the King in full face and profile to those supplied via the Royal Mint. No action was taken on these, although specimens are retained in the BPMA albums, as are two designs featuring floral emblems by a Miss Sparkes, about which nothing is known.

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## GILL'S 'FLORAL EMBLEMS' DESIGN

The first essays, based on Sketch 'C', arrived on 12 January; the same day Harrisons completed finished drawings of the 'Scottish' design and others based on Sketches 'A' and 'B'. Two days later Eric Gill, returned from holiday, supplied a new drawing on which he abandoned his rectangular frame and enhanced the lettering of 'postage' and 'revenue' to make 'a rich looking border', as he had initially suggested on 27 December. Floral emblems in the corners featured more prominently than in Sketch 'C' essay of 12 December, and the denomination was placed in a circular value tab in front of the cut-off neck, to relieve the effects of this style of portrayal. This, referred to subsequently as the 'floral emblems' design, effectively replaced Sketch 'C'. On 18 January essays of the three designs completed on 12 December were produced. The 'Scottish' essays were in the 1d value and those of the 'diagonal heading' and 'rectangular' designs 1½d, although all were in the

definitive 1½d brown. The 'diagonal heading' essays reproduced the King's effigy both including collar and shoulders, and cut off at the neck; at this stage all essays still featured the Royal Mint's photograph of the King in left profile by Bertram Park.

On 20 January Fanshawe and Eric Gill visited Mr Rhodes and Mr Pettitt (Harrison's Gravure Section Manager) to discuss the three essays and the artist's new drawing. Gill agreed to amend the crown in his drawing and 'case in' the cross at its top where it overlapped the upper border, slightly to reduce the size of the emblems, and, with some reluctance, to add a 'd' after the '1½' in the value tab. The following changes to the essays were also agreed, mainly on Gill's advice:

'Scottish' - the value tabs should not be in the form of a shield as this was a symbol of defence, and should be replaced by 'a circle or a square or nothing', preferably a circle. The milling of the coin framing the effigy was artistically acceptable but should be enlarged. 'Diagonal headings' - triangles should be inserted above the headings 'postage' and 'revenue' to give the effect of these cutting across the right-angled upper corners of the frame around the effigy rather than reducing or replacing them. The emblems in the surround needed showing up more clearly, the white lines within the design bolder, and the value panels slightly narrower and higher. These changes were agreed by the meeting; Gill also recommended that the whole design should be contained within a white line, and that the value in figures should be moved to the top corners and replaced by the value in words across all the lower border. It was agreed that these ideas could be developed later if time permitted.

'Rectangular' - as this was basically his Edward VIII design with the minimum amendment essential, neither Gill nor the others present seriously objected to the essay as it stood, except that the bottom panel should be higher and in the same tone as the rest of the border

A general improvement in tone and clarity was felt desirable for all three essays, plus better spacing of lettering and values and the use of a broader crown. Harrison's had bromides of the altered drawings for all four designs ready on 25 January.

During January a large number of unsolicited designs for new stamps were received, and on 20 January a selection was sent to the Controller of Stores by Mr Hardwick of the Postal Services Department (PSD) who added that others had been retained as 'not worth looking at'; meanwhile, 'fresh designs are still coming to hand daily, and we shall soon have another batch for inspection'. Only the following details of these unsolicited designs are available:

P Jeannerat (one design - 1d)

Bucknall (two designs - 1d Coronation)

N A Read (one design - 1d)

Bishop (one design - 1½d)

Evelyn A Hardwick \* two designs - 1d)

Arthur B Bath (four designs – ½d, 1d, 1½d, 2d)  
H L Martin Cox (one design – 1½d)  
Trearfer (one design – 1½d)  
Blanchard (two designs – 2½d)  
T Guibiansky (one design – 1½d)  
John Botterelli (one design – 1½d)  
Lombardi (two designs – ½d)  
Fred W Baker (one design – 2½d)  
Whyte (one design – 1½d)  
Bell (two designs – ½d, 1d)  
Sprague (one design – 1½d)  
H Fuller (one design – 1d)  
Hills (two designs – 1½d)  
Harrison \*\* (four designs plus bomides – 1 ½ d)

\* 'I rather like the ones by my namesake and so does Kidner.' - Hardwick.

\*\* Harrison was a resident artist for Asprey, the Bond Street jewellers and goldsmiths, and not connected with Harrisons the printers.

The above information comes from a Stores Department memorandum of 7 February 1940, which does not mention other unsolicited designs or the ultimate disposal of those listed. None seems to have ended up in the BPMA, although it is probable that the two designs by Miss Sparkes already referred to were of similar origin.

The deadline of 22 January for the approval of designs was already past, although it had been agreed on 21 January that sufficient stamps could be delivered prior to issue provided Harrisons started printing by the beginning of March. A number of questions had already been put in Parliament, mainly about securing a 'better' or 'more worthy' design than the Edward VIII stamps by consulting either those artists who had been most critical of them, 'a really great artist' or, as already mentioned, the RFAC. By 21 January concern was being expressed at the lack of reported progress; amongst questions put to the Assistant PMG, Sir Walter Womersley, that day, F A Macquisten, Conservative member for Argyllshire, asked: 'Is he aware that art is long and life is short?' On 26 January, the PMG was advised to reassure the House of Commons, if pressed, that 'the designs must be settled soon and all the Contractors' [Harrisons] resources in the preparation of designs and essays are being devoted to this aim'.

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## PMG SEES FIRST ESSAYS

On 1 February card-mounted colour essays of designs for the proposed issue were received, seen by the PMG the following day. These were as follows: (a) Dulac's design,

received from the CAI on 25 January; (b) Severin's design, received from the CAI on 26 January; (c) Gill's 'floral emblems'; (d) the 'rectangular' design; (e) the 'diagonal headings' design; and (f) the 'Scottish' design. There were four variants of the Dulac essays, two comprising his basic design in both blue and the standard 1½d brown, both with the King's head as photographed by Bertram Park, and two to which Harrison had added its standard vertically ribbed 'cloth' background, one with the Park head and one with the head modelled for the coinage by Humphrey Paget (this was apparently the only one of the four actually shown to the PMG). The Severin essay also bore the Park head; all others bore the Paget head. All essays were in standard brown except for the blue Dulac essay mentioned.

After seeing the essays on 2 February the PMG decided that the Severin and 'Scottish' essays should not be taken further. Notes were made concerning his suggestions on Gill's 'floral emblems' essay: 'Thistle vein to be slightly lighter. Daffodil to be less divided ... Size of all four emblems to be slightly reduced.' The head should be enlarged and the value tab made smaller so that its circle did not cut into the effigy's neck. The lettering of 'postage' and 'revenue' should be of equal length, and also lessened in size as necessary to accord with the reduced dimensions of emblems and value. On Dulac's design the value in figures should replace or be added to that in words, and the monogram 'G VI R' amended or removed as necessary to preserve balance; Tydeman would discuss this with the artist. The 'rectangular' design needed a slight reduction in size of 'postage' and 'revenue', and it was pointed out that the value tab might be too narrow to incorporate '2½d' without difficulty; the top panel needed lightening in tone to accord with the rest of the surround. It was suggested that two alternative versions of the 'diagonal headings' design might be developed - one 'with fewer emblems ... spread out more and possibly slightly larger', and the other with the emblems removed altogether and the top and side panels either darker or lighter than those at centre and bottom. In the meantime the Gill, 'rectangular' and 'diagonal headings' essays could be shown to the RFAC for comment as they stood, but the Dulac essay should be withheld while work continued. Finally it was remarked that the Paget effigy needed brightening with lighter tones on the face and neck, and the eye needed improving - 'it is a little on the black side'.

In a letter to Tydeman the following day Edmund Dulac added his own comments expanding on this last criticism:

The head is, in this case, the most important part of the composition ... I consider this modelled head to be a bad likeness: the face is puffy and heavy, the eye too small, the lower part of the face comes too far forward, the nose is too pointed and lacks the characteristic curve between the nostrils. The angle of the neck lacks dignity ... The whole thing is commonplace and it makes, on the stamp, a patch of tone that is clumsy in outline and monotonous in value.

He remarked that 'it is absurd to give a stamp the effect of a piece of sculpture as it would be to put an engraved drawing on a coin'; in any case he thought Paget's work could be improved by many artists he could name and felt he could provide a better portrait himself: 'I am prepared to do another head that will give the same effect as a relief interpreted in terms of drawing. This would not be based on your modelled head.'

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## COMMENTS BY RFAC

On 4 February Kidner met representatives of the RFAC, presided over by Sir Edwin Lutyens, for comments on the essays. The 'floral emblems' had aroused a strong response, and they thought it would be a mistake to omit Gill's feature of the circular value tab overlapping the effigy's neck. The daffodil could be improved and did not sufficiently fill its corner; they did not, however, consider necessary the wider changes to the emblems proposed by the PMG, and supplied Kidner with a rough drawing of a minor alteration to the daffodil leaf. They were 'mildly pleased' with the 'rectangular' design and thought this the next best; the 'diagonal headings' was least admired as the emblems in the border were not liked. The Paget head was once more criticised, by Sir William Rothenstein, for not lending itself to reproduction: 'Shading too pronounced - black line at meeting of forehead and hair.'

