

QEII DEFINITIVES: LOW VALUE WILDINGS

1952-64



As early as 26 September 1951 GPO officials were addressing the problem of issuing new definitives when King George VI died and was succeeded by Princess Elizabeth. The succession was anticipated, as the King had been ill for the greater part of the year and was about formally to renounce his constitutional duties after a serious lung operation; there seemed a possibility that the King might die, and on 26 September the press made enquiries as to what the GPO would do in this event. After consultation between Colonel Cross and E W Wood, members of the Postal Services Department (PSD), it was stated that stamps with George VI's effigy would continue after his death until supplies of new stamps approved by the new sovereign and bearing her portrait were available. The Director of Postal Services (DPS), R Locke, confirmed this the following day and on 28 September asked T J Griffith of PSD to detail previous practice. In a memorandum of 1 October Griffith added the rider that 'issuing certain of the low value stamps with the new King's effigy was given first consideration and the question of issuing Coronation commemorative stamps was considered somewhat later'.

On 4 October the DPS ordered that no action be taken but that a plan should be drawn up for future use. This was ready by 9 November and was largely the work of S W Way of PSD.

Under the title 'Initial Steps to be taken in connexion with new issues of Postage Stamps' it provided necessary action points in three main groupings; somewhat condensed, these were as follows:

(1) The Postmaster General (PMG) should approach the Palace recommending issues of new definitives, ideally beginning with the four values in most common use, also with the view of clarifying whether special Coronation stamps were desired and any special views of the sovereign on the design of these or the definitives.

(2) The artists who would be asked to submit designs would be chosen in consultation with the Council for Industrial Design (CoID) which would also inspect the designs and arrange them in order of merit (that the GPO would regard the CoID's findings as recommendations only, and not binding, remained implicit). The Royal Mint should also be consulted as to the suitability of any photographs utilised for the new sovereign's head on coins or medals for similar use on postage stamps. Colour essays of the selected designs should be submitted for approval first to the PMG and then to the Queen; the artists and printers should work in liaison to carry out whatever alterations were required at any stage. Post Office Circulars and Press & Broadcast Notices should be issued as necessary, and a draft prepared for a broadcast announcement by the PMG if required; in particular the Dominions Office should be informed about the new stamps.

(3) The Supplies Department should be advised on requisites not only for postage stamps (including rolls and books) and stamped stationery, but also for postal orders and dies for use by the Inland Revenue and HMSO.

Timetables leading to the first King Edward VIII and King George VI definitives were reconstructed; the file containing these and the 'Initial Steps' plan was stored until the King's death on 6 February 1952. An appeal from the Australian postal services as to the proper means of introducing stamps for the new reign was received almost at once, and the papers proved of value in providing a reply.

The first approaches were made directly to the Postal Services Department by the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, on 13 February, asking what steps were intended; the PMG, Earl de la Warr, confirmed plans to begin the issue of new definitives as soon as practicable in his reply on 25 February, and enquired as to the availability of suitable photographs either for direct reproduction on stamps or as the basis of a new effigy. At the suggestion of Sir Alan's assistant, Lt Colonel Martin Charteris, the DPS and Lionel Thompson, the Deputy Master of the Royal Mint, had visited the photographer Dorothy Wilding on 22 February to discuss requirements from a portrait session with the Queen that had already been arranged. It was explained to the photographer 'that for printing by the photogravure process, it was undesirable to have heavy shadows on one side of the face

and that top lighting, which threw shadows on the eyes, should be avoided'. The session took place on 26 February; pictures were promised by Lascelles writing to the PMG the following day, and, once approved, supplied on 7 March. These showed the Queen wearing a tiara and included four full profiles, and two three-quarter face or 'proper' profiles looking right on light and dark backgrounds respectively - Colonel Charteris intimated in an accompanying note that the Queen would prefer the full profiles for use on the definitives.

PROPOSALS TO POST OFFICE BOARD

On 11 March the DPS prepared a paper on new definitive issues for the Post Office Board's meeting on 20 March, proposing 'two or three of the more commonly used denominations ... by next September or as soon as possible thereafter', the remaining low values to follow 'at suitable and convenient intervals'. He included 'the suggestions which have already been, or are likely to be made' in the press and elsewhere: pictorial designs with historical or landscape motifs, a greater variety of designs, a change of colours, and a return to the style of Victorian postage stamps. Various suggestions in this last category, from Sir George Bellew of the College of Arms and others, included the printing of at least one denomination in black, and depicting the Queen with a coronet in the manner of Victoria, rather than a crown as with her successors. Locke presented the case against pictorial designs at some length, mainly that 'to omit the head of the reigning sovereign altogether from our stamps is unthinkable ... with the present size of our low value postage stamp, there is no room for a pictorial design so long as the head ... is retained as the principal feature'. Conceding the Commonwealth practice of reducing the head and placing it in a corner of the design, he felt that this would undermine both the privileges, and the 'considerable respect and prestige abroad' accompanying them, which were granted to British stamps by the Universal Postal Union:

Since 1840 we have continued the practice of showing the head of the reigning sovereign in a prominent position as the main feature ... and by virtue of this tradition our stamps are the only ones which do not bear the name ... of the country of origin. ... If we had to put the name of the country on our stamps in place of the head of the Sovereign, we should immediately be faced with difficulty in finding a short and acceptable title to cover England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Isles, and the Isle of Man.

Locke indicated the disadvantages of the solution of enlarging the stamps, to 'at least double the present size' to make enough room for an adequate design: production difficulties, greater expenditure on manufacture and materials, the modification or replacement of some 18,000 stamp vending machines, and the known opposition of the business community. He referred to the 2s 6d and 5s definitives of 1951, which represented a concession (criticised in the philatelic press) to the pressures for pictorial issues; any

extension of pictorial design could most appropriately be with the new high values, which were only to be considered once the low values and Coronation stamps had been dealt with.

The DPS was also not inclined to break with including the words 'postage' and 'revenue'. With the former the GPO felt bound by a resolution of the Cairo UPU Convention of 1934, and with the latter by the Inland Revenue whose position was that the word was desirable if 'postage' was included. On the question of greater variety in colour and design, however, Locke welcomed change, as there was public complaint about the difficulty of speedily distinguishing between several of the lower values since the last change of colours on 3 May 1951. With the paler colours introduced in 1941, the ½d orange, 2d brown and 2½d red were not easy to tell apart; this was exacerbated by the 2s 6d and 5s stamp books containing of these three values. At a later date the DPS would detail a further complication, drawn to the GPO's attention by the editor of 'The Economist' of problems caused by the 'pale orange' of the current ½d being visibly darker than that of the 1941-51 2d. Another factor was the lack of variety in design: the current range of low values consisted of only two designs, one with a dark background for ½d to 3d and lighter for 4d to 6d, and another for 7d to 1s. It was intended to replace these with three separate designs, for the ranges ½d to 2d, 2½d to 6d, and 7d to 1s. It was proposed to consider a return to the more intense and better-contrasted colours of pre-war – 'a deepening of colour, particularly the red, coupled with the introduction of a third type of design, would do much to remove altogether any difficulties'. (The solution of simply changing the confusing colours was not really an option; it was long-established international practice, as resolved by the UPU, that similar colours should be used by all its members on denominations representing the basic tariff for various classes of mail - inland letters, overseas letters, postcards, etc. It was not until June 1953 that this ruling ceased to be in force.)

Locke's only reservation on the subject of colour concerned proposals received that at least one denomination of the new issue should be in black to commemorate the original 1d stamp of 1840; he noted that the Penny Black had been withdrawn and the colour changed to red after nine months because of the difficulty with cancellation. On the subject of design generally, he recommended the 'eminently desirable' retention from the George VI stamps of the national floral emblems (rose, shamrock, thistle and daffodil) and urged limited the number of artists invited to 'some half a dozen' experienced designers, 'perhaps one or two promising beginners', and the four main stamp printing firms. He dealt with the problem of obtaining an effigy of the new sovereign separately: the use of a drawing, such as Edmund Dulac's portrait of George VI on the present definitives, could avoid the imperfections of a photograph, although the photogravure process used for the low values meant that a photograph could be directly reproduced. He proposed that both methods should be tried and the results considered.

ADVISORY PANEL SET UP

The photographs of the Queen supplied on 7 March were examined by the PMG and two CoID representatives on 13 March, it being decided the Board would find it helpful to study stamp-size reductions. Colonel Charteris was asked if a leftward-looking three-quarter face photograph could be supplied - the two three-quarter face profiles supplied were looking right, which was contrary to postage stamp practice. Charteris sent a suitable pose on 17 March, with the proviso that the Queen preferred the earlier two if a three-quarter face photograph were used, but would be happy for the enclosed specimen 'to form the basis of a design'. The seven photographs now available, including the reductions, were examined by the Post Office Board on 20 March; the meeting largely adopted Locke's recommendations. The only differences were that the Board felt the deepening of colour should be confined to the 2½d red, and the crown should be replaced on the new stamps by a coronet or tiara as in the photographs (the files are not explicit, but the DPS appears to have favoured retaining the crown). It was agreed that a small panel be set up to advise the PMG on the artistic merits and suitability of any of the available or future portraits of the Queen. On 24 March Locke recommended in a minute to the Director General, Sir Alexander Little, that this panel include the artists Edmund Dulac and Percy Metcalfe, Sir Francis Meynell and Gordon Russell of the CoID, and Sir George Bellew of the College of Arms; as well as being an experienced stamp designer Sir George would be able to advise on the heraldic propriety of such matters as the portrayal of the Queen wearing a coronet.

A session of the panel was arranged for 1 April to deal with the selection of a portrait of the Queen. As well as those mentioned, present included the PMG and Assistant PMG (L D Gammans), Locke, representatives of PSD, the Supplies Department, the stamp printers Harrison & Sons Ltd, plus Mrs C G Tomrley of the CoID.

The PMG expressed a preference for a three-quarter face portrait of the Queen, and the meeting generally agreed, although the two artists favoured a full profile treatment. A discussion resolved that the portrait numbered S.6 was the best with which to proceed, subject to the provisions that the profile should face left instead of right and that the tiara should be replaced by a coronet - Sir George Bellew was definite on this on the grounds of correct heraldic tradition. Sir Francis Meynell found S.6 'very lifelike and more interesting and attractive than a profile'; it was decided to request a new photograph of the Queen on the lines suggested. If this was not practicable it would be possible simply to reverse S.6 (given the Queen's permission) and this should be done anyway so that the artists would have a basis to work to prepare drawings until a new photograph was ready. Percy Metcalfe had to decline the offer as he felt he could not do the subject justice and was in any case exceptionally busy with other commitments. Dulac, however, known for his aversion to designs incorporating photographs, was eager to prepare a drawing and pointed out that the tiara could easily be replaced with a coronet in the process. The conclusion of the panel

was that approaches be made to secure a new photograph while Dulac proceeded with his drawing: the decision on which to use was deferred.

