

Accession Design of Edward VIII

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As issued in September 1936 the four stamps of King Edward VIII were very simple in format, quite different from anything that had gone before. The design reflected the new King's desire for simplicity and change but it was not selected without considerable trouble on the part of the Post Office and their printers, Harrisons. Many difficulties were involved, including arranging for a photographic portrait to be taken of the King for use on the stamps. And although the first design chosen by the Post Office was worked upon to good effect by the printers with particular reference to the printing process to be used, nevertheless the King still thought it too decorative and insisted upon something simpler and less ostentatious. The story of how the design came about and the unadopted essays that fell by the wayside is illuminating and a characteristic reflection of the difficulties encountered by officials dealing with the new King.

George V had died late on 20th January, yet quite remarkably quickly questions and suggestions were received by the Postmaster General, George C. Tryon, as to what should happen about postage stamps bearing the head of Edward VIII. Indeed, there was an enquiry dated 21st January from the Australian Post Office asking about possible changes in the format of British stamps. And by the end of the month a design had appeared for the definitive issue and suggestions for a commemorative Coronation issue.

As time went on various strands of thinking were clarified and altered but these were often considered at the same time and it is necessary to make distinctions between them so that they may be better understood. Fairly early in the reign it was decided within the Post Office that there would be three possible issues. The first, with values to 1s, would be a temporary "Accession" issue to be produced as soon as possible. This would be replaced by

a special "Coronation" issue if that were agreed. On the withdrawal of these commemoratives the first denominations of a "Permanent" series would be released.

Because of the time needed to print the large quantities of stamps, there was considerable urgency involved in the finding of a suitable design for the first "Accession" issue. The Post Office might have waited for an agreed coin effigy to be produced by the Royal Mint, but in 1934 the photogravure process had been introduced for printing stamps and they were conscious that a photographic portrait might be the best basis for a design. Nevertheless, steps were also taken to obtain an effigy. However, this was not to materialise until the later months of 1936 and so a portrait would be required for the first issue.

It was also agreed very early on that there would be no invitation to artists to submit designs. Unhappiness with the results of dealing with artists for the later stamps of George V's reign led to the decision that the Post Office would use the services of their own printing contractors, Harrisons, rather than outside artists. This did not prevent them from accepting designs from the public or recognised artists and the final stamps as issued were, in fact, inspired by a design from a member of the public. Equally, a member of the P.O. Engineering Department Drawing Office was officially instructed to produce designs and these were also to influence subsequent proposals.

Enquires were made of the Royal Mint on 23rd January as to the availability of a coinage head but the first suggested design received by the Post Office was from a Brigadier-General W.E.R. Dickson, who was the President of the Scottish Philatelic Society. On 31st January, 1936, barely 11 days after King George V died, he wrote to the Postmaster General enclosing a pencil drawing of a possible design. His remarks were, he claimed, based on the views generally held by philatelists. In brief, the design should be simple without insignificant detail, strong in body of colour, and the main feature should be the Sovereign's head as it appears on coins, "the central idea being that the stamp symbolised a coin paid for the carriage of a letter". There should also be a uniform design for different values.

Together with other designs submitted by the public, this was sent to Harrisons, the Post Office printers at High Wycombe, at the beginning of April. Artwork in blue-grey and white was made from this "Scottish Philatelic Society" design and a photographic portrait of the King facing left added, similar to the Cecil head. Stamp-sized bromides (black and white photographs) were made of this with two different portraits (Nos. 1 and 2) and submitted on 23rd April. They were not chosen for further colour essays. However, the idea of a coin design was not lost and was to appear later in different forms. Indeed, one of the Harrison designs for the subsequent George VI definitives (unadopted) was virtually the same.

In January and February, A.S. Willmot, Chief of the Engineering Department GPO Drawing Office, was asked to produce a number of designs. According to F. Marcus Arman (the first Curator of the National Postal Museum) in 1968, some 50 designs were prepared by Willmot, assisted by two members of his staff, N.H. Baker and W. Morris. Now, there are 27 rough drawings still extant in the collections. Most incorporated youthful portraits of the King, one in naval uniform, the other in civilian dress. The latter, at least, was supplied by Vandyk Ltd at the end of January 1936, although taken much earlier, and is one of three photographs by Vandyk head. That in naval uniform dates from 1923 at the latest and is also by Vandyk. A letter exists from the studio, dated 1st February, emphasising that these photographs should on no account be used for the final stamps but only “for the purpose of gaining a rough idea for new designs”, which is precisely the use to which they were put.