The next day Edmund Dulac visited Fanshawe, bringing a modified version of his design with the value in figures, subsequently referred to as '1840 no. 2'. He also showed a rough sketch of his proposed effigy of the King, following this with a finished drawing on 8 February. On 9 February he sent Tydeman a card with three bromides of alternative tonal variations of '1840 no. 2' and rough sketches of each in five colours - the bromides showed the design as it stood, as light-on-dark border with dark-on-light effigy, and as dark-on-light border with light-on-dark effigy. Dulac's note explained that this 'would save time if my sketch were selected for the whole range or a good part of it'.

In the meantime Harrisons reported on 8 February that the company had prepared bromides of the 'diagonal headings' design without ornamentation and the value in figures in the bottom corners, and of the 'floral emblems' both with and without the circular value tab - copies of the last two had been sent to Eric Gill for his comments. These were followed next day by further treatments of the 'diagonal headings'; these included one similar to that of the previous day, and two with the value in the upper corners. One of these was again without ornamentation; the other largely incorporated ideas offered by Gill on 20 January which had then been deferred: the white line around the whole design, the value in words along the whole lower border, and a redesigned strip of all four floral emblems down each side. These were modelled on those in Gill's own design, and more boldly printed than the more subdued original by Harrison's staff, which for purposes of distinction was referred to as 'wallpaper'.

On 12 February Harrisons delivered essays of '1840 no. 2' with the Dulac head. The DG examined these on the following day and decided that essays with the Dulac head should be prepared for all designs under consideration. Meanwhile the revised Dulac essay should be shown to the RFAC. Further colour essays of the Gill 'floral emblems' should be prepared, with emblems and wording reduced in size and without the circle around the value tab.

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## DAFFODIL VERSUS LEEK

The question of the daffodil as a Welsh symbol also arose - the College of Arms had gone on record the previous day describing the leek as proper for the purpose, but it was felt there were ample precedents for the daffodil. This was a long-running debate, which would be revived again in September, and eventually recur almost identically over the Elizabeth II Coronation issue of 1953. As later summarised in the 'Cardiff Western Mail' of 15 May, the daffodil was first touted as a Welsh national emblem as recently as 1907, by Ivor John on the grounds that the Welsh for both 'leek' and 'daffodil' was the same, *y genhinen*, and by Llewelyn Williams because the leek was merely 'a stinking vegetable'. Williams subsequently persuaded his friend David Lloyd George to include a daffodil on the first National Insurance stamps introduced by the latter as Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer. Thirty years later the daffodil was still representing Wales on insurance stamps and motor licences, although John, Williams and Lloyd George had long since recanted, on the discovery that precedent for the leek in this role stretched back to 1536. The 1937 Coronation robes used both leek and daffodil to symbolise Wales, and that the Royal Mint opposed Welsh symbolism altogether - Sir Robert Johnson, the Deputy Master of the Mint, complained to Kidner in a letter of 26 May that 'you are giving us great trouble here in rebutting the claim of all kinds of Welsh enthusiasts to have Wales represented, as Ireland is, on the coins'.

On 15 February Dulac and Rhodes called on Fanshawe for further discussion; the artist resisted the suggestion that the neck should be lengthened but agreed to improve parts of the value and lettering. It was agreed with Rhodes that sets of the following essays in four different colours with the new head should be delivered by 24 February:

- (a) Dulac's with agreed improvements;
- (b) Dulac's dark-on-light border variant as put forward by artist on 9 February - it was Rhodes' own suggestion that this should be included if time was available;
- (c) the 'rectangular' design with darker centre tones and lighter surround tones, 'postage' and 'revenue' slightly smaller;
- (d) Gill's 'floral emblems' with larger head;
- (e) Gill's 'floral emblems' - value tab with no circle and '½' enlarged, 'postage', 'revenue' and emblems slightly smaller;
- (f) 'diagonal headings' with original 'wallpaper' decoration.

(g) 'diagonal headings' with the four emblems two to a side instead of strips of four on each side.

Dulac made the necessary alterations to his drawing and sent it to Harrisons the same day (15 February) with the following comments:

I have enlarged the eye of the 'P' and the 'R', lengthened the strokes of the 'E's' of Postage and Revenue. I have also thickened all the thin strokes of Three Halfpence as well as shortened the 1's, and given more air round the first and last letters of the lettering at the side.

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### FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH CAI

On 18 February a meeting was held of Tydeman and Kidner with Frank Pick of the CAI. The Stores Department prepared 'notes on colours' for Kidner's use if required; these refer to colours which had been suggested as alternatives to those in current use, although there is no record of this unless it is a reference to the hand-painted colours used by Dulac on 9 February. The notes defended current usage as follows:

The present colours were selected for richness of tone and brightness and suitability for design and manufacturing process [whereas] some of the suggested colours are somewhat dull.

[The] present brown (1½d) is quite as good as those suggested ... the reds (1d) suggested probably contain Vermilion which is not admissible as it contains mercury ... The green is the most attractive ... but it is too light and would give rise to difficulty in maintaining reasonable uniformity [as] there are unavoidable slight differences in the printing cylinders which could not be accommodated if the lighter ink were used.

It is proposed to retain the present colours for the 4 main denominations [but] consideration will be given to the alternatives for the other denominations ... it is important to have colours which will be distinctive in [both] natural and artificial light. Mr Dulac has suggested that the 1½d colour should be changed from Chocolate to more of a brown or purple shade to show up head more clearly ... we doubt whether the difference will prove to be worthwhile.

There is, however, no record that colours were actually discussed at the meeting.

Pick was shown the designs under consideration and informed that Dulac's design, which the CAI had selected, was still 'viewed with favour' and would be shown to the RFAC. He regretted that Severin's design had not been taken any further but conceded it would have needed a degree of modification. He approved of Dulac's new effigy of the King and preferred the artist's design to any of the others, finding Gill's design only 'promising' and

suggesting it could be improved by placing the value in the lower corners and uniting the shamrock and daffodil at centre bottom. He disliked the 'diagonal headings' and dismissed the 'rectangular' design as 'a postage stamp and nothing else'. Later that day Kidner arranged for the RFAC to see the Dulac design – it maintained its preference for Gill's design but thought the new head of the King by Dulac decidedly more becoming than Paget's coinage effigy, and recommended its use on the 'floral emblems' stamp.

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## DULAC'S EFFIGY OF KING ACCEPTED

On 22 February Harrisons showed Gill a bromide of his design adapted in line with Pick's suggestion – he did not like it and the printers agreed, 'as the base now appears too crowded in comparison to the rest of the design'. Gill was reportedly very pleased with the Dulac head, however, finding it 'much superior to using a photograph of a plaster cast', ie, the Paget head. It is clear that the superiority of the Dulac head was recognised by all who saw it (although it was not finally confirmed as the accepted effigy until 4 March). Previously touted alternatives to the Paget head as it stood had included remodelling by the artist to make it suitable for gravure reproduction, a drawing by Harrison's staff closely based on Paget, or the use of another effigy he had prepared for the Royal Mint to use on medals. Gill had also drawn a head-and-shoulders portrait of the King in formal dress which he had given to Harrisons about a week earlier; an undated letter by the artist retained in the files recounts how after consulting Tydeman, Rhodes felt obliged to decline the portrait on the grounds that it looked 'much too like the King' and 'they won't agree with the collar'. He amplified by explaining that what the GPO wanted was 'a more generalised portrait and not a speaking likeness of the King as he appears in February 1937'. Gill's opinion was that he had neither aimed at nor produced a purely naturalistic portrait, and that it was 'both correct and dignified' to include a hint of ceremonial uniform; however, he was more concerned to put his views on record than to press the point.

Essays of the seven designs were delivered on 24 February, each in the different colours associated with the four values – ½d green, 1d scarlet, 1½d brown and 2½d ultramarine. The PMG considered these and decided as follows:

- of the two variants of the Gill design, the original, with larger emblems in the corners and the circle around the value tab, was preferred;
- of the two variants of the Dulac design, the revised version with border tones reversed from light-on-dark to dark-on-light was preferred;
- the 'rectangular' design was preferable to either variant of the 'diagonal headings' design;
- of the two variants of the 'diagonal headings' design, the version with two emblems on each side and the value in the top corners was preferred.

He therefore proposed to submit the preferred versions of each of the Gill, Dulac, and 'diagonal headings', plus the 'rectangular' design, to the King and hoped to secure his approval of two or three of them.