The meeting also looked at, and rejected, an existing portrait of the Queen by the artist Edward Halliday - although Sir John Wilson of the Royal Philatelic Society later praised this as having 'considerable charm and a good carriage of the head', the panel criticised it as a poor likeness, looking too much like a magazine illustration, and having a dated air. (On this last point Mrs Tomrley of the CoID had taken pains to urge that the style of the Queen's hair in any portrait used should not have a dating effect on the design.) The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) albums contain copies of two Halliday portraits, one full-length in formal dress commissioned by the Drapers Company and shown in the Royal Academy in 1950, and a head-and-shoulders pencil sketch signed 'Edward I Halliday, 1947'. The former was seen by the panel.

Immediately following the meeting Harrisons set about producing bromides four times stamp size of the S.6 photograph, both as originally supplied and in reverse, for use by Dulac in preparing his drawing; after discussion with him the company also passed on to PSD his queries about properly depicting a coronet, including the angle at which it should be worn. K Hind of PSD telephoned Sir George Bellew about this on 3 April, and a sketch accompanied by notes of explanation came the following day. Sir George advised that there was no correct angle as such, the position of the tiara in S.6 or the coronet in Victorian stamps being equally suitable. The size and jewellery of the coronet were similarly unimportant; it only mattered that it should be depicted with crosses patées and fleurs-de-lys set alternately on the rim. This was borne in mind when the PMG saw the Queen on 8 April and explained the need for new photographs; subsequently Hind and Brigadier Holmes of PSD visited Dorothy Wilding on 10 April to detail exactly what was required, and a further photographic session took place on 15 April. This included leftward-looking profiles of the Queen both full and three-quarter face, as well as at least one portrait full face. The coronet featured in the photographs was, strictly speaking, a diadem, dating from the 1820s and intended for wearing over the Cap of State, the velvet cap worn inside the sovereign's crown. Allegedly made to George IV's own design, it featured emblems of the rose, thistle and shamrock between the crosses patées, rather than fleurs-de-lys as described by Bellew. Victoria, Edward VII's Queen Alexandra, and George V's Queen Mary had on occasion worn it in public; Elizabeth II would first wear it in public at the State Opening of Parliament in November 1952.

On 5 May the Palace supplied two full profiles and one three-quarter face, with the proviso that the Queen felt the set showed the coronet too far back on her head and hoped this could be rectified in retouching. The three-quarter face photograph (Dorothy Wilding ref no. 015957-E) became the basis of the standard head that gave the name 'Wilding' to the

definitives. Harrisons enlarged bromides were ready by 7 April and Dulac's first three-quarter face drawing was completed by 21 April.

CHOICE OF HEADS DECIDED

On 8 May the PMG held a meeting at which Dulac agreed to make minor alterations to his drawing in light of the new photograph; it was the intention that once available the revised drawing be the effigy for all the low value definitives. Dulac's revision was ready on 13 May, but was felt unsuitable, Sir George Bellew commenting on 19 May that 'the coronet had been over-emphasized a little ... it seemed to rest on the Queen's head in a way which was not entirely natural'. He felt this might be remedied by redrawing the hair more naturally to overlap the coronet in places, and that the stark appearance of the latter could be relieved by a degree of shading. These suggestions were passed to Dulac, who carried out further retouching and 'toning down' of the coronet. When submitted on 6 June, this second revision was considered 'considerably improved'. However, the PMG thought it less attractive than the three-quarter face photograph supplied on 8 May; Harrisons considered the photograph the most suitable yet received and that Dulac's drawing did not equal it as a likeness. Rather than asking Dulac to produce fresh revisions or a new drawing, it was decided on 9 June to concentrate on the photograph and that Harrisons proceed with retouching. The PMG particularly wished to see the crosses on the coronet reduced in size, but Harrisons warned that this was not practicable.

Separate discussions had been taking place since February on the choice of artists and the drafting of instructions. On 20 February, John Stobie, a former Harrison's staff artist who designed the Channel Isles Liberation 1d stamp of 1948 and was now freelance, applied to the GPO for permission to submit designs. Contacted on 26 February, Mr Rhodes of Harrisons recalled Stobie as 'quite a valuable artist ... not regarded as being in the top class'. On 14 March Gordon Russell of the CoID suggested Edmund Dulac, Percy Metcalfe, Joan Hassall, Mary Adshead, Abram Games and Victor Reinganum. The DPS replied on 17 April adding John Stobie, despite the lukewarm testimonial of his former employers. Russell was not happy at this as he had refused the requests of John Farleigh and Enid Marx, well known artists with stamp design experience, to be included in the list; he understood the GPO wanted the number of participating artists limited. At a meeting on 23 April it was agreed to add all three artists' names; subsequently, anybody wishing to submit designs or doing so unsolicited was to be told that the GPO could not promise any financial reward. Unsolicited work, including that already received, would be assessed by Mrs Tomrley of the CoID; this review took place on 30 April with the assistance of Hind, from which it was decided that only one would be invited to contribute further. This was Harold W Bird, whose unsolicited designs were received on 20 March and again on 7 April - following the decision on 23 April,

he was advised his designs would be considered with no guarantee of payment if they were not used.

The invitations to individual artists went out on 2 May, with those to the four main stamp printing firms (Harrisons, Bradbury Wilkinson, Waterlows, and De la Rue) following on 7 May. As was usual an invitation also went to the College of Arms: Sir George Bellew normally submitted designs on its behalf, but on this occasion replied that he was already under heavy pressure with previous commitments; in his place he suggested E G Fuller, an experienced College staff artist who had given considerable assistance with stamp designs in the past. This proved acceptable to PSD. The last invitation went to Lancelot A S Thornton, a Harrison's staff artist. Thornton originally wrote to the GPO on 24 March stating his experience of stamp design and willingness to contribute; Harrisons had decided none of its staff could be spared from the pressure of existing work for its normal practice of holding an internal competition for any GPO stamp design and submitting the best results in the firm's name, but gave Thornton permission to produce designs for the new stamps in his own time and on his own account. On 17 May Thornton was told of the intention to limit the number of artists and informed, similarly to Bird, that his work would be considered but no payment could be promised unless it was used. Thornton wrote accepting these conditions, and was duly sent a set of instructions on 30 May.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ARTISTS

The instructions stated that three designs in vertical (portrait) format were required, one against a light background, the Queen's head being the dominant feature; photographs of Dulac's first unrevised drawing were supplied, although it was made clear that this was not a final choice. The denominations would cover the range ½d to 1s and could be shown in words, figures, or both. The designs had to include 'postage', 'revenue', and the national floral emblems. The fees were 40 guineas per submitted design up to a maximum of 120 guineas for each artist (or printing firm) plus 160 guineas for each design accepted: this made a total of 200 guineas (£210) for each successful design. The DPS had proposed doubling the fees before the war for the King George VI definitives, but this was still 25 per cent lower than the post-war norm, to which the fees were raised again at the prompting of the CoID. Abram Games pointed out in a letter of 21 May that this still fell short of the levels of payment urged by the Society of Industrial Artists. The deadline for submitted artwork was 30 June; this had earlier been set a month previously, but a meeting between PSD and Supplies' representatives and Locke on 21 April confirmed the change of the provisional date for the issue of the initial stamps from September to 8 December and agreed a timetable beginning on 30 June; Gordon Russell of the CoID questioned the earlier date as leaving inadequate time for proper design. A total of 75 designs were received by the deadline and listed by number for subsequent reference. Although it has not been

possible to reconstruct the numbering from incomplete records with full certainty, as far as can be told this was as follows.

John Farleigh (received 17 June):

1 – ½d; 2 – 2d; 3 – 2½d; 4 – 3d; 5 – 6d, 6 – 8d; 7 – 1s

Edmund Dulac (received 19 June):

8 – 2½d; 9 – 6d; 10 – 1s

John Stobie (received 21 June):

11 – 2½d; 12 – 2½d; 13 – 1s; 14 – 4d; 15 – 2½d

Joan Hassall (received 27 June):

16 – 2½d; 17 – 4d; 18 – 8d

Mary Adshead (received 30 June):

19 – 2½d; 20 – 2½d; 21 – 2½d; 22 – 3d; 23 – 5d; 24 – 5d

Abram Games (received 26 June):

25 – 3d; 26 – 4d; 27 – 9d

Victor Reinganum (received 26 June):

28 – 2d; 29 – 2½d; 30 – 4d; 31 – 8d

Enid Marx (received 26 June):

32 – 2½d (titled 'Royal bouquet'); 33 – 3d (titled 'Imperial Lace'); 34 – 2½d (titled 'Elizabethan Spray'); 35 – 8d (variant of 34)

E G Fuller (received 27 June):

36 – 2d; 37 – 5d; 38 – 10d

Harrison and Sons (George Knipe) (received 28 June):

39 – 1½d; 40 – 1½d; 41 – 2½d; 42 – 7d; 43 – 8d

Harrison and Sons (M C Farrar-Bell) (received 28 June):

44 – 2½d; 45 – 4d; 46 – 4d; 47 – 10d

De La Rue (received 27 June, except 58 and 59 received 30 June):

48 to 50 – all 2d; 51 to 57 – all 4d; 58 – 6d; 59 – 9d

(although the individual artists are not identified, it appears that three artists were involved, for 48 to 50, 51 to 57 and 58 to 59)

Waterlows (received 26 June, except 60 received 25 June):

60 – 2½d (by L D Fryer); 61 – 2½d (by Hugo Fleury); 62 – 6d (by Stanley D Scott, titled ‘Dawn of a New Era’)

Bradbury Wilkinson (W S Matthews) (received 25 June):

63 – 2½d; 64 – 4d

Bradbury Wilkinson (E J Jackman) (Received 25 June):

65 – 4d; 66 – 4d

Harold W Bird (received by 30 June):

67 – value unknown (not in BPMA albums); 68 – 4d; 69 – 8d

Lancelot Thornton (received 25 June):

70 – 1d; 71 – 2d; 72 – 3d; 74 – 6d; 75 – 1s (also four two-colour roughs - 3d, 4d, 6d and 1s 3d values)

Harrisons in fact submitted nine designs, despite the impression given earlier of being too pressurised by other commitments. However, while George Knipe was a staff artist, M C Farrar-Bell was freelance, specially commissioned by the company. Of the artists invited, only Percy Metcalfe had ‘very reluctantly’ declined, explaining that due to increasing illness in recent months ‘I have not at present the control of my hand that is so essential to this kind of work.’ Metcalfe had also declined the invitation of 1 April to produce a drawing of the Queen’s head.