One of the Willmot designs has no king’s head at all. It is landscape in format, denominated 1s, and shows the globe in two parts with the oceans in blue and the British Empire marked in red. This clearly, is a representation resulting the suggestion from Ormsby-Gore of 30 January of a Coronation issue. His final design, a 1s value, was for a “Multicoloured map of the world with the British Empire marked in red – similar to the Imperial 1d post stamp issued by Canada at Xmas 1898”.

Of the others, four are pictorial with scenes of a liner, a map of the British Isles, heraldic arms, and an aeroplane over the sea. More are in black ink but a few are handpainted in blues or red.

These rough drawings were sent to Harrisons who produced stamp-sized bromides of them. When the Postmaster General first saw the King on 10th March to discuss new stamps it is probable that he took these bromides with him to show the King the lines along which they were working. The interest inherent in these drawings is very much in the frames that they provided. Harrisons were later to use three or four of them (one being a variation) with portraits selected for possible use and indeed one was to form the basis of the Seaforth Highlander design to endure in essay form throughout the reign.

At the same time as these preliminary rough designs were being made steps were being taken to obtain from the Royal Mint a copy of the effigy to be used on coins or medals and from the King’s Private Secretary, approved photographs. This was because of the recent change-over to photogravure as a printing process. A letter explaining the possibilities was sent by the Director-General of the Post Office, Sir Donald Banks, to Major A.H.L. Hardinge, the King’s Private Secretary at Buckingham Palace on 18th February.

“Hitherto our stamps have always borne the effigy of the Sovereign; and in ordinary course, as soon as an effigy is approved by His Majesty for the new coinage, we should get designs prepared for postage stamps, using the same effigy.

“Recently, however, we have adopted the photogravure process for printing our postage stamps. With this process it is possible to produce a portrait very successfully, even in the small size necessary for a postage stamp. It has occurred to the Postmaster General that it might be worthwhile to have designs prepared with a portrait of His Majesty and, if the result is satisfactory, to submit these designs to His Majesty, together with designs containing an effigy. We are, however, unable to take any steps in this direction at the moment because we are in doubt as to what photograph or photographs may be used for the purpose.”

Photographs in existence were few and not approved for this purpose and it was hoped that new photographs would be taken specially and authorised within a week or two. With regard to the Mint’s effigy submitted to the King, this was not approved (to their surprise) and as a result no effigy was available for consideration until September.

Prior to 1934 British stamps were being printed by letterpress (sometimes called surface-printing, or inaccurately typography). This gave a rather flat, dull result. The reason why photogravure was employed in the new definitive series of 1934 onwards was the added richness of colour. It was not cheaper, as has sometimes been stated. Indeed, it cost £2,500 a year more than the old method. But it was felt that more could be gained in using photogravure and so the contract passed to Harrisons from Waterlows who used Royal Mint plates. However, instead of designing a series specifically for production by photogravure, the printers merely improved the existing range. Solid backgrounds to the head were added and the colours enriched. No advantage was taken of the photographic tonal qualities now possible and the king’s head remained that originally based on a coinage or medal head, drawn for production by a line process.

There was some adverse comment about the 1934 gravure designs when they appeared. An interesting, if biased, view was that of Robert A. Johnson who, as Deputy Master and Comptroller of the Royal Mint, in his annual report for 1933 said:

“So far the designs are only adaptations of those originally intended for reproduction by surface printing and the claim that the colour of the new stamps is richer is true to the extent that they even suggest a touch of the liver. But the new experiment is an interesting event in the history of our postage stamps and there is reason to hope that as soon as new designs have been prepared that are suitable for production by photogravure we shall be within sight of as fine an issue of stamps as we have ever enjoyed.”