A brief was prepared the following day to accompany the short-listed essays, listing them as 'A' (Gill), 'B' (Dulac), 'C' (rectangular) and 'D' (diagonal). This explained that the CAI preferred 'B' to 'A' and the RFAC 'A' to 'B'; a particular point was made of defending the circle surrounding the value:

[The RFAC] and Mr Gill favour the circle cutting the neck and regard it as a feature of the design. Both point out that it helps dispose of the suggestion of a beheaded monarch or of the head being suspended in space. The circle could, however, be removed without interfering with the rest of the design - except possibly the point of the neck.

The brief contrived to imply the GPO's own preferences without over-labouring the point for the King's benefit:

Eric Gill's design meets His Majesty's wish for a more decorative stamp and at the same time provides one which is modern in its artistic style. Dulac's design is excellent but it is not altogether original and the Post Office may be criticized for reverting to a type of design which, although beautiful, is 100 years old.

It was also pointed out that Gill's interpretation of the crown (as used on 'A', 'C' and 'D') was closer to the 'authorised' version than Dulac's as seen on 'B', which the artist had described as 'heraldic'. The brief made no reference to 'C' and 'D' beyond the brief explanation that both had been developed by Stores Department and Harrisons, in the prior case from an original design by Gill.

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## **GILL DESIGN APPROVED BY KING**

On 26 February the King gave an audience to the PMG and said he considered Gill's the best design and also approved the Dulac; he conditionally approved 'D' provided the emblems in the side panels were brought out more clearly, but did not like 'C'. The CAI was informed on 1 March that a decision had been taken to use the Gill design for the four values intended for issue at the time of the Coronation; the Dulac design might possibly be used on higher values later. On 3 March the DG suggested that the 'Dulac alternative design' - '1840 no. 2' - should be essayed for the 9d, 10d and 1s values. Due to the pressure they were already under with the Coronation issue and the ½d to 2½d definitives, Harrisons agreed to essay the 9d only. Dulac supplied a revision of the design on 8 March, showing the 9d value and incorporating slight changes to the crown and other minor details; however, after a discussion with Fanshawe on 11 March, Rhodes suspended all work on the matter

indefinitely. Later a Stores Department memorandum of 15 April indicated that essays of the original design and the light-on-dark border variant were being retained for possible higher value use, rather than the version already seen by the King.

Final essays of the Gill design appeared on 8 March incorporating minor alterations to the jewels of the crown and other details, and were subsequently shown to Frank Pick of the CAI out of courtesy. On 17 March Pick wrote a letter to Kidner, now Director of Postal Services [DPS] since his appointment on 1 March, to place his criticisms of the finished essay on record:

The defective part of this design is the bottom line. The figures in the circle are a little too thin in relation to the leek [sic] and shamrock, with the result that the line appears to be broken. Another leaf to the leek [sic] and another trefoil to the shamrock, placed close on to the circle, would, I think, pull the thing together a little better ... something is required to hold together the three elements that make up the bottom line.

As early as 5 March Harrisons had reported that the new design would entail using more ink than anticipated, although this news was greeted with equanimity (it was later estimated that the 1d used 60 per cent more ink than the same denomination of the Edward VIII or George V issues). A letter to the RFAC on 16 March confirmed that work on printing 'the four popular values' was under way; on 25 March it was reported that problems had arisen with printing the ½d value – the first proofs were not uniform in shade either between sheets or even across the same sheet, although Rhodes claimed these 'the best results Harrisons could obtain by bulk printing'. The difficulties were overcome, and on 20 April Kidner reassured Stores regarding a later proof sheet it had sent him: 'They seem to me very good and I doubt whether even the philatelists will spot the light shade in the bottom row to which you refer.'

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### COLOUR CHOSEN FOR 1½d

A major delay in production was caused by the choice of a suitable colour for the 1½d. The CAI had strongly urged a change from the 'chocolate' brown of the Edward VIII 1½d on 1 January, while the notes prepared by Stores for the 18 February meeting indicated a preference for the colour as it stood. On 21 April colour trials in 'plum brown' and standard chocolate brown were available, and seen by Kidner the following day – the plum brown was not favoured, probably because a similar violet-brown mix, such as that first advocated by Dulac in February, had since been chosen for the Coronation stamp. On 24 April Harrisons was asked to supply further colour proofs in standard chocolate brown, plum brown, and 'one or more slightly lighter shades of chocolate brown or some near colour'.

After some weeks while the printers prepared cylinders for production of the 1½d, specimen sheets were sent on 21 May. Details of these are not recorded other than that one was the 'standard' 1½d brown as used on the George V and Edward VIII issues. These were apparently intended for examination as colour samples rather than finished essays. The following were dispatched subsequently:

27 May – Chocolate brown (approximate shade of George V 1½d); similar but first reduction in strength; similar but second reduction; Green brown; similar but first reduction; similar but second reduction; Brown madder ('Coronation' brown); similar but first reduction (Pale coronation brown).

1 June – Pale chocolate; Pale green brown (cold sepia brown).

Rhodes thought that the reduced chocolate brown and the first reduction of the green brown tones were effective, but might respectively be confused with the colours of the 5d (fawn or orange brown) and the 1s (raw umber); he considered the brown madder tones 'useless' other than for showing the green brown to particular advantage by contrast. Kidner noted on 3 June that in the lighter shades the King's head was too pale and did not stand out satisfactorily. The DG saw the various colour trials on 4 June and decided to retain the standard shade of brown and usually called 'chocolate brown', although later the term 'red-brown' was preferred. On 8 June six more sheets of essays in the agreed colour were produced and approved for production.

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## FIRST DENOMINATIONS ISSUED

An internal circular announced on 21 April that the ½d, 1d and 2½d values would be issued on 10 May, and a special 1½d stamp for the Coronation three days later. The PMG released this news at a press conference on 5 May; he announced it in a talk on BBC radio's London regional news bulletin the same evening, and twice that day in a recorded interview on the television 'Picture Page' programme. To avoid potential confusion to both staff and customers, issue of the 1½d definitive was deferred to 30 July, when it was estimated that sales of the Coronation stamp would be sufficiently run down. Four days prior to the issue date it was reported that Harrisons had encountered 'the utmost difficulty' in preparing adequate stocks of the new stamp:

The cause of their trouble seems to be the high standard which has been called for in the case of the 1½d stamp and which they appear to be able to maintain only at the expense of an unduly large number of cylinders (they have made 40 to produce the first 1¼ million 1½d sheets as against 20 for the 7¼ million 1½d K.E. sheets). One difficulty is with the contrast between the heavy background and the delicate tones of the face.

The confirmed issue date of 30 July was given to postmasters on 21 July and the press the day after, and on 29 July the few remaining stocks of Edward VIII stamps (except those in books and rolls) were withdrawn. On 2 October the Coronation 1½d, its sales potential exhausted, was withdrawn from all counters except the London Chief Office, where it remained available until 31 December.

There remained the question of stamps in the range of values from 4d to 1s; this was first addressed at a Postal Services Department (PSD) meeting on 13 May, which Fanshawe and D P Dell of Stores attended. Fanshawe stated that Harrisons had no spare resources at present to produce the higher values as it was committed to having new stamp books ready by August and rolls by October. As to designs, Dulac had some available, and both he and Gill would be asked for fresh ideas; in particular Gill would be asked to collaborate with Harrisons on a suitable design for the 6d, which presented special problems. Fanshawe would pursue the matter and hoped to have new designs by Gill and Dulac in a month or so.

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### ISSUE OF 2d AND 3d

On 22 July the DPS and Tydeman of Stores agreed that a relatively early release of the 2d and other values might now be practicable; on 30 July, the same day the 1½d was issued, Kidner suggested to the DG that, as a design for the higher denominations was not likely to be ready for some time, the issue of a 2d stamp in the 'floral emblems' design about the year end would 'show that we were not resting on our oars altogether' and 'fill a gap'. On 20 August Harrisons was asked for proofs of the design in the standard 2d colour of orange vermilion; after a renewed request on 8 September, six sheets of 1½d in the 2d colour were supplied on 13 September. The printer was pleased with the essays' appearance and anticipated no unusual problems with printing if required. There had been concern on both sides that the stamp might be too dark for ink signatures across it to be fully legible, as the 2d was employed primarily for revenue rather than postal use (this was also the problem with the 6d, although to a greater extent as for fiscal reasons the 6d was printed in doubly fugitive ink). However, brightness was sought by using 95 per cent full strength dye as opposed to 75 per cent anticipated for the 3d if produced in the same design, and the essays proved lighter overall than the values already issued. Both Tydeman and Kidner liked the essays and it was decided on 20 September to proceed with these in the 2d value. Fresh essays were supplied on 22 November and approved next day by the DG and PMG, who also indicated that they would like the 3d to be in the same design. The PMG confirmed this at a meeting on 25 September in preference to alternative designs on show by Gill and Dulac. The CAI also praised the essayed 2d on 2 December and found the colour particularly pleasing.