ARTISTS’ DESIGNS VIEWED

On 11 July the designs were viewed by members of PSD and the Supplies Department, plus Rhodes and Coulton of Harrisons, to assess their suitability for photogravure printing; other than minor improvements, the only complaints were that the Reinganum 4d (no. 30) and Marx 8d (no. 35) had stippled backgrounds that might be mistaken for faulty printing. Rhodes considered that, allowing for amendments by artists and the closure of the company from 28 July to 11 August for the annual holiday, colour essays might be ready around the end of August - about a month behind the original schedule. It was hoped to issue one stamp in each of the two lowest ranges of values (½d to 2d, 2½d to 4d) in December, although Supplies’ representatives questioned issuing both stamps during the Christmas period, and the exact values to be issued were still not settled from the 1½d, 2½d and 4d.

A meeting of the advisory panel was arranged for 18 July, so that the CoID could view the designs. The panel had been expanded to include Sir Kenneth Clark, Sir John Wilson, and the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Chairman of the Royal Fine Arts Commission. As Lord Crawford was unable to attend, he examined the designs with Brigadier Holmes and Hind of PSD on 14 July, giving his preferences as nos 39 and 36 in that order for a dark-on-light design, and nos 43 and 41 for light-on-dark; all were by George Knipe of Harrisons, apart from no. 36 by E G Fuller of the College of Arms. He commented that no. 36 was rather fussy and could be simplified; on both nos 36 and 43 the head needed redrawing with particular attention to breaking up the severity of the neckline, such as with an extra fold of corsage or a necklace. Comparing the Wilding photograph of the Queen in three-quarter face with a tiara and the final version of Dulac's drawing, Crawford thought the photograph was 'more regal, less flat, had a much better neckline and the drapery on the shoulder was much more attractive'. Following up his comments in a letter to the PMG on 17 July, he felt that many of the designs were striving to be fashionable in a way that would make them soon appear dated, and suggested: 'Avoid the advice of fashionable people ... Really good stamps should not date.'

The CoID sent its stamp selection committee to the meeting on 18 July, including Lady Cecilia Sempill (Vice-President of the Design & Industries Association) and Sir Leigh Ashton (Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum) as well as Meynell, Russell and Tomrley. The rest of the panel was made up of the DPS, Brigadier Holmes and T J Griffiths of PSD, Mr Fuller of Supplies, and W H Rhodes representing Harrisons. The meeting hoped to select at least six light-on-dark designs and at least three dark-on-light; by using both normal and 'reversed' backgrounds as well as different designs within the range of denominations it was hoped that the same colour could be used more than once if necessary. An initial scrutiny reduced the number of designs to a total of 19 as follows: nos 2, 3, 7, 10, 20, 21, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 39, 41, 43, 45 to 48 and 73. A further examination resulted in a shortlist of nine, no order of preference being given:

Farleigh – designs 2 and 3

Dulac – designs 10 and 20

Marx – design 35

Knipe – designs 39 and 43

Farrar-Bell – design 45

Thornton – design 73.

Copies of the Dulac drawing and Wilding photograph of the Queen's head were available for comparison; the former was again criticised, on the grounds that the neck appeared too thick and that the whole juxtaposition of the shape of the Queen's hair, the 'very dark accent' of dress on the shoulder, the neck, and the oval of dark background framing the head, seemed uneasy, nos 2, 10 and 39 being particularly singled out in this regard. Of the three dark-on-light designs (10, 39 and 73) it was commented: 'It is noticeable that this

type of tonal arrangement does not seem to be productive of successful designs, and that both the designs presented only with this background and the light versions of those rendered both dark-on-light and light-on-dark were among the less effective.'

Other comments on particular designs were:

Nos 2 and 3 – 'The slightly tentative work of a distinguished designer'; both needed redrawing to insert a 'd' after the value, a GPO requirement which had not been specified in the instructions. Also the daffodil on no. 3 approached the Queen's chin too closely.

No. 10 – a line or fine border around the edge of the design would improve its balance.

No. 43 – 'A very successful design but ... its likeness to the present permanent issue might suggest a poverty of invention.'

No. 45 – a Roman numeral II should be inserted between the 'E' and the 'R'.

A consequence was that the 'd' where denominations were given in figures was now a requirement included in all future instructions to artists (a note to this effect was sent to the Coronation stamp designers on 31 July, their instructions having previously been sent). A meeting of the advisory panel took place on 23 July, including the PMG and APMG, and Locke. Retouched copies of Dulac's drawing were available on which the artist had altered the neck and corsage and added a necklace, following the meeting of 18 July.

ADVISORY PANEL'S SELECTIONS

The meeting dealt with the selection of designs, hoping for at least a modestly radical break from the style of the current definitives; after some discussion, Farrar-Bell's design 45, with a very small Roman numeral 'II' to be added to the right hand side of the 'E', was agreed as first choice. The second choice was Enid Marx's design 35; it was decided to recommend the modified design 45 for the 2½d and 35 for the 1½d. Mr Coulton of Harrisons confirmed that both stamps could be produced before the year end provided an early decision came from the Queen. For the CoLD, Sir Kenneth Clark then proposed 39 as the third, dark-on-light, design; after more discussion, however, it was decided to recommend nos 10 by Dulac and 20 by Adshead for later use, the denominations to be decided, while the remaining five designs would not be taken further. A decision was reached to use the Wilding photograph rather than Dulac's latest drawing, Sir Francis Meynell alone arguing that the latter could be used following further retouching of the neck and corsage by the artist.

A final point the PMG put to the panel was that he had hoped to see a design resembling the original Penny Black; while accepting it would be unfortunate simply to revive the old

design, he found support that a new version of the concept might at least be considered, and it was agreed that design 35, already picked for the range into which the 1d value would fall, would be quite fitting. Sir John Wilson took care to remind the meeting of the difficulties of adequately cancelling the original stamp.

Also on 23 July the PMG, after speaking to both Sir George Bellew and the Scottish Office, confirmed that it would not be necessary to add 'II' to design 45 as the letters 'E' and 'R' were not combined in the Royal Cypher; later the Home Office opposed including either letters or numerals, as, apart from this being unprecedented, it would risk exacerbating the Scots. Both Sir George and Rhodes of Harrisons considered that the size of the letters on design 45 could be slightly reduced. It was also decided to prepare new bromides of the four selected designs with the Dulac head replaced by the Wilding. The PMG saw the Queen the following day, and showed her the panel's recommendations, plus the other five previously short-listed designs; the Queen's preferences were for the coronet to be a little further forward on the head, and for design 39 over design 10. It was decided to proceed with 39 in addition to the other four selections; arrangements were made for Marx to change the values on 35 from 8d to 1½d, and for Farrar-Bell to replace the '4d' on 45 with '2½d', both amending their designs as necessary to incorporate the new head.

Locke and Brigadier Holmes spoke to Dulac on 25 July to advise that his drawing was not now to be used; an advance payment of 100 guineas (£105) covering this and other work on the stamps was made; Dulac agreed to collaborate with Harrisons on retouching the Wilding head to see what could be done with the coronet, as the printer was unwilling to take responsibility for attempting to 'improve' the coronet. On 28 July the Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, confirmed with the PMG that there was no need to add 'II' to design 45 as it stood; consequently Lord de la Warr agreed with Locke that it was both possible and desirable to proceed straight to the production of essays, of the 1½d in green and the 2½d in several shades of red, to help choose a suitably rich colour. Later essays of designs 10, 39 and 20 would also be prepared. One set of essays would be with the unretouched Wilding head, another with the photograph as retouched by Dulac if this was successful. The PMG was at pains to let it be known that he did not attach undue importance to amending the coronet and was not fully satisfied that it was desirable.

On 30 July the DPS held a meeting with PSD, Supplies and Harrison's representatives, at which it was agreed to prepare 2½d essays in the three shades of red used in the 1940 Centenary, Channel Isles Liberation and Festival of Britain special issues (the magenta of the last was particularly favoured for re-use). It was also decided to produce bromides with the Wilding head for those four of the nine short-listed designs that had not been selected (nos 2, 3, 43 and 73) in addition to the five where this was already in hand; Locke mentioned that the PMG particularly favoured design 43, although the general feeling was that this

was too similar to the ½d to 3d range of George VI definitives. Bromides of the selected designs were sent to the Palace for information the following day.

Locke raised the question of the allocation of stamps to denominations; the PMG suggested that the first five values be in each of the chosen designs, which might then be repeated in blocks of two or three throughout the remainder of the low value ranges (and that the 1d should be black). The alternative, according to the more conventional system designed to prevent stamps of the same design and colour appearing in different values, was ½d to 2d and 2½d to 4d as first intended, followed by 5d to 8d and 9d to 1s. If (as seemed probable) a 1s 3d stamp were to be issued, this could be either in design 10 or 39, design no. 20 being allocated to either of the intermediate ranges of low values. It was agreed that if issued the 1s 3d should either be in the steel blue of the Royal Silver Wedding stamps or 'airmail label' blue, as it was primarily an airmail rate. Meanwhile PSD and Supplies would put forward alternative groupings and colours to see how far the PMG's proposal could be met.

PROPOSED COLOUR CHANGES

Intended colour changes as discussed by PSD and Supplies in April had been confined to a 'light as possible' orange ½d, a slightly darker blue 1d, and a 2½d 'as rich a red as possible'. On 7 August essays in the following colours were requested from Harrisons by T J Griffiths of PSD:

35 (Marx) – ½d pale orange; 1d black; 1½d pale green; 2d pale red brown

45 (Farrar-Bell) – 2½d light ultramarine; 3d pale violet; 4d light blue

20 (Adshead) – 5d rich brown; 6d purple; 7d yellow green

10 (Dulac) and 39 (Knipe) – 8d violet red; 9d olive green; 10d azure blue; 11d brownish purple; 1s umber; 1s 3d Air Force or steel blue; 1s 6d (see later)

It appears the reference to a 'light ultramarine' 2½d was quickly spotted and informally corrected, as there is no subsequent mention of the value in this colour. Harrisons was asked to prepare the essays, with the appropriate values inserted in collaboration with the artists, once work was completed on the 1½d and 2½d. As it had not yet been decided which design should be used for either of the two highest ranges of values, Knipe and Dulac were both asked to insert a full range from 8d to 1s 6d; either words or figures could be used for the 1s 3d and 1s 6d as long as the design was not imbalanced or radically altered. The printer was asked to suggest one or two colours for the 1s 6d that would not clash with any other used from 8d upward.