The British stamps to be designed with gravure in mind were the Barnett Freedman designs for the 1935 Silver Jubilee set but even then the photographic portrait by Vandyk of George V was not chosen for the final stamps. And so the end result was a flawed mixture of

aspects of design suitable for the two printing processes of gravure and letterpress. Thus, when it came to the stamps of Edward VIII, the necessity to design a stamp purely for the gravure process was in the mind of the P.O. officials right from the outset. And the first essential was an acceptable photographic portrait of the King. The Edward VIII stamps were, in fact, the first British examples where the needs and possibilities of the gravure printing process were held in mind, as far as the design was concerned, right from the beginning. It is impossible to understand why the designs were chosen and how they appeared without some idea of the gravure printing process to be used.

Photogravure is a form of recess or intaglio printing. As the name suggests, photogravure involves photography. The master negative of the design is multiplied automatically by a step and repeat camera. The resulting multipositive is then transferred photographically by means of a sensitised carbon tissue to the printing cylinder which is then etched. To obtain shading or gradation in tone the image is photographed through a fine screen at one of the stages. At the etching stage the darker areas are etched deeper than the lighter areas. The little dots on a printed stamp are, in fact, small square cells all of the same size but different in intensity. The deeper the cell is etched the more ink it holds and therefore the darker it prints. With all other forms of stamp printing there is no variation in intensity of colour, although offset litho and letterpress may also have screens to create tones. There, however, the size or frequency of the dot determines the intensity of the colour. Therefore, neither litho nor letterpress has the same capacity for producing shading as does gravure. Where gravure fails, on the other hand, is in the printing of lines which have to be made up of individual cells, and are thus never sharp at the edges.

In terms of stamp design, the gravure process lends itself to the reproduction of the light and shade gradations which are a feature of photographs. These, therefore, become the best basis for a design. Lettering, which must be composed of lines, becomes a problem. Bold solids must here replace fine, classic, sharp lines. Richer colouring can also be used, partly because of the intaglio or recess form of the printing, and partly because of the peculiar nature of the inks required.

Thus, the Post Office required photographic portraits of the King so that Harrisons could begin the design work. As has been seen, the Postmaster General enquired on 18th February as to what was available. The answer was, in effect, nothing that could be used. On 10th March, the PMG saw the King. Beforehand, an internal memo, dated 9th March, was prepared for him detailing what was required. This was urged in a manuscript note saying also that the PMG should be furnished with some typical designs which were in contemplation, presumably the Willmot roughs in bromide form, "in view of the King's very individual taste in these matters which is becoming apparent." The situation as described in the memo was:

“we are entirely held up at the moment awaiting

(a) an effigy which should be the same as that approved for the new coinage. We cannot get this from the Mint at present and it is understood semi-officially that this is due to the fact that His Majesty did not care for the designs submitted recently by Sir Robert Johnson;

(b) a photograph suitable for stamp purposes. It is understood that His Majesty does not care for any existing photographs for this purpose and he is having new photographs taken (?this week) from which it is hoped a selection of photographs suitable for stamps can be made.

“As soon as either or both the effigy and photographs are available it was intended to proceed with rough designs which would be submitted in a preliminary way to obtain His Majesty’s views generally on form of design and portrait.

“In view of the disappointing results that have hitherto attended our invitation to artists to submit designs, it was thought that at this stage it might be better to produce in collaboration with the stamp printers, a limited range of simple designs based on the best practised in other countries rather than to resort again to artists or to competition.”

At the meeting with the PMG the King expressed himself in favour of a coronation issue “bearing pictures of such places as Caernarvon, Windsor and Holyrood”, and against competitions, especially public ones, as he might not like the winning design. He asked that he be shown a selection of the best of the newer foreign stamp issues.

The foreign stamps requested by the King were supplied on 26th March. They included Bavarian designs of 1914 (the first photogravure-printed stamps), the Belgian Queen Astrid Mourning issue, a 1935 Colonial Silver Jubilee stamp to show how Windsor Castle might appear on a stamp, and issues from Germany, Liechtenstein and the Vatican City. Other Dominion stamps were also included. The King kept these for some time until late May or early June but they were returned eventually. Particular attention was drawn to the Bavarian issue for its simplicity.