Harrisons had already stated on 13 September that it thought the 3d would be particularly suited to the 'floral emblems' design and appear to have supplied Stores with preliminary proofs on 22 November. After some problems with cylinder production during December, six sheets of essays were supplied on 14 January 1938. These were not regarded as satisfactory and were followed by further sheets on 15 and 17 January; a final proof of the 3d was agreed by the PMG the following day.

In his notes of the meeting on 25 November Dell of Stores recorded as 'desired' that the 2d and 3d should be issued on the same day, and this was agreed by Tydeman and Kidner on 10 December. The first intention had been to issue the 2d before the end of December; after this decision issue of the 2d was deferred and production of the 3d brought forward as much as practicable. A date of 10 January was contemplated until reports showed that stocks of the George V 2d would be exhausted by the last week of the month. Presumably in the hope of reducing stock returns as low as possible, the date was deferred again to 24 January, and finally to 31 January 1938, when the George VI 2d (described as 'orange vermilion') and 3d ('deep violet') were finally issued.

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## FRESH DESIGNS CONSIDERED

The question of the higher values was not formally dealt with until 13 May, when action on the matter was postponed until later in the year. Both Gill and Dulac were approached by Fanshawe concerning the 6d, and on 28 June Dulac submitted a design with the following comments: 'The present stamps have been so criticised in certain quarters for lacking simplicity that I thought of trying the simple style on the 6d ones. It is a business stamp after all and severity might thus be justified.' On 6 July Harrisons produced bromides of two further variants of Dulac's '1840 no. 2', and a version of Gill's issued design without the emblems that was very similar to Dulac's 'simple style' design. None of these were satisfactory: Fanshawe did not think the Gill variant suitable for the particular problems of the 6d. On one of Dulac's the top of the head looked flat as it was too near the top line of the background while the nose was too near the sideline; on the other a curved outline had been introduced to give more space around the head which Fanshawe also objected to. Improved versions of each of the Dulac designs were supplied on 8 July; Fanshawe commented of one, 'I do not like the denomination appearing three times on a stamp and should prefer the 6d in the top corners to be omitted', while on the other he thought the value, shown in the bottom panel as 'Sixpence 6d', well balanced but felt the point of the neck too close to the bottom line of background. His conclusions as reached on 10 July were that either of the last two designs demonstrated a reasonable possibility of overcoming the problems encountered so far in producing a photogravure 6d; light backgrounds and decorative line-work as opposed to solid backgrounds were essential to printing in doubly fugitive ink. Meanwhile the frame surround and head might both be

reduced in area, the lettering should be larger and bolder, and decoration in the top corners should be either modified or removed.

Although the designs were clearly unsatisfactory as they stood, work on them was not pursued because of the pressure that Harrison was already under. Later in the month Tydeman discussed design possibilities first with Eric Gill and then the DPS. In a memorandum on 22 July, he reported that Gill deprecated decorative line-work such as that of the Dulac design as 'meaningless ornamentation' and was reluctant to produce anything more elaborate than his own previous designs; these included four rough sketches for the 6d which were apparently similar in style to the bromide seen by Fanshawe on 10 July. Gill was not averse, however, to designs 'incorporating emblems ... with functional or other appropriate meaning', and Tydeman said he would endeavour to find some alternatives to the floral emblems already used. In his later talks with Kidner, both favoured making only slight modifications to the issued design for future values; however, it was conceded that variety in design was desirable 'to meet the difficulties which the slight variations in colour give to the counter clerks'. The PMG was still 'very keen' on Dulac's '1840 no. 2' and this might be used for the higher of the remaining denominations if merely modifying the 'floral emblems' could not be carried.

Little of consequence developed over the following month – Gill submitted drawings of the 4d and 5d value figures on 22 August, 5 September and 7 September of which the last were accepted, while on 30 August Dell visited the College of Arms to enquire about possible alternatives to the national flowers for use as emblems. On 21 September Dell had a meeting at the College with the Somerset Herald, George Bellew, who made the following points: the national flags of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick could be used – there was no equivalent for Wales, however, as it was not recognised in heraldic convention as having ever been a formally independent kingdom; the English, Scottish and Welsh lions and Irish harp could be used either individually or on shields as on the new half-crown coin – in either case, however, the Welsh and English lions were not easily distinguishable; the Welsh dragon could be used on its own but not 'in association with emblems of the other three countries', ie, not on the same stamp; neither the leek nor daffodil were recognised heraldically as a Welsh national emblem.

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## DULAC'S HEXAGONAL DESIGN

Also on 21 September, the DPS and Tydeman met with the CAI, when it was suggested that Gill's design could be amended by substituting thorn, oak, ash and ivy leaves for the floral emblems, and that the dark background of the issued stamps should be relieved by printing either in white on colour or vice versa. The CAI also produced two promising designs that Edmund Dulac had produced for them, and Tydeman promised to have these essayed. This

was arranged with Harrisons, while on 23 September Gill was notified of the CAI's suggestions relating to his design.

Both designs showed the King's head framed in a hexagonal inner border, differing in that one had floral emblems conventionally placed in the corners, while the other had 'solid' corners and emblems located within the hexagonal frame. Edmund Dulac had been producing stamp designs in a similar style for some years, one as recently as 25 January 1937. This was executed independently of the commission he was undertaking for the CAI and submitted directly to the GPO, but not included among the designs subsequently considered; the stamp-sized design, in the 1d denomination with the King's head in an octagonal frame, is retained in the BPMA. The drawing of the King's head was closely copied from the Bertram Park photograph supplied to him by the CAI for the commissioned '1840' design, and differs from the later Dulac head. Dulac's alternative design was typical of those he had unsuccessfully submitted for both the 1935 Silver Jubilee and 1936 Accession issues, which were apparently found too unconventional by George V and too ornate by Edward VIII.

Harrisons supplied bromides of the two designs on 4 October – six with solid corners, six with corner emblems, one of each with a line surround, and two of each with the left and right hand points of the hexagon cut off to create an octagon. Rhodes of Harrisons explained that the company had made this last change on its own initiative as it believed there was too much solid in front of the face and behind the back of the head to give a satisfactory result on either of the two designs. On 11 October Dulac supplied two sketches with variations on the version of his 'corner emblems' design with the frame revised to an octagonal shape by Harrisons. The corner emblems were shown light-on-dark in one variation and reversed to dark-on-light in the other, '1s' being added to each side of the design in both cases. Harrisons produced more bromides on 13 October showing the different versions of the design with a variety of tonal backgrounds.

On 28 October Dulac produced a new full-size drawing of his hexagonal design. Fanshawe discussed this with Rhodes the following day and noted: 'Whites in crown, emblems etc are not sufficiently distinct; letters may be varied a little.' The white background in Dulac's drawing 'would give a hopeless result', and Rhodes again proposed to introduce toned backgrounds. The main problem, however, was the size of the head: 'Dulac was given the correct size but he has allowed for a reduced size. This means that Harrisons will have to redraw the general design to a larger size than Dulac's drawing, ie, to take the size of head at present available. Then they will reduce and the result will give Dulac's desired size of head.'

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## VARIANTS ON GILL DESIGN

The printers had also been collaborating with Eric Gill during October; on 7 October Harrisons produced four bromides with amendments of the issued design, redrawn to give the effect of a smaller head with greater space between the crown at the top and the value tab at the bottom – in particular the neck had been shortened and the circle around the value reduced in diameter. One was on the same background as the original, one with a lighter background and head, and two reversed to dark-on-light with different backgrounds – plain white and light stripes. On 12 October Gill produced completed drawings of his amended original design with changes to both emblems and values – on the 6d value with oak, ash, ivy and thorn leaf emblems as proposed by the CAI, and on the 10d with the Scots and English lions, Welsh dragon and Irish harp, largely as proposed by Bellew of the College of Arms (apart from the dragon). He also supplied versions of both drawings reversed to dark-on-light in stamp size. Tydeman discussed these with the DPS next day, and the following were decided:

### Oak/ash/ivy/thorn leaf design

Those in the bottom corners should be reduced in size, and a little more upright to match those in the top corners; if necessary the lettering should be reduced in size to accommodate the latter. The circle round the value should be omitted.

### Lions/dragon/harp design

The harp should be omitted, the dragon moved to top right, and the value replaced at bottom centre by the Scots lion represented upright. '6d' should be inserted in each bottom corner, without circles.

It was felt right that the head should appear in the same size as on the issued stamps. It was decided to obtain colour essays of both designs, first in 'reverse' and second dark-on-light. These recommendations were passed to Gill for further collaboration with Harrisons. Also on 13 October, the printers supplied specimen stamps of the 1½d design printed in reverse with 'Eric Gill lettering and emblems black on toned background' and in doubly fugitive violet ink as used on the 6d stamp.