Plans for the 1s 3d and 1s 6d denominations had begun after questions were asked in Parliament in May 1952 following an increase in overseas postage rates, although the

introduction of the 1s 3d had been discussed as far back as 1940. At the beginning of July a PSD report had made the following estimates of annual usage (in millions):

Airmail letters: 1s 3d – 25 to 30; 1s 6d – 6

Inland parcels: 1s 3d – 20; 1s 6d – 2

Inland telegrams: 1s 3d – nil; 1s 6d – 10

Total: 1s 3d – 45 to 50; 1s 6d – 18.

Airmail letter usage was based on 1s 3d being the basic airmail letter rate for 106 countries, and 1s 6d for 26; inland parcels estimates were supplied by the Accountant General's Department, and for inland telegrams were calculated by the Telecommunications Department on the basis of 1s 6d being the 12-word minimum charge. The idea of an airmail design for the 1s 3d was briefly entertained: as the figures showed this was far from its only use and that, telegram usage apart, a higher proportion of the 1s 6d was likely to be employed for airmail purposes. In January 1953 the PMG specifically ruled out further new values between 1s 6d and 2s 6d until further notice; the 1s 9d essays of the Dulac design in the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) must be of much later date: 1s 9d stamps were not issued until 1967, on the introduction of the Machin portrait.

Lord Crawford again looked at bromides of the selected designs, and made the following comments in a letter to the PMG dated 3 August:

45 (Farrar-Bell) – there was a small but obtrusive gap near the chin in the wreath framing the Queen's head, which could be relieved by the insertion of one leaf.

35 (Marx) – the top of the design seemed overcrowded, and the letters of 'Postage' and 'Revenue' differed in style and size; the crowding might be lessened if the top two value figures were removed and 'Postage' printed in the smaller size. The tiara and rose were too close together, likewise the shoulder and thistle.

20 (Adshead) – 'Could not the daffodil be made to look a little less unlike one?'

39 (Knipe) – might look better without the isolated patch of drapery on the Queen's shoulder.

These comments were quickly passed to the printers and Rhodes of Harrisons was able to confirm on 8 August that design 45 had already been amended as proposed, while Marx and Adshead each had the necessary improvements in hand; on design 39 it was anticipated that the drapery would look better in the Wilding portrait that was replacing the Dulac drawing.

On 13 August Rhodes showed the DPS two essays of the 2½d design, and one of the 1½d. One of the 2½d essays showed Dulac's amendment to the coronet on the Wilding photograph, having succeeded in tilting forward the cross at the front to give the impression of the whole being further forward on the head; this was supplied to PSD by 30 July. The head on the other essay was without Dulac's modifications to the coronet but

incorporated retouching - done for Harrisons by M C Farrar-Bell, apparently with the interests of his own design as adopted for the 2½d in mind - to accentuate details of the coronet, earrings, necklace, hair, and back of the neck. After discussion Rhodes agreed to combine both sets of amendments into a third head; the Queen could make her choice from the three for use on all stamps. Further essays would be prepared with each head, in each of the two shades of red now decided - these were magenta as discussed on 30 July, and 'Penny red', the colour of the definitive 1d stamp of 1937-41 before the change to 'pale scarlet' as on the present 2½d. A fresh essay would also be prepared of the 1½d - as had been feared at the first view of the designs, the 'canvas' background had produced a mottled effect when essayed, and this was to be replaced by a solid backing.

ESSAYS APPROVED BY QUEEN

The fresh essays were seen on 21 August, Coulton and Rhodes of Harrisons both present; the DPS agreed with them that the deep 'Penny Red' as 'a slightly softer colour more suitable to the subject' than the magenta, was the better of the two colours in which the 2½d was now seen. Locke thought the detail of the Dulac-modified Wilding portrait was too indistinct to make it fully acceptable, and that a choice between the versions, with and without the modification, whose detail had been clarified by retouching, should be left to the Queen, although he found the modified retouch 'very slightly less pleasing' than the other. The new 1½d essay with a solid background was favourably compared to its 'mottled' predecessor and proposed for adoption, apart from some improvement required to a thistle in the right-hand border. The essays were passed to the PMG the following day with these recommendations, plus bromides in four times stamp size of the five selected designs, each with a partly retouched Wilding head in place of the original effigy. In an accompanying note the DPS explained that work would proceed with those designs not yet essayed once a decision was reached on the Queen's head, and that further issues would not follow up that of the 1½d and 2½d in early December until after the year end. The PMG forwarded three card-mounted essays to the Palace on 26 August, these being the 'Penny Red' 2½d on A1 (with the Wilding portrait as retouched by Harrisons) and A2 (also retouched, but including Dulac's modification to the coronet), and the green 1½d on card B (with an unretouched Wilding head, to be replaced in due course by whichever of A1 or A2 the Queen preferred). The bromides were also included and colour essays of these promised when available. Next day Sir Michael Adeane, the Queen's Equerry, replied that the Queen approved the A2 effigy for general use and thought it 'a very considerable improvement' - she also accepted the 1½d and 2½d designs, and particularly welcomed the return of the pre-war shade of 'Penny Red'. The remaining designs received approval pending developments.

On 30 August the DPS asked for a fresh essay of the 1½d with the approved A2 effigy, with the proviso that this should show as much as possible of the corsage as was in the original photograph. The order for colour essays of the remaining denominations was also confirmed.

½d, 1d, 2d - 35 (Marx)

3d, 4d - 45 (Farrar-Bell)

5d, 6d, 7d - 39 (Knipe)

8d, 9d, 10d, 11d - 20 (Adshead)

1s, 1s 3d, 1s 6d - 10 (Dulac).

The provisional grouping of 7 August had allocated Adshead's design to the 5d to 7d range; however, at the 21 August meeting Rhodes had explained that the doubly fugitive ink of the 6d stamp (necessary due to its high level of fiscal use) would make design 20 too costly to reproduce. Knipe's 39 was more suitable, hence the change in grouping. Locke also confirmed the acceptability of the colours that Rhodes had tentatively suggested for the two new denominations at the 21 August meeting: steel-blue for the 1s 3d and bronze-green for the 1s 6d.

At a meeting on 3 September it was decided that Marx should be asked to remove the two value figures and 'Postage' from the top of her design, and replace 'Revenue' at the bottom with 'Postage Revenue' as on the 2½d. The artist was contacted the next day and agreed that these changes would be an improvement; she would collaborate with Harrisons on implementing them and make such minor changes to the wreath framing the head as necessitated by the insertion of the approved effigy. She confessed to a little disappointment over the unfortunate mottling effect caused by the original 'canvas' background, as she had seen some delightful textural effects reproduced in photogravure on foreign stamps.

1½d AND 2½d APPROVED AND ISSUED

Essays of all 17 values were available on 6 September; the colours were as recommended on 7 August except that the 1s 6d was in purple, no reason for this last change being recorded. Marx supplied Harrisons with an altered drawing on 15 September, and revised colour essays of the 1½d green were sent to PSD on 1 October. The PMG was not completely happy with it and recalled the advisory panel for a discussion on 3 October. His suggestions for further alterations would have had the effect of making the stamp closely resemble the 2½d design (lowering and reduction in size of 'postage revenue', the insertion of 'E' and 'R' in the top corners, amendment of the circlet around the Queen's head to a more oval shape). The CoID representatives (Meynell, Ashton, Wilson, Russell, and Mrs Tomrley) succeeded in persuading the PMG that the design was 'most pleasing' as it stood and

required no change. However, they also took the opportunity to criticise the 2½d, which the Queen had approved unconditionally, and for which printing preparations were well advanced. Some of these criticisms were levelled at the lettering and the circle around the value figure, but the main problem was one of definition - Griffiths of PSD had drawn attention to this as early as 11 September but recommended only that the value figures be made bolder. The CoID considered that printing should be suspended while fresh modifications were made, if necessary setting back the issue date by a month; this was strongly resisted by the GPO representatives. Finally it was agreed that definition would be improved considerably if the colour was changed back from 'Penny Red' to the magenta proposed earlier, as this would cause no delay to production, and to make no other change. The PMG was particularly keen that the stamps should be issued as proposed before Christmas; Coulton, present on behalf of Harrisons, agreed to aim for a target date of 15 December with a full quantity of 2½d and as many 1½d as could be produced. The CoID supported the simultaneous issue of both stamps even if only a limited supply of 1½d was available, as it considered it a better stamp than the 2½d. The Palace was contacted the same day and replied approving both the 1½d and the colour change to magenta for the 2½d on 6 October.

A further PSD/Supplies meeting took place on 7 October, at which Locke pointed out that a 15 December issue date would mean that senders of Christmas cards might defer their postings until the stamps were available, thus putting an extra burden on counter and sorting staff when Christmas pressure would already be severe. His preference would be for Monday, 8 December, or Friday, 12 December at latest. Carr of Supplies reported that Harrisons had promised to let him have progress reports, and it was arranged that he should keep PSD abreast of developments.

By 13 October Harrisons had completed one cylinder for the 2½d which it was keeping in reserve while preparing a second improved one; the first etches had been made for the 1½d. Proof sheets of both stamps were available for examination at the meeting of 23 October, by which time a second cylinder was in preparation for the 1½d; Rhodes said that Harrisons was now confident of supplying both stamps in adequate quantities. In fact by 12 November Fuller of Supplies was able to report to the DPS that 150,000 sheets of 1½d and 400,000 of 2½d had been received; by 17 November Harrisons would have delivered 500,000 of each, and could maintain 100,000 a week of each until 22 December. It would therefore be possible to issue the stamps as early as Friday, 5 December. Locke welcomed this and the date and denominations were duly announced by the PMG in the House of Lords on 18 November. Further details were given at a press conference on 28 November, and in a press release the following day; this unusual degree of advance notice was due to the intense public interest already generated. The stamps were issued on 5 December.