Mention was made in the memo quoted earlier of a photograph possibly being taken that week. Precisely when it was taken is not known but it was received by the Post Office, having been approved by the King, by 26th March. This was the profile picture taken by Hugh Cecil, and was specifically taken for the stamp issue. Indeed, it was the profile head used on the issued stamps. The photograph exists in three forms in the collection: one shows it full size; another has four small versions cut off at the neck; and the third is a full size cut-

off head signed by Cecil, the photographer, (coming from a stamp collection formed by Bertram Park, another royal photographer). However, the Post Office wanted more than one photograph, specifically asking for good, full face or three-quarter face portraits. A later note, of 24th July, explains what happened now.

“Sir Godfrey Thomas [the King’s Assistant Private Secretary] subsequently suggested that suitable portraits might be obtained from Bertram Park or Hugh Cecil Portraits Ltd., and that designs based on portraits procured from these sources might be submitted to the King. Mr Sargent [the Director General’s assistant] selected three portraits by each firm and the Director General [Sir Donald Banks] decided that one of those supplied by Bertram Park – showing the King in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders – should be used, with the intention that a temporary ‘Accession’ issue in one design should be made of all denominations up to 1s., to be replaced after the Coronation by a permanent series, the first denominations of which would be ready for issue as soon as the ‘Coronation’ stamps [if they were issued] were withdrawn. The design was to be based on one of a number of rough designs prepared by Mr Willmot of the Engineering Department.”

This note was written some months after the event and it is thus unsurprisingly not entirely reliable. In the collection are three portraits by Hugh Cecil other than the profile head taken specially. These show three-quarter face portraits of the King in the uniform of Colonel-in-Chief of the Welsh Guards, and in naval uniform. That in the naval uniform was never used for G.B. essays but the Welsh Guard version (of which two forms exist, one a close-up or enlargement of the other) was certainly sent to Harrisons, as designs were worked up based on it. No date is given for these photographs.

As far as the Bertram Park photographs are concerned, these show the King in the uniform of Colonel-in-Chief of the Seaforth Highlanders [Ross-shire Buffs – the Duke of Albany’s]. At least three or four different versions exist, one with headdress, the others without. There are slight differences between them as to the angle of the head, but a study of the arrangements of the medals and attachments proves that the photographs were all taken at the same time. One was used for the engraved 5d stamp showing Edward VIII as Prince of Wales in the Canada Silver Jubilee set issued on 4th May 1935. This proves that the portraits were taken long before Edward VIII’s accession and were not intended specifically for any 1936 GB stamp issue. In fact, the photographs were taken in June 1932, the Bertram Park negative number for the portrait chosen by the Director General being 02696E. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that the Hugh Cecil portraits in uniform date from a similar time and were in stock at the photographer’s studio when the Post Office called on them for suitable portraits.

on a black card to give a truer impression of a stamp and (numbered 3 to 10) were shown to the King with the other designs in May and June. Apart from the portrait the design had remained the same except for the legend POSTAGE/REVENUE now at the foot. The value was still 4d.

The Director General of the Post Office, Sir Donald Banks, saw these designs probably on 23rd April and chose the Seaforth design (No.5) for production in colour essay form by Harrisons. The first colour essays on 29th April and 4th May retained the 4d value but reverted to the single word POSTAGE at the foot. Four pairs of essays in different colours exist for the 29th April trial. They are in slate-green, red, green and brown. A softer print was made on 4th May and a block of 6 exists in slate-green. These essays were produced (normally in blocks of 6 or double sheets of 480) on the normal rotary press. Only one set was made on a slow-running sheet printing machine not used for stamp manufacture. Various papers were used over the period with the George V Block Cypher watermark, standard for the 1934 gravure issue.

After these first essays had been printed the design was altered slightly. The height of the lettering of POSTAGE was reduced a little as was the panel in which it lay, and the value, admittedly nominal, was changed to 1½d. Five colours were used for the next essays supplied to the Director General on 11th May. These were the colours for the following values: ½d (green), 1d (red), 1½d (brown), 2d (orange) and 2½d (blue), though, of course, the printed denomination in each case was 1½d. All came from a cylinder not yet chrome-faced.