On 20 October Gill sent Tydeman photographic reductions of the two amended drawings, commenting at some length on the 'lions' design:

The neck of the King needs to be cut a little shorter so as not to come so tightly on the lion's nose, and also a little more space should be left at the top between the head and crown. I think this could be done without reducing the size of the face.  
... I have made the Welsh dragon face outwards. As the stamp is not a heraldic composition and as the Welsh dragon is never used in official heraldry, there seems to me no reason why he should not face either way, and from the point of view of the

design it seems to me desirable that the two animals at the top should face opposite ways.

In a discussion with Rhodes on 22 October, Fanshawe obtained agreement that the head would look 'too stubby' if treated as Gill proposed, although 'a slightly smaller head must be provided'. It was accepted that this would give rise to another problem – 'the lions will appear to be too large (as may denoms) and out of balance with the head but if they were made smaller they would lose definition'.

## NEW ESSAYS EXAMINED

Colour essays of all designs were prepared during November and received by Fanshawe on 22 November. They were listed as follows:

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Artist</b> | <b>Design</b>     | <b>Value</b> | <b>Colour</b>            | <b>Background</b> |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1          | Gill          | Leaves (reversed) | 6d           | Doubly fugitive violet   | Lightest          |
| 2          | Gill          | Leaves (reversed) | 6d           | Doubly fugitive violet " | Darker            |
| 3          | Gill          | Leaves (reversed) | 6d           | 1/- umber                | Lightest          |
| 4          | Gill          | Leaves (reversed) | 6d           | 1/- umber                | Darker            |
| 5          | Gill          | Leaves            | 3d           | 3d violet                | Solid             |
| 6          | Gill          | Leaves            | 3d           | 3d violet                | Lines             |
| 7          | Gill          | Leaves            | 3d           | 9d green                 | Lines             |
| 8          | Gill          | Lions             | 9d           | 9d green                 | Solid             |
| 9          | Gill          | Lions             | "            | 3d violet                | Lines             |
| 10         | Dulac         | Hexagon           | 1/-          | 1/- umber                | Pale lines        |
| 11         | Dulac         | Hexagon           | 1/-          | Doubly fugitive violet   | Pale lines        |
| 12         | Dulac         | Octagon           | 6d           | 1/- umber                | -                 |
| 13         | Dulac         | Octagon           | 6d           | Doubly fugitive violet   | -                 |

On nos 5-7 the lettering was in white on a full strength background; on nos 8 and 9 the English lion was at top left, the Welsh dragon top right, the Scots lion bottom centre, and the value bottom left and right, as agreed in October.

Harrison's own recommendations were no. 1 for the 6d, no. 5 for the 3d, and no. 10 for the values from 7d to 1s, with either nos 1 or 5 suitable for the 4d and 5d. With reference to the 6d, the company warned that 'we have no experience of running doubly fugitive photogravure ink to Postage Stamp quality'. Harrisons had been trying to produce a photogravure 6d since 1933 to replace the letterpress version but had never overcome the incompatibility of available designs with the required ink. It was noted that the 7d and 8d

were new denominations and would need to be in readily distinguishable colours from the others in use.

On 23 November the PMG, Assistant PMG and Director General were shown the 'leaf' design as the suggestion for the 3d, the 'lions' design suggested for the 4d to 6d values, the 'leaf' design in reverse as an alternative for 4d to 6d, and Dulac's two designs for the range from 7d to 1s. The PMG did not care for either of Gill's alternatives to his original floral design; he considered that the 3d should be issued in the same design as already used for the ½d to 2½d range, and that the same design in reverse should be used for the 4d to 6d. He stated on 25 November that he preferred Dulac's hexagonal design for the higher values but wanted the emblems redrawn, especially the thistle and daffodil.

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### DESIGNS FOR 4d TO 6d VALUES DEVELOPED

It was decided to abandon the 'lions' design outright; on 2 December the remaining designs were shown to the CAI by Kidner. The GPO's recommendation of the Dulac design for the higher values was accepted, and the use of a reversed design in the 4d to 6d range was favoured; however, it was disappointed at the PMG's preference for continued use of the 'floral emblems' on the 3d to 6d stamps as it found the 'leaf' design a marked improvement, and only acceded reluctantly after much discussion. The 'ghost-like' appearance of the King's head in the reversed design was also criticised; the CAI suggested that Dulac be asked to redraw it for the purpose, and that Gill and Dulac should each be invited to redraw the surround. It was also critical of the retention of the circle around the value tab, which was in fact dropped from the reversed design after 7 December following a discussion between Rhodes and Fanshawe. It had not been universally welcomed as a feature of the first issues, the Deputy Master of the Mint commenting, for example, in his note to the DPS of 26 May, that 'the inscription within a circle gives me the impression of counters at Woolworths'.

Dulac's revised drawing of the King's head in darker tones for the reversed Gill design was available on 14 December; on 23 December he supplied a transparency to give a rough idea of his thoughts for the surround for the 6d, which basically comprised the value in each of the bottom corners and the relocated emblems from those corners entwined under the head. After discussion with the DPS, Tydeman said that he would ask Gill to supply a drawing on similar lines as well as his own redrawing of the 6d surround. Gill replied on 3 January 1938 that he had tried a sketch of this, but found it impossible to combine the shamrock and daffodil successfully; in any case he thought it preferable to follow the same arrangement as for the rose and thistle in the top corners. He enclosed his own reworking of the surround, with slightly smaller lettering and minor improvements to the emblems, and it was decided to proceed with this.

Two panels of 6d essays (one in doubly fugitive violet, and one in 5d fawn) were received from Harrisons on 15 January; Dulac saw these with Fanshawe the same day and decided that the head needed further darkening. He supplied a head in stronger tones, judged by Rhodes as 'much improved', on 17 January, while further 6d essays in 4d grey-green were received from Harrisons on 18 January. Essays in all three colours were seen by the PMG, Assistant PMG and DG, and approved in general terms the same day, although it was agreed that minor improvements were still needed:

The background is too light; the lettering is not perfect in size and spacing; the colour tone of the lettering and emblems is slightly too dark; the balance of tones in the head is not satisfactory; some of the head tones are not dark enough and are out of harmony with the balance of the stamp.

It was noted that Dulac's improved head was already available for further essaying.

Harrisons supplied further 6d essays in the three colours of the 4d to 6d values on 5 February. Both Gill and the Stores Department were satisfied with these, as well as the printers; Kidner showed them to the DG on 9 February and the PMG on 10 February. The essays were approved except for the colour of the 5d, which was found 'rather anaemic'. The DPS received essays in two darker shades of brown (the 'anaemic' shade, was also supplied for comparison) and showed these to the DG on 14 February. The PMG saw these the following day and as a result approved the darker of the two shades. On 17 February Kidner and Tydeman showed essays in all three approved colours to the RFAC, which expressed its 'entire satisfaction' with both the design and the proposed colours. Similar reaction was expressed by the CAI on 13 March, apart from criticism of the 'hardness' of the 5d brown compared with the 4d and 6d tones.

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#### **4d TO 6d APPROVED AND ISSUED**

On 18 July the PMG made a selection from the latest essays of outstanding designs for submission to the King; he chose essays of the 6d in violet and the 4d in sage green, but was dissatisfied with the colour he had formerly approved for the 5d. As a result only the 4d and 6d were submitted, on 21 July, and reported as approved by the King on 26 July; meanwhile the Stores Department was asked to find 'some more satisfactory shade' of brown. On 11 August the DPS received essays in four new colours – three in various stages between the two darker browns seen on 14 February, and one in a slightly different shade – 'a warmer brown than the usual 5d fawn'. The variation in the other three browns was due to 'a very slight alteration in the toner used for strengthening the ink'; the shade chosen from these was that closest to the lighter of the original dark browns, and was approved by the DG on 24 August.

It had been noticed that the latest essays of the 6d (supplied on 11 July) were 'bluer' than the colour approved on 5 February, and on 15 August Fanshawe and Dell of Stores visited the printers at High Wycombe to discuss this. Fanshawe was prepared to seek the Inland Revenue's agreement to the use of 'single fugitive' ink if problems with 'doubly fugitive' could not be overcome; however, Rhodes explained that while the 'doubly fugitive' qualities of the ink used in February had not proved satisfactory in subsequent tests by the Government laboratory, the 'slightly more violet' ink used on 11 July had given fair results. It was agreed that if this could be slightly weakened a close approximation to the approved colour would be achieved. There was also some discussion of the value figures for the 4d and 5d, which both Harrison's and Stores' representatives agreed did not harmonise as well with the rest of the design as Gill's original 6d figures. The printers had prepared alternatives that it was proposed to show the artist on his return from holiday, with a view to either adopting them or amending his own figures. In view of these difficulties it was by no means certain that new 4d to 6d stamps could be issued at the end of September as had been hoped, and it was therefore decided to print another two months' supply of the George V issue to last into mid-October.

After discussion with Gill, Harrisons supplied bromides of the revised 4d and 5d figures on 5 September, with the following description:

4d. Mr Gill's original figure with the 'tail' slightly shortened.