To retrace steps to the receipt of essays in the chosen colours of all the low value denominations on 6 September, T J Griffiths of PSD reported on 11 September that 'Mr Knipe's design [for the 5d to 7d range] seems all right in colour and the proposed colours are good and are readily distinguishable from each other'. However, he noted at least three pairings of the same designs where the colours were not easy to distinguish in a poor light - these were the 3d and 4d (violet and blue) by Farrar-Bell, the 9d and 10d (olive-green and azure) by Adshead, and the 1s 3d and 1s 6d (steel-blue and purple) by Dulac. The oval frame surrounding the Queen's head was larger on Adshead's design than on the others, and would hence show more of her dress, thus not being uniform with on the other designs; Griffiths thought this might be countered by removing the white areas visible on the left sleeve. Dulac had further altered the effigy on his designs without any authority and introduced a slimming effect, which seemed to Griffiths 'to have made the Queen look pigeon chested and her neck too thin'.

Brigadier Holmes commented that equivalent similarities of colour to those of the 3d/4d and 9d/10d pairings had not been the subject of complaint in the past, but conceded that there was a case for ensuring a clear distinction between new denominations such as the 1s 3d and 1s 6d. On 22 September Carr of Supplies noted the receipt of seven new essays of the Dulac design in various alternatives to purple, of which the most distinctive in poor light and preferable on aesthetic grounds was emerald green; at the subsequent meeting on 7 October the DPS confirmed that work on a new essay of the 1s 6d in emerald green was to proceed. Meanwhile Dulac had been told that he must use the approved effigy of the Queen, and he and Adshead were collaborating with Harrisons on producing versions for their designs that conformed to each other on removing the patches of white visible on the dress. At a meeting on 23 October Locke reported the formal decision to issue the 1s 3d and 1s 6d denominations taken on 13 October, and confirmed the colours as steel-blue and emerald green respectively.

REMAINING DESIGNS ISSUED

After the 1½d and 2½d were issued, further consideration was given to the designs by Knipe, Adshead and Dulac still awaiting issue. At a meeting on 26 January 1953 Coulton of Harrisons produced colour essays of each design in one of the appropriate denominations: 5d brown, 8d violet-red and 1s 3d in steel-blue. Only minor modifications had been made since the Queen provisionally approved the bromides at the end of August the previous year, other than the substitution of the approved head and alterations as required to the value. On the Adshead design the lettering of 'postage' had been slightly lowered to better balance 'revenue', and the value figures reduced in size to be more distant from the Queen's face; the artist had been asked to move them to the corners of the design, but had declined, supported by Rhodes, on the grounds that this would ruin the balance of the

whole. The top of the Dulac design had been slightly altered to maintain the balance after the base had been amended to show the value in figures rather than words.

On the subject of colour the risk of confusion between the 5d and the different shades of brown of the 2d and 1s was discussed and decided was non-existent, and only negligible in the case of the 8d and the purples of the 6d and 11d. The DPS pointed out that the 1s 3d was more of a problem; since the PMG's decision in mid-December that the Coronation issue 1s 3d should be green and the 1s 6d blue, the definitives of those values had to be in the same or similar colours. The olive-green of the Coronation stamp and the shade used on the current 9d, however, were very similar; if the new 9d was identical in colour to the old, there was a clear risk of confusion with the 1s 3d as both values were widely used for airmail postage, and the two designs were not markedly dissimilar. This was not felt to apply to the 1½d and 7d (also green) as they were not likely to be used for air mail. After discussion Coulton promised the DPS that he would produce a set of essays presenting both designs and a choice of shades of green, so that a distinctive shade could be chosen for the 1s 3d. On 28 January Coulton provided an essay of Adshead's 8d design in the green of the current 9d stamp, and another in sea-green of Dulac's 1s 3d. This was generally agreed to contrast acceptably with the other greens in the low-value ranges. There was criticism that the 1s 3d value tab was both too faint and too small - rather than involve the artist in further amendments, the meeting accepted Coulton's opinion that both faults could be corrected at the printing stage, by a heavier printing of the figures to the same depth of colour as the Queen's hair.

The next group of values to be issued was discussed; Coulton said that one denomination in each of the three remaining designs could be issued by the end of May, although it would only take one of Harrison's key men falling ill to jeopardise not only this issue but that of the Coronation stamps. The DPS pointed out the importance of avoiding a clash with the Coronation, which meant that a new definitive issue should take place no later before the event than early May - this was clearly impracticable, and so the issue should be made at the end of June, at the earliest. The values should be 5d, 8d and 1s. There is some confusion in the files as to whether 8d or 9d was discussed, due to a difference of opinion or a misunderstanding; at any rate the question was swiftly resolved in favour of the 8d, no doubt assisted as there was an essay of the value to look at, albeit in the wrong colour. The 1s was chosen to avoid competition with the 1s 3d and 1s 6d Coronation stamps. The PMG submitted a set of the three essays to the Palace on 3 February, seeking the Queen's approval of the finished designs, which was received on 5 February.

In a minute to the Deputy Director General, D O Lumley, on 24 February, Locke suggested that an issue date of Monday, 6 July for the 5d, 8d and 1s should give Harrison's ample time; subsequently the ½d, 1d and 2d could be issued about the end of August, the 4d, 1s 3d and 1s 6d once the Coronation stamps of those values were withdrawn on 31 October, and the

remaining values - 3d, 6d, 7d, 9d, 10d and 11d - later in the year or early in 1954. This tentative programme was approved and closely followed thereafter. Final essays of the 5d brown, 8d magenta-red, and 1s bistre-brown were endorsed 'approved for colour and design' by the DPS on 8 May and issued on 6 July after a print run reportedly free of mishaps. The descriptions of these colours have included fawn, sepia and rich brown for the 5d, cerise for the 8d, and umber for the 1s; what should be noted both for the 6 July release and those after is a directive in a letter from T H Bowes of Supplies to Harrisons dated 22 May: 'I think you are already aware, but I must emphasise again, that the deeper shades of colour used before the war for the low denomination stamps are to be used for the new reign.'

THE ½d, 2d, AND THE '1d BLACK'

The ½d, 1d and 2d were scheduled for issue on 31 August; on 30 April Harrisons sent three cards each with six mounted copies of an essay of the 2d red-brown to Supplies, which retained one and forwarded the rest to K Hind of PSD on 5 May. These were criticised that the figures were poorly designed, the right hand '2' in particular having a tail that seemed to run uphill; also there was too much red in the colour, which might lead to confusion with the orange-red ½d or even the magenta-red 2½d. Hind said he would prefer a deeper 'chocolate' brown; Brigadier Holmes concurred and the essays were returned to Supplies on 8 May. On 14 May fresh essays were received in PSD.

Harrison's note accompanying the essays explained that they could not improve the values on the 2d stamp without a fresh drawing from the artist, as they were Adshhead's own production rather than standard figures; this would be a time-consuming process. For this reason Hind recommended to Brigadier Holmes that an essay should be approved, the shade being slightly darker but not quite as rich as the George VI 1½d of 1937-41. Two essays were equally suitable for the ½d - there was no criticism of the lettering or figures and the colour was the same as the George VI 2d. The DPS approved both values for colour and design on 18 May. However, the ½d had to be returned for further essaying on 27 June, the DDG (now Sir Dudley Lumley, since the Coronation honours list) being 'very anxious' that a deeper shade should be used and the Queen's face made to seem less pale. On 3 July twelve copies of the revised ½d essay were received in two card-mounted sets, in 'a really lovely orange' which it was reported was to the DDG's satisfaction, although the general opinion in PSD was that there was hardly any appreciable difference from the shade previously approved. This new essay was endorsed by the DPS the following day.

There had been attempts over a long period to produce Enid Marx's design in black that had bedevilled production of the 1d - it had been ordered from Harrisons in black in August 1952, despite the misgivings voiced in various quarters. The problem was to produce a black

stamp that could bear legible overprints and cancellation marks; finally on 31 December Harrisons submitted a 1½d essay in black overprinted 'Bahrain, 1½ annas'. Supplies reported that after much experimenting the firm had obtained its best results with a double overprint, first in white and then in bronze-blue, as on the specimen - PSD was not enthusiastic about the result, in that the overprint was still so indistinct as to invite public criticism if ever issued. However, on 12 January Brigadier Holmes minuted that the DPS 'thinks that we can probably get by with it' - the problem of legibility might have to be readdressed, but for the time being, Marx's design in black as overprinted by Harrisons could be said to meet requirements.

On 26 January Coulton of Harrisons was asked to produce further essays of the 1d design in black, both with and without overprints; the following were received on 23 February:
6 stamps unoverprinted
6 stamps, imperforate, overprinted 'Bahrain 1 anna'.

PSD conducted test cancellations by hand and machine on covers bearing samples of these essays; on 27 February T J Griffiths reported that four ordinary essays had been handstamped, eight machine cancelled, three overprints handstamped, and three machine cancelled - of the machine cancelled items, five ordinary essays and two overprints were spoilt. In a memorandum to the DPS on 7 March, Brigadier Holmes summarised these results as 'most unsatisfactory' - the handstamped impressions showed up better against the black background than the machine stampings, but on the other hand gave 'a most unfortunate result insofar as appearance is concerned'. Locke's own comments on 10 March were:

The overprinting [in blue] ... is altogether too obscure on the black background ... My second impression of this black stamp is not so favourable as the first. Owing possibly to the difference in printing technique, the effect is different from that of the original penny black, and might be criticised by the public as somewhat funereal. Aesthetically, however, the effect is admirable and most attractive.

It was important to retain a 'one anna' overprint for the Persian Gulf, however, as it was a basic unit of postage in the area; this meant that a 1d stamp had to be in a colour that could bear a legible overprint, which the black essay did not, quite apart from its problems with everyday cancellation. On 12 March the DPS asked Brigadier Holmes to look into the possibility of a 1d blue. However, there was a reluctance to abandon so attractive a concept outright over seemingly minor stumbling blocks, and further essays were requested on 18 March after a discussion between K Hind of PSD and Fuller of Supplies. These included one essay in black of each of the five low value designs, and a reversed (dark-on-light) essay in black of the Marx design with a dark background to the head. A reversed essay was already available (supplied on 23 February) but had a light background to the head.

The essays were available for Locke's meeting with Supplies and Harrisons on 27 March. The earlier handstamped and machine cancelled specimens were re-examined and agreed to be wholly unsatisfactory, from both aesthetic and practical points. None of the versions in black of the other designs made a good showing, except for Knipe's, regarded as 'not unattractive'. After considerable discussion the DPS decided to persist for the time being with the two reversed versions of the Marx 1d design (including the new essay with the head on a 'normal', ie, dark, background). In case these too had to be rejected. Rhodes of Harrisons also agreed to supply essays in blue of the Marx and Farrar-Bell designs, both normal and reversed.