5d. The top horizontal and the bottom of the curve slightly thickened and the figure reduced in size.

Gill confirmed on 7 September that he was entirely satisfied with these changes, and they approved on 9 September by PSD and the Deputy Director General (DDG), W R Birchall. It was not, however, until 21 October that a final essay of the 4d was submitted to the King; it was approved on 24 October, and printing authorised. On 28 October six proof sheets of the 5d were received from Harrisons, of which one was approved for colour and standard of quality; it was, however, 'not quite an exact match to the approved proof as regards depth of colour', and six sheets from the beginning of the production run were submitted by Harrisons for comparison. Dell reported on 3 November that these were considered 'an improvement in the desired direction' and the run was authorised to continue with one used as the standard for colour and quality of production. It was not, however, until the following day that Harrisons was able to obtain a consistent match in colour standard.

By the end of October it had been decided that the stamps should be issued as soon as possible after sufficient stocks had been printed, to avoid the Christmas pressure period, and a provisional issue date of 21 November was fixed. It was recognised as early as 3 November that it might not be possible to issue the 6d at the same time as the other two values, and this was confirmed on 9 November when Dell reported to PSD that 'Harrisons

have experienced a recurrence of the difficulties arising out of the use of doubly fugitive ink and a further period of experiment is necessary before supplies of the 6d are available.’ The 4d and 5d, described as ‘slate green’ and ‘rich brown’, were issued on 21 November 1938; it was not until 13 January 1939 that arrangements for the 6d were at last put in hand, and finally issued on 30 November. There was some uncertainty over the proper description of the 6d colour, which was commonly referred to over the two years of the production process as ‘mauve’ or ‘violet’; Rhodes suggested ‘dirty violet’. The GPO preferred ‘purple’, taken from the manufacturer’s own description ‘doubly sensitive purple gravure ink’, and this became official. There was an equal lack of consensus over the description of the 4d colour, which was also called ‘grey-green’ and ‘sage green’; ‘sage green’ was the official description eventually used for the issued 9d.

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## DESIGNS FOR 7d TO 1s VALUES DEVELOPED

The PMG had seen Dulac’s hexagonal and octagonal designs for the denominations in the upper end of the range in November 1937, and preferred the former, although with amendments to the thistle and daffodil; on 2 December the CAI had supported his view. On 23 December Dulac supplied Stores with a new drawing incorporating the required improvements to the emblems, but was asked next day to make further amendments to the shape and size of the leaves on the thistle, following suggestions by the DPS; he was also asked for drawings of the 7d, 8d, 9d and 10d values and a revised drawing of the 1s value. On 28 December Dulac sent an altered drawing, explaining that he had completed retouching the thistle as required and also designed lettering for the 7d and 10d values; the 8d and 9d lettering would take up much the same space as that for 7d when completed. He pointed out that the design had initially been completed with the lettering for ‘one shilling’ in mind, and that ‘sevenpence’ and the other values would present something of a problem: It is very difficult to fit the lettering for these three values. The letters cannot follow the angular shape of the white band [of the hexagonal frame] without looking groggy; the only way to get over this is to make – as I have done – the middle curved and the ends straight. I feel, however, that it balances neither the crown nor Postage, Revenue ... I have roughed out a small design on similar lines ... putting the lettering at the bottom. This layout has the following advantages:

- the letters at top and bottom provide natural angles so that the dark ‘corner patches’ round the flowers are no longer necessary.
- there is a little more room for the head which can now be the same size as on the current issue.
- the lettering being straight is more readable; any value can be written in the space without destroying the balance; it is larger and shows up better.
- there is, on the whole, less ink surface.

If, however, the first arrangement is insisted on, the head should be in the proportion shown on the sketch, that is, smaller than that of the current issue.

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## ESSAYS OF HEXAGONAL DESIGN

On 3 January 1938 Harrisons was asked to supply colour essays in the 10d denomination, from Dulac's design with the requested alterations rather than the version as proposed above. These were still in preparation on 18 January when Kidner showed Dulac's revised drawing to the PMG, Assistant PMG and DG, who found it satisfactory. Harrisons supplied essays in a choice of lighter and darker tones on 14 February. They were printed in the following five colours proposed for the different values: 'rich' or 'bright' green (7d), magenta (8d), dark or 'deep olive' green (9d), 'cerulean' blue (10d) and 'raw umber' brown (1s). These were seen by the DG, and on the following day by the PMG; it was decided that further essays should be produced in tones slightly lighter for the backgrounds and darker for the head. The head was also to be larger and lower as on the original 1s essay, but without the point of the neck being so close to the frame; some retouching was also needed, especially to a defect on the King's nose. The new colours for the 7d and 8d values were too bright: a 'more modest' green was needed for the 7d with care taken to distinguish it from the ½d green, and the magenta suggested for the 8d should be 'broken down' with a little black. Finally the lettering should be strengthened to stand out more clearly.

On 17 February Tydeman and the DPS showed the essays to the RFAC, whose response was generally critical. The hexagonal shape of the surround was not liked; the lettering of 'revenue' was too crowded, and that of 'tenpence' poorly laid out; 'a more pleasing shade of green' should be found for the 7d. The background shading in the corners was disliked and there was a general preference for the value to be expressed in figures. After discussing the RFAC's views with the PMG next day, Kidner visited Dulac to talk over the essays further; the artist was 'evidently gratified' with their overall effect and was happy with the limited changes the GPO thought necessary. The RFAC's more sweeping criticisms do not seem to have been raised, except for the suggestion that the corner emblems would show up to better effect against a white or nearly-white background as on the original 1s essays, instead of the shaded background now in the corners. Dulac's response was that the lighter background would give the desired contrast.

On 21 February Dulac visited Tydeman and Fanshawe at the Stores Department; it was agreed that he prepare adapted versions of the 1s design with the value moved to the bottom panel of the surround as suggested on 28 December. The same day Harrisons supplied two more 10d essays, in green and umber, with improved lettering and the head 'larger and lower' as required; it was conceded that the green essay had the right tone values but was a poor print in other respects, while the umber was a better print but too

dark in the background. The King's head appeared slightly tilted forward, and this was corrected in vignettes of the head and background only supplied on 10 March, plus specimen essays. These were lent to the CAI for its meeting on 13 March, at which, according to Pick, those attending 'avoided all criticism and provoked praise', although 'I am sorry myself that we are not to lighten the corners as in the original design.'

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## DULAC DESIGN REVISED

Starting on 14 March, Dulac carried out all necessary revisions to his main drawing and completed these by 23 March. Fanshawe saw bromides of the redrawn design (with the value at the foot in words) on 25 March and reported to the DPS: 'We think Dulac has done his work well; a few slight modifications may be necessary.' These were shown to the DG on 29 March and the PMG on 31 March, and found satisfactory. It had initially been agreed on 21 February that Dulac also prepare a version of his design with the value in figures at the bottom, but this does not seem to have been pursued.

On 1 April Dulac met Rhodes of Harrisons and discussed the 'slight modifications' needed to the 1s design – these amounted to general minor improvements in tone, lettering, and emblems. Dulac completed these by 7 April in collaboration with Mr Pettit, and bromides were ready by 11 April; he then began work on the lettering of the other denominations, which he supplied to Harrisons on 19 April, and a set of bromides of the design in the full range of values was produced on 21 April. These were found acceptable and on 29 April the DPS authorised colour essays be produced.

In addition Harrisons produced a number of experimental essays that were only related in that Dulac's hexagonal design was featured. In April several bi-colour essays were produced using the unrevised design, in imperforate strips of three, together with similar treatment of the '1840 no. 2' design. On 8 to 13 May the company made trial essays of the revised 9d and 1s designs on specially coated paper. Sets of both the April and May experimental essays are retained in the BPMA (see also the 1940 stamp centenary issue).

Essays in the 1s denomination were produced on 9 May, but fell short of expectations; in a memorandum to the printers on 13 May Fanshawe said the result was too flat and lacked the brightness of previous essays. The emblems and lettering did not show up well, while the head was satisfactory in size but 'lacks life, expression, light and shade'. On 18 May Dulac accordingly supplied, for Harrison's guidance, a considerably strengthened revised drawing for the 9d value, stronger lettering for the 1s value, and a specimen 9 May essay which he had retouched to accentuate the crown and emblems. Fanshawe passed these to Harrisons with a request for essays in the 9d or 10d colours to see if these were more

appealing than the 'rather dull' brown of the 1s umber, and also asked that they pay special attention to improving the head.