BLACK AND BLUE

Eleven card-mounted essays were delivered to PSD on 20 April:

Marx 1d in bright black, dense black, Milori blue and tri. blue

Farrar-Bell 1d in the same colours

Farrar-Bell 2½d in 4d blue*

Adshead 2½d in 10d turquoise blue**

Dulac 1s in steel blue.

* ultramarine; ** azure or Prussian blue.

Part of the intention seems to have been to compare the available shades of blue, some already earmarked for use; also received the same day were the following:

Marx 1d in black (9 supplied), 1d in blue (3), 1d overprinted in black (3), 1d overprinted in blue (3), 1d overprinted in black reversed (2); 1d overprinted in blue reversed (2)

Farrar-Bell 1d overprinted in black reversed (2), 1d overprinted in blue reversed (2).

This information is clearly incomplete and seemingly contradictory but is as recorded in the files. Three more card-mounted 1d essays of the Marx design in dark blue were received on 29 April.

Locke wrote to the DDG on 4 May, reiterating the impossibility of obtaining a satisfactory overprint or distinguishable datestamp impression with the 1d black as it stood. He conceded that the Marx design was attractive, and suggested that a reversed version be used if a 1d black was still wanted, as this would not cause the same technical problems. Otherwise the choice was between a blue 1d and a reversed 4d of the same colour, or a reversed blue 1d and normal 4d. The DPS expressed his preference for a normal 1d and a reversed 4d, the arrangement with the current George VI stamps. Sir Dudley Lumley passed these proposals on, commenting only that the proposed 1d blue was a particularly pleasant colour. On 11 May Harrisons delivered the following set of overprinted essays in black, in response to the PMG's request on 7 May for a last effort:

1d overprinted 1 Anna Bahrain in blue-black (6 supplied)
1d overprinted 1 Anna Bahrain in blue (2 supplied)
1d overprinted 1 Anna Bahrain in red (12 supplied)
1d overprinted 1 Anna Bahrain in white (12 supplied).

The printers had warned that every conceivable expedient had been tried to obtain a satisfactory result, and that the company not prepared to recommend an overprint on the 'full black' 1d in any colour. On 11 May Sir Dudley recommended to the PMG:

This is the best Harrisons can do. They would much regret putting out work of this kind, and, after discussion with Mr Locke, I am clear that we could not advise it. We feel that the royal blue penny and the blue 'reversed' 4d would do us credit.

By 14 May it was confirmed that the PMG wished to proceed as advised, and final essays of the selected 1d blue and reversed 4d blue were requested the following day, with the proviso that the latter should be in a slightly deeper shade identical to that of the 1d. The essays were received on 3 June, and the 1d blue, more properly described as ultramarine than 'royal blue', was endorsed by the DPS on 8 June as approved for colour and design. The ½d, 1d and 2d stamps were issued on 31 August.

4d, 1s 3d AND 1s 6d APPROVED AND ISSUED

The remainder of the essays received on 3 June still required approval:

Marx 1d blue

Farrar-Bell 3d violet, 4d blue

Adshead 9d green, 10d blue, 11d maroon

Dulac 1s 6d steel blue.

In the case of the 4d and 1s 6d, approval awaited confirmation that the colours were the same as those of the new 1d blue and Coronation 1s 6d respectively, after which they could be issued alongside the new 1s 3d - an issue date of Monday, 2 November was proposed by the DPS on 11 June and confirmed on 17 July. The 1s 6d appeared to be slightly lighter than the Coronation stamp; Harrisons explained to PSD that although the same ink was used, the variation in colour was caused by the different tonal values of the two designs. It was felt that the 4d needed to be a shade darker to match the blue of the 1d, and Mr Bowes of Supplies promised to obtain further essays of both designs after discussion with the DPS on 17 July: these were available on 27 July. The following day Locke wrote to the DDG that Harrisons had achieved a slightly darker effect with the latest 1s 6d, which was a closer match to the Coronation stamp and did more to bring out the finer points of the design than the essay of 3 June. The latest 4d essay on the other hand now appeared a little too dark as regards the Queen's features, though the choice between this and the 3 June essay

was 'very much a matter of opinion'. The DDG's thoughts supported those of Locke concerning the 1s 6d, and that the latest 4d was 'rather smudgy' - he considered the choice of the 4d to be between the 3 June essay and the original of 20 April, his recommendation to the PMG being the 3 June versions in each case. The PMG followed this advice, after first opting for the original 4d but being persuaded by a number of regional directors that this was too similar to the approved 1d and would cause confusion - this is the reason recorded in the files, but is hard to reconcile with earlier suggestions that the original should be more similar to the 1d. The DPS endorsed both essays as approved on 31 July.

A decision on the 1s 3d was delayed, partly because essays in the sea-green agreed on 28 January were not completed by 11 June, when the DPS, acting on comments from the PMG and Sir Dudley Lumley, asked Bowes to obtain essays in further shades contrasting as much as possible with the greens of the 7d and 9d. On 19 June essays of the 1s 3d in various shades of green and blue were received by PSD; accompanying these for comparison were two specimens of the 1½d, two copies of the essay of the 9d as first supplied on 3 June, and essays of the 7d. The 1s 3d essays were in four possible colour variations; Harrisons and Supplies were in agreement that these might be confused with the shades of turquoise blue (10d), umber (1s) or steel blue (1s 6d) already intended for use, while the greens they had previously suggested would not. A decision was deferred until further essays with the backgrounds reversed became available. These, of the 1s 3d in a light, medium and dark shade, were received on 17 July.

At a meeting with the DPS the same day Bowes of Supplies pointed out it was essential for Harrisons to have an approved essay of the 1s 3d by mid-August when the annual staff holiday ended, if the stamps were to be ready for 2 November. Locke gave his opinion on the essays with normal backgrounds supplied on 19 June; two were too close in colour to the 9d, one too close to the 1s 6d, and one to the sea-green shade of the previous January of which the PMG was critical. Several of the reversed essays were very pleasing, but the dark emerald version was most striking; the bare white background was not attractive, however. Harrisons had used the Queen's effigy from the 2½d to 4d values (differing in minor details) to reduce the area of stark white in the central oval as much as possible; this break in the uniformity of design for the 1s to 1s 6d range was not acceptable.

On 20 July Locke discussed the essays with the DDG and it was agreed that Supplies ask Harrisons for one or two more essays with a normal background and in a shade part way between those of the 7d and 9d but slightly nearer the former. This was identified in the Stanley Gibbons stamp collectors' colour guide as apple green, to which they drew the printer's attention. Essays were supplied on 27 July, with the following proviso from Harrisons:

These specimens are for colour only and [we] realise that they are not good stamps ...
The colours in the Gibbons Chart are produced by two, three, or even four printings,

the Apple Green in question being a double print. There is a considerable amount of yellow in the Apple Green and this is always a difficult printing colour. If the shade now submitted is acceptable special inks will be made up.

The colour was still not satisfactory so a meeting was called for 5 August of Locke, PSD officials, Carr of Supplies and Rhodes of Harrisons. It was reiterated that the required shade had to be both pleasant and distinguishable from the 7d bright green and 9d bronze-green, and that the reversed essays, though attractive, had been marred by the unacceptable Queen's head and stark whiteness of the background. Rhodes agreed to produce further essays with normal backgrounds, and reversed designs with the same head as the 1s and 1s 6d and the background toned down, which could be submitted straight to the PMG for a final decision. On 14 August essays were received in the following colours:

Winstone bottle green

Vert green

Nickel green

Blue green

Jade green

Spectrum green

1½d green.

These were mounted on two cards each with seven essays in the original design, and two with seven reversed essays. The DDG's recommendation was for one of the reversed essays, 'a most beautiful stamp'; the PMG agreed the following day, and the 1s 3d was endorsed on 21 August. The 9d, deferred since the essay was first seen in PSD on 3 June in case of a colour clash with the colour finally chosen for the 1s 3d, was endorsed for colour and design at the same time. The stamps were issued on 2 November 1953.

REMAINING VALUES ISSUED

The 3d design was among the colour essays received on 3 June; it was noticed that the letters 'E R' were smaller than on the 2½d stamp. On 19 June essays of the 7d were ready, and a preliminary essay of the 6d was seen by Locke and Sir Dudley Lumley on 27 June. The DDG agreed the colour of the 3d to be acceptable, and was told that the lettering was in the course of correction; he commented on the 6d essay that a more pastel shade similar to that of the present stamp should be used. Locke had stated at a meeting on 11 June that the intention was for the 3d, 6d, 7d, 9d, 10d and 11d stamps to remain in the identical colours of the current issue. Essays of the 3d (Farrar-Bell), 6d and 7d (both Knipe) designs were received on 17 July.

Locke agreed that the 3d was satisfactory; the 6d and 7d essays were passed to the DDG with the comment that the former was in a 'much nicer' lighter tone than before. Also on 17 July Sir Dudley commented 'in my view they are both perfect', and all three essays were endorsed by Locke on 20 July. A belated complaint was made by the PMG, on 29 July after the stamps had gone into production, that the colours of the 6d and 7d were not as deep as he had been given to believe and about 'the whiteness in the inner picture'.

Both the 10d and 11d essays were approved by the DPS on 3 June, and the 11d was endorsed on 8 June. The 10d was deferred for further consideration, however, and on 27 June Sir Dudley commented that the portrait on the 10d 'appears to have dirty marks on the neck and face'. On 3 July Harrisons was reported by Supplies as replying to these comments that every effort would be made to equate the tone value of the 10d effigy with that of the 9d and 11d and that these marks would be eliminated. On 21 June four further essays were received accompanied by a fresh explanation that the marks were an illusion caused by shading which it was hard entirely to eliminate. The following day Locke reported on the revised 10d to the DDG:

The toning is slightly lighter than in the previous essay and the shade on the neck is slightly less pronounced ... The shading which is an integral part of the design perhaps stands out rather more distinctly in blue ... [Harrisons] have, however, done everything possible to meet our wishes by reducing the tone.

Sir Dudley agreed to this and the 10d stamp was endorsed for both colour and design the following day.

On 11 June Locke had envisaged issuing the 3d, 6d and 7d at the end of January 1954, and the 9d to 11d at the end of March. By September the DDG was investigating if this could be improved, and on 8 June Bowes was able to tell PSD that Harrisons expected to meet the initial requirements by 21 December 1953 and 11 January 1954 respectively. The DPS added four weeks for distribution and told Sir Dudley on 6 October that the 3d, 6d and 7d issue date could provisionally be set for 18 January 1954 and the 9d, 10d and 11d for 8 February; any earlier dates would mean extra disruption during the Christmas period. Both dates were confirmed on 26 October; the stamps were released as scheduled.

THE NEW AIR LETTER

On 1 January 1954 a revision of the air letter form was issued; this bore a printed 6d stamp that was basically an adaptation by Farrar-Bell of his original design for the 2½d to 4d definitives. The origins of this revision date back to 12 June 1952 when the Controller of Supplies suggested to the printers McCorquodales that the new reign afforded an

opportunity for some modifications to the forms, which dated from 1949. These were as follows:

- a facsimile of the official 'BY AIR MAIL - PAR AVION' label as used on envelopes;
- a vari-coloured border, possibly blue and white, or dark blue and light blue, not more than 0.125 inches in depth, in a uniform pattern of plain rectangles or parallelograms;
- slightly heavier paper (180 rather than 200 forms per lb) for better opacity;
- longer gummed flaps;
- improved paper colour;
- six lines for name and address at standard typewriter spacing of 6 lines per inch; ditto for sender's name and address.

McCorquodales was asked to supply mock-ups and estimates for these changes.

In discussion with the printers on 25 June it was agreed that the air mail label facsimile should be printed white on blue only, as the presence of black would lead to problems in achieving accurate registration and would slow production by about 10 per cent and raise costs by the same degree. The same problems would be encountered if the border were printed in two colours; three-colour printing, needed for a blue and black label and a red and blue border, would be 'extremely difficult', and registration problems would be 'very acute'. The paper colour could be improved by using white paper with a blue 'screen' printed on one side. Spaces could be left in the blue screen for the border, label, and stamp impression, but each of these would need a margin of 1/16 inches around their edges; printing any closer would, once more, either slow output or cause poorer registration. The other changes suggested on the 12 June would cause no problems. In a subsequent letter, on 14 August, McCorquodale's manager, K D Carter, reminded Supplies that 'it was proved ... in August 1949, that a white paper of the correct weight could not be made opaque by the addition of a screen and the idea was ruled out'.

On 22 August the first meeting of a committee established to plan the GPO's arrangements for Coronation celebrations recommended that all items of stationery, including air letters, should be overprinted with a Coronation symbol for up to three months after the event; Miss C Kennedy of PSD telephoned Supplies on 25 August with the less ambitious suggestion that such celebratory 'overprinting' be confined to the air letter. This proposal, although not confirmed officially until 19 September, had the full backing of the DPS; from 6 September plans concentrated on a commemorative Coronation air letter form that would also incorporate the desired improvements.

The Coronation air letter that emerged differed from that first envisaged; the designer, Stuart Rose, changed the air mail symbol from a facsimile of the standard label to one of his own design. He also abandoned the idea of an 'airmail' style border, although his original instructions had been that a border in either red and blue or blue only should be included.

His design was accepted on 5 February 1953. The choice of stamp to be used on the form was Farrar-Bell's design for the Coronation 1s 6d, which was an adaptation with embellishments of his design for the 2½d, 3d and 4d. The choice of colour for the stamp was the magenta-red intended for the 8d definitive; Harrisons began photogravure colour trials on 29 January and by 3 February had produced a result agreed to be an improvement on the 'muddy' reddish-purple of McCorquodales 1949 letterpress stamp. It was confirmed on 13 February that both stamp and form were approved by the Queen.

On 18 February McCorquodales produced unstamped proofs of the new forms, with five address lines and three sender's address lines spaced at intervals of 1/3 inch. Two days later it was agreed that the gummed flaps should be extended to the length and breadth of the address panel, less 1/8 inch to allow for the cut and stretch of paper, with the corners cut at 45 degrees rather than the curved cut used previously. The only subsequent requirements involved minor re-positioning of the dotted address lines, folding and cutting instructions, etc, which were implemented without difficulty. The revised form was issued as the Coronation air letter on 3 June and remained on sale until 31 January 1954.

It was planned from about September 1953 that a version of the form without Coronation emblems should replace both it and the George VI form of 1949 as the new permanent air letter. On 1 January 1954 the George VI forms were withdrawn, while the Coronation forms were sold on request only until 11 January, after which stocks were disposed of as far as possible for the rest of the month. The new permanent form differed slightly in the stamp, as well as in the absence of Coronation symbolism. The stamp was already modified from the 1s 6d commemorative, not only in colour and value, but also in that the word 'revenue' replaced by a second 'postage' - this was at the request of the Inland Revenue, who did not recognise the 6d stamp on an air letter form as valid for fiscal use. The change now made was that the Coronation date '2 June 1953' was replaced at the foot of the design by 'SIXPENCE'.

From 1 February 1954 only the new permanent issue forms remained on sale. The forms were printed in letterpress by McCorquodales, apart from the stamps, which were printed in photogravure by the company's subsidiary Blades, East & Blades (the Coronation air letter stamps had been printed by Harrisons). Cutting, gumming and checking of the forms was completed by McCorquodales. In autumn of 1954 the firm began photogravure printing of the stamps, and made the first delivery of forms it had totally printed on 4 October. Production at Blades, East & Blades ceased on 18 February 1955, although Supplies noted as late as 26 April that it was still awaiting delivery of a small stock of forms stamped by the firm.

PRESENTATIONS AND PAYMENTS

On the first two release dates (5 December 1952 and 6 July 1953) gifts of first day covers containing mint sets were made to the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, former PMGs and APMGs still serving in Parliament and the heads of postal administrations in the self-governing Commonwealth. Similar gifts on the subsequent issue dates were restricted to the Queen, Princess Margaret and the Prime Minister, as these were not different in design from the earlier stamps.

In July 1952 payment of 120 guineas each (£126) was made to Farleigh, Dulac, Games, Adshead, Hassall, Stobie, Marx, Fuller and Reinganum - and the four printing firms for submitting designs. Harold W Bird received no payment, as already agreed; Lance Thornton, however, who had made a similar agreement, eventually received 40 guineas 'honorarium' for his designs, and four experimental two-colour roughs for the 3d, 4d, 6d and 1s 3d values completed later. In December Enid Marx and Harrisons (for Farrar-Bell) each received 160 guineas (£168) for accepted designs, as did Mary Adshead, Edmund Dulac and Harrisons again (for George Knipe) in May 1953. In addition to the above amount and the 100 guineas he had received for his original drawing, Dulac was paid a further 200 guineas (£210) for other work in connection with postage and stamped stationery.

2d COLOUR CHANGE

On 30 April 1954 Harrisons was asked for new colour trials of the 2d 'in a slightly lighter shade and showing gradations of colour from the present brown to the old King George VI 2d stamps'. This followed public complaints about the difficulty of deciphering signatures written across the stamp for fiscal purposes, which had come to the notice of the PMG. On 6 May Harrisons supplied trials in colours described as 'Normal Issue', '50 per cent reduction in colour', 75 per cent and 90 per cent, and 'as GVI light background'. No further action was taken at the time, but on 4 November PSD was reminded of the PMG's interest and asked to obtain essays showing the effect of lightening the background to the Queen's head on the 2d, or whatever else might achieve the desired result. On 6 November T J Griffiths of PSD asked Supplies for essays with the background lighter or reversed altogether, 'or any other variation which would be likely to meet the difficulty in question'. T H Bowes of Supplies passed the request on to Mr York of Harrisons on 16 November for immediate action, with the proviso that basic design or colour should not be altered.

The firm's experiments in May had shown there were limits to what could be achieved without preparing a new cylinder; on 15 December the company supplied stamp size bromides of a new drawing with the background modified from the original design, and asked whether it was worth proceeding to making a fresh cylinder. Hind of PSD asked on 17

December to see colour essays with a lighter immediate surround to the Queen's head, 'shading off to the present brown at or about the oval of emblems', or any variation on this: Harrisons was instructed 21 December. On 14 January 1955 sets of essays 'A', 'B' and 'C' were supplied, the differences being due to the degree of exposure and etching time; the firm indicated it would like time if possible to improve the redesigned stamp's appearance further, and that it would produce essays in reverse as mentioned previously if still required. Mr Bowes replied on 19 January:

As you have stated that these essays could be considerably improved ... go ahead accordingly and improve the quality of the stamp generally. As you mentioned the background within the oval could be lightened in colour ... The light area could be extended fractionally nearer to the emblems. Parts of the neckline seem a bit hazy and maybe you could improve on this when you are attending to details of the highlights of the hair etc ... Specimens printed in reverse were also asked for and I should be glad if you would forward these with the essays referred to above.

On 7 February the DPS was shown a set of essays 'A', 'B' and 'C', plus specimens of 'experimental light background' essays (described as 'lightened' and 'reversed').

On 30 March the DDG, Sir Dudley Lumley, reported to the PMG that Enid Marx had been consulted and put on record that she was opposed to the proposed alterations to her design for the 2d. The DDG's feelings were that only so much could be done toward enabling legibility of signatures across the stamp, that the volume of complaints was not large, and that the proposed changes should be resisted. The PMG seems to have agreed, at least until the following December.

On 12 December Harrisons supplied essays with eight variations of the 'experimental light background' in either brown or grey.

On 6 February 1956 Harrisons was asked to supply specimens of the 2d printed in the light brown of the George VI issue rather than the current darker brown; a further set of essays was supplied on 14 February. On 20 March the printer was told: 'Please ensure that no further printing ... is made in the existing dark brown colour. A decision on the lighter colour is expected shortly.'

H N Pickering of PSD noted in a memorandum of 27 March to Supplies that the Queen had been asked to approve an essay as exemplifying a change of colour back to that of the George VI 2d, but that the shade of the essay was 'in fact not identical to that of the King George VI issue and is rather darker'. He asked if further essays of the 2d could be supplied 'in which the shade resembles more closely to the eye that of the King George VI stamps in brown'. This request was passed to Harrisons on 3 April, and a final set of essays was

supplied on 6 April. The printer's comments on this final set were relayed to PSD by Supplies in a memorandum of 9 April:

The present specimens are as near as they can get to the King George VI shade. While the new essays approximate more closely to the desired colour tone than the earlier ones they still look perhaps slightly darker to the eye than the King George VI issue. This impression is accentuated by the difference in design, but the Firm stresses that if there is any further watering down of the pigment much would be lost in the quality of reproduction of the Queen's head.

On 2 July F J Langfield of PSD instructed Supplies that the colour change for the 2d had been approved in accordance with that of the essay submitted to the Queen. It was later noted that the Queen disliked the lighter brown and approved the colour change only because of the need for legibility of signatures across the 2d when used for fiscal purposes. The 2d was issued in the light red-brown from 17 October 1956 as stocks of the darker brown became exhausted.