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## FRESH ESSAYS REQUESTED BY RFAC

Essays in brown umber of the 10d and 1s values were produced on 8 June; both Dulac and the printers were dissatisfied with these and a further set was produced on 13 June in umber, 'strong' or darker brown, and 10d blue. The PMG and DG saw these the following day; the PMG approved the essays subject to the lettering of the values being raised slightly to show a fine line of background beneath them. He preferred the standard umber brown for the 1s (unlike Dulac, who commented: 'This is too much like cheap chocolate'). On 16 June the essays were shown to the RFAC by the DPS and Fanshawe; generally the design was found satisfactory, apart from the white band between the bottom of the crown and the top of the hexagon, which it wished to see improved. It was critical of the colouring of the 10d, which it thought seemed to combine two distinct shades of blue, and asked to see fresh essays in standard red, green, orange, blue and violet. Dulac was subsequently asked to prepare four sketches of alternative modifications to the crown for submission to the RFAC; he produced these on 19 June with the following comments:

The interest of the design is in the formal shape of the hexagon. With the Crown above there is a tendency for the upper half to appear elongated like a sugar-loaf while the bottom half appears squatty. This effect is very marked in No. 1 and diminishes as one goes on to No. 4.

No. 1 shows the top line of the hexagon curved to meet the Crown. I am not prepared to alter the design in that way.

No. 2 shows the circlet of the Crown lowered into the hexagon and the arches curved down to meet the corner florets.

No. 3 keeps the top line of the hexagon. The base of the Crown has been flattened, but the upper line of the circlet is on the same level as before.

No. 4 is a compromise between No. 2 and No. 3, ie, the Crown is lower and its base a little flatter ... This is the only alternative that does away with the white space while least interfering with the spirit of the design. It is the one I should like to see adopted.

The DPS and Fanshawe considered no. 4 the best and no. 2 next best; the four sketches were given to H C Bradshaw, Secretary of the RFAC, on 22 June, and shown to its Chairman, Lord Crawford. Bradshaw replied the following day that Lord Crawford disliked nos 1 and 2 and thought nos 3 and 4 an improvement – 'his preference is for No. 3 which eases off the differentiation between crown and hexagon'. Fanshawe noted in a memorandum to the DPS the same day that, 'I don't think there is much to choose between 3 and 4. If Dulac does not object to three I should feel disposed to try out this alternative. If, however, he is strongly in favour of 4, we might get the essay of this instead of 3 in the hope that the FAC will

accept it.’ In the event Dulac agreed to redraw the crown along the lines of his sketch no 3 and Rhodes was asked on 27 June to prepare fresh colour essays accordingly, plus slight modifications in tone behind ‘postage’ and other lettering.

On 11 July colour trials of the 1s essay were received including essays in the ‘spectrum’ colours of red, green, orange, blue and violet as requested by the RFAC, and in the 9d green, 10d blue and 1s umber of the standard issue. A large number of different inks from the manufacturers Hartmann and Winstone were used, including two shades of red, seven shades of green, two of orange, six blue, two violet, and three umber. Tydeman gave a set of essays in the ‘spectrum’ colours to Lord Crawford to show the RFAC on 12 July; he was reportedly pleased with the modified crown and lighter background contrasts. The RFAC approved the colours, though commenting that it ‘gave the impression of having run, as though the stamps had been dipped in water’. It was also noted that the background to the dark portions of the print was too dark in tone. In further coated paper trials that were not, however, subsequently developed, essays of the 1s in ‘spectrum blue’ were also produced on 13 July.

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### COLOURS OF 9d TO 1s APPROVED

In a note to the DPS on 14 July Fanshawe made it clear that the RFAC knew what constraints the GPO was under as to the choice of colours for the 7d to 1s range, namely the need to avoid confusion with those already used on lower values, and the firm views on this topic of counter staff and their union representatives. He noted that the colour trials had produced attractive shades of blue and umber for the 10d and 1s respectively that might be considered as alternatives to those in use, although the new umber was rather closer in colour than the present one to the 9d green. With regard to the quality of colour reproduction on the stamps that the RFAC had drawn attention to, Bradshaw had not considered this as anything that could not be resolved during production and was happy to leave the matter with the GPO. Similarly Fanshawe thought that, despite the comments on the background tones, it would be possible to select essays for submission to the King (as was now envisaged) from those available – ‘any alteration to the background would be slight and, if considered necessary, could be made later. A lighter background tone could only be obtained by getting Dulac to furnish a fresh drawing. This, with the preparation of essays, would probably take about a month.’

A set of 1s essays was submitted to the King’s Assistant Private Secretary, Mr Lascelles, on 21 July, in the colours proposed for use – red (7d), green (8d), sage green (9d), dark blue (10d) and brown (1s); the 10d blue was one of the new shades to emerge from the colour trials rather than that in current use, and was later described as ‘azure blue’, while the 1s was variously described as brown, bistre-brown, or umber. The King’s approval was notified

on 26 July. Reporting this to Tydeman on 28 July, Kidner suggested that 'slightly different' colours for the 7d and 8d might be sought to avoid any possible confusion with the ½d and 1d. In further discussion with Fanshawe on 9 August, the DPS agreed the colours for the 9d to 1s as approved by the King. It was agreed that production of the 9d to 1s stamps could follow on from the 4d to 6d values; once any outstanding points had been settled, hopefully about the end of September, essays in alternative colours could be sought for the 7d and 8d, which were in need of improvement.

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## THE 'OXO' AMENDMENTS

At the 9 August meeting, Fanshawe referred to criticisms some weeks earlier of Dulac's ornamental scrollwork in the hexagonal border around the King's head. These came from Frank Pick of the CAI, who thought it resembled 'OXO'. The DPS agreed that Dulac should consider Pick's suggestion of adding fresh lines of scrollwork to obviate this effect, hopefully in time for the CAI to see the results in mid-September as had been proposed. The RFAC's criticisms concerning tone and colour were also noted; rather than having Dulac redraw the design on a lighter background as initially favoured by Tydeman, Kidner preferred Harrisons be asked to achieve the effect of the 10d blue essay (the best in quality of those supplied). This was agreed with the printers on 15 August, and also that white or light patches, as on the essays at 'e' and 'v' in 'revenue' and elsewhere, be reduced as far as possible.

Dulac had a bromide of the artwork for the 1s produced with considerably elaborated scrollwork; this was seen by Pettit of Harrisons on 22 August in comparison with an unelaborated version and criticised in the following terms: '[It] does seem to rather convey the idea that the space is being filled in for the sake of filling in whereas there appears to be purposeful design in the original. If your people agree to going ahead with the design in its original state I feel no harm would be done if Dulac gently strengthened the fine lines of the decorative work.' The artist's own opinion was that the extra lines 'spoil the design and cause the bottom two bands of the frame to become grey and ... out of balance in tone with the lettering of the top bands.' Fanshawe also agreed that the unelaborated version was slightly the better of the two, and finally Mr Gould-Smith of PSD reiterated this in a memorandum of 24 August. Adding 'subject to any improvement which [Harrisons] may be able to effect by slightly strengthening the finer of the decorative lines'. Dulac completed a new drawing of the design with these lines slightly thickened on 25 August, and the printers had a preliminary bromide prepared by 31 August. Once more, however, Dulac thought the heavier-lined version 'dull and grey'; Fanshawe agreed that it was 'heavy and wooden', and on 9 September noted the general consensus of Stores, artist and printers in deciding that the revised version was no improvement and approving the original scrollwork. Unsurprisingly Dulac found the whole 'OXO' interlude exasperating, emphasising the defects

of the 'committee principle' of design selection; the matter seems to have rankled with him as late as February 1945, when he was the subject of an article in the magazine 'Everybody's'.

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## 7d TO 1s APPROVED AND ISSUED

On 12 September Harrisons was told that the colour essays of the 9d, 10d and 1s were now formally confirmed as suitable for production and reminded that the company had provisionally promised bulk supplies of the values by January 1939. Essays of the three values in the approved colours were shown to the CAI on 13 October and 'well received' without further criticism. Meanwhile matters at Harrisons were delayed first by discussions between Dulac and Pettit over retouching of the King's head and then difficulty in making satisfactory printing cylinders. At the end of October it was agreed to put the work aside temporarily in the face of the demand for lower values for Christmas, although it was considered that some if not all of the 7d to 1s range might still go on sale in February or March. Shortly afterwards, on 2 November, the Assistant PMG announced in a speech to the Grocery and Allied Trades Association that 7d and 8d stamps were to be issued to meet the needs of the business community following the reduction of parcel post tariffs in 1935 (the denominations had formerly been issued but had fallen into disuse in 1918, also due to a change in postal rates). As a result of this being made public, it was decided to issue these two values first. Harrisons was therefore asked on 7 December to produce trial essays of the 7d and 8d in shades of red and green alternative to those used for the ½d and 1d, as discussed earlier during August and September. Essays for the 1s, in green, in red, and in grey, were supplied on 12 December. Further essays followed on 5 January 1939: in violet grey, in violet grey extra, in tri-col red, in violet red, in blue green, in vivid green, and in cerise. On 6 January the DDG (now Sir Raymond Birchall) approved vivid green (later described as 'yellow-green' or 'emerald green') for the 7d and tri-col red (variously described as 'violet-red', 'a shade of magenta' and carmine) for the 8d.

Harrison's tentative view on 12 December had been that supplies of the new 7d could start by 23 January, 8d by 20 February, 9d by 20 March, and 10d by 10 April (conditional, of course, on colours for the new values being swiftly approved). Prospects for the 1s, which Fanshawe had suggested a few days earlier might be put on sale at the same time as the 7d and 8d, were less certain: 'We are well forward with the etching and proving of the 1/- stamps ... we regret to say, however, that we have not yet made an even cylinder for the 1/- series, and until we have found out by experience how to overcome the new troubles, we cannot make a programme with any degree of certainty in fulfilling it.' However, it was hoped that deliveries of the 1s could be completed by the end of the first week in April. A Stores memorandum of 19 December noted that production of all values should be

completed by the end of April and that existing supplies of George V 9d to 1s stamps should last for a month beyond that.

On 20 January, Harrisons supplied proof sheets of the 7d from two cylinders, approved sheets being selected. Proofs of the 8d were supplied on 27 January, with one noted as 'approved, subject to the removal of knife marks'. The printers estimated in a memorandum of 24 January that initial supplies of the two values could be delivered in mid-February; by 16 February Stores felt able to propose issuing the stamps on 27 February. Both values were issued on that date.

Proof sheets of the 1s were supplied on 28 February, one endorsed as 'approved as standard for production' on 1 March. Similar details for the 9d and 10d are not recorded, but a Stores memorandum as late as 23 March recorded that 'Harrisons have not yet succeeded in printing either value'. By 6 April, however, it was possible for Stores to propose 1 May as the issue date, and this was confirmed on 17 April; on the same day it was noticed that supplies of the 9d reaching Stores were slightly different in colour from the proof approved by the DG. Dell discussed the matter with PSD and pointed out that a year's supply had been printed and were of consistent colour throughout, and there was no danger of arousing public comment; Gould-Smith said on behalf of PSD that the difference in colour was too slight to act upon and that he preferred that of the production stamps to the approved proof. All three denominations were issued on 1 May 1939; the range of George VI low value issues begun two years earlier was thus completed, apart from the introduction of the 11d value in 1947 and the colour changes of 1941 to 1942 and 1950 to 1951.

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## REACTIONS TO THE NEW ISSUES

Of the two designs, Gill's was generally welcomed on its appearance in 1937, despite vocal minority opinion that it was a retrograde step from the Edward VIII issues. A typically favourable press comment, from the 'Glasgow Herald' of 6 May, was that 'it certainly makes a pleasant change both from the rather dimly photographic effect of the Edward VIII stamps and from the tastelessly fussy elaboration of detail that marked those of King George V'. The 'Cumberland & Westmorland Herald' of 22 May was pleased by their 'fair and floral air', although an opposing view was quoted in the 'Edinburgh Evening News' of 7 May, 'that the stamps of the reign bear too much resemblance to a seed catalogue'. Dulac's effigy of the King was praised almost universally – an ecstatic letter to the 'Daily Mirror' of 11 May called it 'strikingly characteristic and most happily reminiscent of that memorable photograph at the time of his Accession – calm, dignified, every inch a King'. However, the sculptor Jacob Epstein commented against the issue in both the 'Daily Telegraph' and 'Evening Standard' on 10 May: 'A conglomeration of objects does not make a design ... one hopes that these stamps do not prophesy a reign of the commonplace.' Replies in defence

of the stamps came from both the painter Eric Kennington and Alfred Praga, the President of the Society of Miniaturists; Praga commented in a letter published by the 'Daily Telegraph' on 14 May:

I cannot agree with my friend Epstein's animadversions. He is, remember, a sculptor. He works in the round – in three dimensions – not in two as we draughtsmen. Should the day come when we can frank our letters with bronze busts, I will at once put forward his name as the best designer of a new issue.

On its appearance in reverse in November 1938 the Gill design aroused less enthusiasm, particular criticism being levelled at the colours of the 4d to 6d range. The magazine 'Cavalcade' wrote on 25 March 1939 that 'quite artistic designs are spoilt by anaemic tints', while the 'Daily Telegraph' of 8 March had called them 'washed-out looking productions obviously suffering from advanced anaemia', before adding about the 7d and 8d: 'Now we have two more which have gone to the other extreme and shriek at one in pink and grass green ... The design is quite pleasing, but why those terrible colours?' For the most part, however, Dulac's design for the 7d to 1s values was well received without arousing any of the controversy that new stamps had inspired in 1936/37; a typically muted reaction, from the 'Bolton Evening News' of 27 February, was that 'Britain's stamps are not generally very ornate, but these new ones are brighter and more pleasing to the eye.'

Some alarm was caused by an article in 'Stamp Magazine' for January 1939 illustrated by a recognisable but by no means identical copy of the Dulac design. Enquiry suggested that the author, T Todd, had glimpsed an essay of the design while visiting the Harrisons works on private business. Similarly 'British Philatelist' for September 1938 had published artwork by John Farleigh for the 1929 PUC issue, and artwork by Mark Severin had been reproduced elsewhere; a Stores Department memorandum of 11 August 1942 records these incidents, plus the offer for sale in 'Stamp Collecting' on 1 August of artwork by Harold Nelson for the 1940 Centenary issue. These instances were a matter of concern not merely because the GPO claimed copyright over all artwork, but because there was a fear of anything that might facilitate or encourage counterfeiting genuine material.

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## FEES PAID TO ARTISTS AND PRINTERS

Eric Gill was paid 100 guineas in April 1937 and a further 100 guineas in August 1938, making a total of £210. Edmund Dulac was paid 65 guineas in March 1937; 200 guineas in April 1937; 100 guineas in March 1938; 100 guineas in July 1938; 100 guineas in August 1938; 50 guineas in October 1938; 100 guineas in November 1938; 50 guineas in April 1939, making £803.25 in all. These sums included work by both artists on high values and stamped stationery, and the 1937 Coronation stamp by Dulac. Both artists were highly spoken of in internal GPO correspondence justifying the awards; Dulac was praised for his 'freely given expert advice'

and willingness to ‘put his private commissions on one side to meet the Department’s requirements’ at ‘all hours and during weekends’, while Gill’s ‘expert advice to the Department over a considerable period’ and ‘very helpful advice regarding stamp designs submitted by other artists’ were noted. Payments to Harrisons are not recorded in full, but they were paid £500.16 for completed essays of the first four issued denominations in December 1937, and £1,041.17 for the remainder in April 1939.

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## THE ARTISTS

ERIC GILL, ARA, RDI, was born in Brighton in 1882, the son of the Congregationalist minister of West Wittering. On leaving Chichester Art School in 1900 he worked for three years under William Douglas Caroe, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Subsequently he studied letter design under Edward Johnston at the Central School of Arts and Crafts and practised letter cutting at the Westminster Technical Institute. By 1904 he was supporting himself as a letter cutter, having abandoned architecture as ‘divorced from the real work of building’ (although he was later honoured by the Royal Institute of British Architects). He later moved into the fields of book decoration, monumental masonry, and simple figure sculpture in stone; his first solo exhibition was held in 1910. His interests also led him into other areas – as well as lecturing and writing on topics including the ‘social and economic conditions of industrially organised societies’, he came to be described as ‘one of the greatest craftsmen of this century, a typographer and letter cutter of skill and a masterly wood-engraver’ [‘20th Century Painters and Sculptors’, Frances Spalding, 1990]. He also won notoriety by the sexual improprieties of his later years after converting to Roman Catholicism in 1913. He died on 17 November 1940; his younger brother, Macdonald Gill, was an architect, muralist and cartographer, whose own work for the GPO included the Coronation greetings telegram of 1937.

EDMUND DULAC was born in Toulouse in France on 22 October 1882 and made his career as an artist from 1904 onwards. He worked in Britain from 1907 and was naturalised in 1912. Although most prominent as a book illustrator, he also ventured successfully into fields such as caricature, poster art, interior decoration and theatrical design. However, his first public commission was the King’s Medal for Poetry, inaugurated in 1935. His first ‘stamp’ designs were for Red Cross charity labels in the Great War; his last designs, for Queen Elizabeth II definitives, were issued in 1953. In a long and increasingly heated debate about the aesthetic qualities of the Edward VIII stamps in the letters page of ‘The Times’ in the autumn of 1936, Dulac was one of their severest critics and Eric Gill, whose own draughtsmanship Dulac unreservedly admired, one of their stoutest defenders. Dulac’s head of the King for the George VI definitives remained one of the commissions that gave him most satisfaction, not least due to the King’s own high opinion of the portrait –

interviewed for the 18 May 1951 issue of 'Stamp Collecting, Dulac announced, 'I am proud to say that His Majesty will not consider a change of head'. He died on 25 May 1953.

GILES ALLEN  
24 November 1995

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[See also - PRO file BT 57/15 - Council for Art & Industry.]