WATERMARK AND PAPER CHANGES

All the stamps were issued in the first instance in sheets of 240 on uncoated paper with the Tudor Crown watermark. In the course of 1955-56 this was replaced by the St Edward's Crown watermark, and again by the Multiple Crowns between 1958 and 1960. Chalk-surfaced paper was later used for the ½d and 2½d values in 2s Holiday stamp books of July 1963, but not otherwise. Other changes followed the introduction of automatic letter-sorting equipment, facilitated at first by the graphite-lined issues of 1957-59 and by phosphor lines from 1960 onwards – an 'interim' version had phosphor bands applied to graphite-lined stamps. Stamp paper changed in colour, from cream to white; it was noticed that heavy rains on several occasions during the 1950s had the effect of cleansing the normally brackish water supply to the Ivybridge Mills in Devon where paper for the stamp printer Harrisons was made, and that the resulting product was whiter than the norm. From 1962 the water supply was permanently pre-filtered and 'white wove' stamp paper replaced 'cream wove'. Another factor that brightened the appearance of stamp paper was that the rag waste used in the manufacturing process contained increasing residues of detergents, while these tended to contain optical brightening agents (OBAs) as a standard ingredient; by the end of the Wilding era OBAs were routinely used in the manufacture of paper for stamps.

MORE COLOUR VARIATIONS

Problems with the colour of the 2d stamp arose once again with deliveries of the first printing on white paper, in August 1963. Supplies informed Harrison on 18 October that 'this print ... has a faded appearance and lacks the richer chocolate colour of the ... previous contract standard'. The result was that the GPO refused to accept the 2d printed on white paper as the new standard despite York's warning on 22 October that 'on some colours it will be impossible for the new standard to look exactly the same as ... on the cream wove'. Harrison's attempt in November to match the previous colour standard, by printing in a darker shade on white paper, was found even less successful. However, it was decided to accept York's assurance on 18 December that it was 'quite impracticable' to reproduce precisely the former colour of the 2d on white paper, and his offer to supply further essays attempting to match the standard light red-brown as closely as possible. Supplies received essays in slightly different shades of light to medium brown on 12 February 1964.

Supplies chose the one considered the nearest match, although PSD opted for another of the essays as reported by F J Langfield in a memorandum of 4 March. Harrison was authorised next day to start production in the approved shade as soon as possible; this had been suspended while the dispute was resolved and a severe shortage of the value resulted. It should be noted that the Stanley Gibbons catalogue does not recognise appreciable fluctuations in the light red-brown colour of the 2d whether on cream or white paper, although the earlier change from darker red-brown is recorded.

From 8 May 1958 the 6d stamp was issued in reddish-purple rather than deep claret; this change was deliberate but the reason is not recorded.

A 4½d value was issued on 9 February 1959; this became the rate for inland letters between one and two ounces in October 1957, and a wide variety of colour trials of the Farrar-Bell design followed before the stamp was approved in chestnut. Finally the 4d stamp was reissued on 28 April 1965 in a darker blue (due to a deeper etching rather than a change of ink) prior to 4d becoming the base inland letter rate on 17 May.

OVERPRINTS AND THE VANISHING 11d

In a review of January 1959 it was decided that printing of the 11d value would cease due to the fall in demand, some 64 million having been sold. In March 1960 half the remaining stock of the value was destroyed; it was estimated that the remainder (40,000 sheets) would last an estimated 18 months. It was not until October 1964 that the final 171 sheets

were destroyed by Supplies, which had withheld the remaining stock because of slightly misaligned perforations.

Between December 1952 and April 1961 overprinted stamps were issued for overseas postal agencies; full details are in the Stanley Gibbons catalogues under the headings for Morocco Agencies, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and British Postal Agencies in Eastern Arabia. Apart from changes of watermark, noteworthy variations include the 1957 overprints in 'new currency' for the Persian Gulf agencies when the naye paise replaced the anna in local use, and the '1857-1957 Tangier' overprints introduced on 1 April 1957 and withdrawn on 30 April when the agency closed - its closure had been delayed so that the agency could reach its centenary.

PRESS REACTIONS

Immediate press and public reactions to the stamps were generally favourable, although 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly' of August 1953 had a few reservations: George Knipe had 'a good conception of the simple kind of design which suits photogravure best [but] in the new 5d he has adopted flat tints which lack the vigour of solid colour', while Mary Adshead had 'not been very successful with the placing of the value, which seems to have been relegated to the only clear space left, and rather unbalances the design'. The verdict on Dulac's 1s, however, was that 'the whole design is smooth with all its components happily located'; of Farrar-Bell's design, 'we still get a thrill of pleasure whenever we look at the 2½d'.

For a considerable time the 1952-54 definitives were considered a crowning achievement in British stamp design - typically 'The Philatelist' of February 1954 thought 'the beauty of these charming designs' and the 'high standard of ... technical excellence achieved by the Postal Authorities', while in April 1958 the DDG, S D Sargent, asked: 'Could one wish for a finer central feature ... than the very lovely head which appears on our stamps today?' In later years the appeal waned, the Dorothy Wilding portrait of the Queen as retouched by Dulac and Farrar-Bell being described by 'Stamp Collecting' in May 1970 as 'the tenderly glamourised drawing-room portrait of a débutante of the 1930s'. The Wilding definitives were replaced from 1967 by a new permanent issue with the Arnold Machin head.

In 1986 the National Postal Museum issued a postcard of the Wilding head as part of a special exhibition for the Queen's 60th birthday.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

ENID MARX, RDI, FRSA, FSIAD, was born on 20 October 1902 and was educated at Roedean, the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and the Royal College of Art Painting School. The

areas in which she mainly worked were textile design and printing and book illustration. She also designed posters for London Transport and served during the war as textiles expert to the Board of Trade furniture design panel. In 1987 she was made a Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art. Although she was frequently involved in postage stamp design her only other success in this field was the Christmas set of 1976.

M C FARRAR-BELL was 31 at the time of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. He was the son of Mrs G K M Bell, ex-Vice President of the Royal Miniature Society, whose own work prompted him to produce his design 'in the manner of a framed miniature portrait'. Educated at Harrow, he was best known as a designer of stained glass and was then engaged in restoring the Great West Window in Bath Abbey. His previous career had included the completion of a similar commission in Exeter Cathedral, painting inn signs, and the design of Commonwealth reply coupons and vouchers for the Lord Mayor of London's Thanksgiving Fund; he had not, however, designed stamps prior to his Coronation and low values designs. He was later active in stamp design for a number of countries overseas, and once more for the GPO with a stamp for the Salvation Army Centenary set of 1965.

GEORGE T KNIPE was born in 1918 in Tylers Green, Buckinghamshire, and attended High Wycombe School of Art. He was trained in the photogravure process by Harrisons before the war and served in the Royal Artillery from 1939 to 1946. He rejoined the firm and in 1952 was employed as commercial layout artist and designer in their London office. He had previously designed the much-praised Royal Silver Wedding 2½d stamp of 1948.

MARY ADSHEAD was born on 15 February 1904 and learnt watercolour painting from her father, the Professor of Civic Design at Liverpool University. Her mother imbued her with a love of flowers that she later expressed in much of her work. At the age of 17 she entered the Slade School of Fine Art. From the late 1920s the bulk of her career was devoted to murals, her last major work in this field being done in 1982. During her last decade her occasional exhibitions of watercolours met with warm acclaim. She was regularly involved with stamp design from the late 1940s to the early 1960s; her other successes included contributions to the 1949 UPU 75th Anniversary and 1957 Boy Scout Jubilee sets and the 1951 high values. She died in September 1995.

EDMUND DULAC was born in Toulouse, France, on 22 October 1882, making his career as an artist from 1904 onwards. He worked in Britain from 1907 and was naturalised in 1912. He was best known as a book illustrator but involved himself in a multitude of other areas of design. He first designed adhesive stamp labels for the Red Cross in 1914, and both definitive and special postage stamps for the GPO from 1937 onwards. At his death on 25 May 1953 he was perhaps the most respected of contemporary stamp designers.

DOROTHY WILDING was born on 10 January 1893. Early ambitions to be an actress, dancer or painter were all thwarted by her family before she bought her first camera in 1909; in 1912 she was apprenticed as retoucher in a Knightsbridge portrait studio, and in 1915 opened a studio of her own. Having become one of the leading photographers of the day, she took her first Royal portrait, of the Duke of Kent, in 1928. Her later portraits of George VI and his Queen were used on postage stamps issued for the 1937 Coronation, the Royal Silver Wedding of 1948, and the Queen Mother's 90th birthday in 1990, as well as numerous Commonwealth stamps. She retired in 1957 and died almost forgotten on 9 February 1976; subsequently, however, her standing revived when she was the subject of a major posthumous exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery between July and September 1991.

GILES ALLEN
13 February 1995

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive files:

- 52/466 (lighter brown 2d, 1953-64)
- 52/468 (Elizabeth II stamps, ½d to 1s 6d, 1952-56)
- 52/470 (4½d orange-brown)
- 52/483 (11d stamps 1959-64)
- 52/705 (permanent Queen Elizabeth air letter)
- 122/1108-1112 (QEII low values)
- 122/1115-1117 (QEII Coronation issue)
- 122/521 (lightening of colour of 2d stamp)
- 122/661 (QEII permanent issue air letter form).

Press & Broadcast Notices:

- PB596A, 29/11/52;
- PB814A, 5/7/53;
- PB55, 9/4/58.

Articles:

- Gerald Davis, 'Looking Backward to go Forward', 'Stamp Collecting', 28 May 1970
- M C Farrar-Bell, 'Development of the 2½d Queen Elizabeth Design', 'Stamp Collecting', 9 January 1953
- A Rigo de Righi & Jean Farrugia, 'The Wilding Designs', 'British Philatelic Bulletin', vol. 23, pp. 158-161
- John Sugden, 'GB Elizabethan Stamp Papers of the Wilding Period', 'British Philatelic Bulletin', vol. 13, no. 12, pp. 7-8

- Also
- 'British Philatelic Bulletin' vol. 2, no. 5, p. 7; vol. 2, no. 6, p.5; vol. 28, pp. 252-253; vol. 29, pp. 36-37.

Books:

- Terence Pepper, 'Dorothy Wilding - the Pursuit of Perfection', NPG Publications, 1991
- Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue, Volume 3 - QEII Pre-decimal issues, Stanley Gibbons Ltd.