These all had the lettering and figures in a serif typeface. On 15th May another version was produced with Gill sans serif type which “appears to be more suitable than the ordinary serif type for stamps of the design proposed.” These were sent to the Director General on 18th May. One week later the Postmaster General saw the King and showed him the specimen stamps, both with serif and sans lettering, together with a large number of photographic designs, some of which have been mentioned already. The essays and bromides were left with the king who said he would show them to the Queen (Queen Mary).

Unfortunately, when the King saw the PMG again on 5th June he said that he did not like the design on which so much time and effort had been expended by the printers. He considered that they were “over-ornamented and foreign-looking” and chose instead two of the photographic bromides, those numbered 22 and 23 on the card. Major Tryon, the PMG, undertook that proofs of these would then be prepared. In fact only No. 23 was experimented with.

The bromide chosen embodied some of the features of a design submitted by H.J. Brown in April, and which Harrisons had improved and altered at the same time as they were

experimenting with other designs, notably those based on the Dickson design and on the Bavarian 1914 issue. Some of the results of these efforts are still extant.

H.J. Brown was only 17 when he first wrote to the Postmaster General, though the Post Office did not know that. On 13th February, 1936 he asked if he might be permitted to submit a design for the new issue of postage stamps. His interest was purely philatelic, he said, and he was a member of the philatelic societies of both Exeter and Torquay. He received a reply, dated 19th February, saying that “there is no objection to you submitting a design for the new issue of postage stamps. I should perhaps mention, however, that the design is usually chosen from the competitive designs of distinguished artists”.

Undaunted, Brown went ahead and produced a pencil drawing, 10 times stamp size. He also photographed it down to stamp size and in a letter of 1st April he said that although he had now completed the drawing of his design he observed from the photograph enclosed that there were several alterations to be made. When a fresh photo of the altered drawing had been taken he would forward them together. This he did on 4th April. The alterations seem to be a softening of the shading overall. His design had begun as a doodle in blue ink on a piece of scrap paper. Later, it was carefully detailed with such items as the crown drawn enlarged with much craftsmanship. He retained all his preliminary sketches.

Brown heard nothing more about his design until the stamps were issued. However, his effort was sent to the Post Office Stores Department by A. Kidner, the Assistant in charge of the Mails Branch, with the comment “this design appeals to me rather more than most of the others I have seen and it would perhaps be as well to let Harrisons see it.” It was duly passed on to Harrisons on 14th April.

Harrisons now modified this design by substituting the newly arrived profile head by Cecil for the drawn version by Brown. A bromide was made on 29th April, being that chosen by the King. There are, in all, 15 bromides remaining of the many submitted to the Post Office. Two are based on the Dickson design, three are clearly derived from Brown’s design apart from the direct adaptation, one is a copy of the Bavarian 1914 issue and there are four which might be described as being influenced by that stamp. Most of these bear the Cecil profile head or a similar drawn type which was intended to simulate the Mackennal profile head of George V, and the bromides are mounted on perforations photographed on a black background. In all, there were about 60 design bromides in existence originally.

There are two other stamp-sized bromides and photographic versions of the artwork of a stylish design submitted by Edmund Dulac. The first of these was originally submitted on 17th February when Dulac described it as a tentative idea. It was a “hexagonal design” so-called because of the shape of the frame and it bore the national emblems, the head being surmounted by a crown. On getting little response other than an acknowledgement Dulac

then sent his design direct to Buckingham Palace in April. Godfrey Thomas, the King's Assistant Private Secretary, thought it an extremely attractive design but he pointed out that there was one drawback "that it would immediately revive the heated controversy as to whether the daffodil or the leek is the official emblem of Wales". The Director General replied to Thomas noting that Dulac "has been submitting designs of a similar nature for several years."

On 21st May Dulac submitted an alternative photographic arrangement in which the hexagonal design is shown partly in reverse. He added some comments about the necessary processes which any design would have to go through, rather interesting in view of the controversy he was in large part responsible for, on the actual design of the issued stamps.

"The head must like the rest be a *drawing*. This can only be done by touching up the photograph, a task which on *no account* should be left to the designer of the firm who will print the stamps. This fatal error was committed in the stamps of the last reign with deplorable results. The necessary alterations should be the work of a *proper artist* whether he designs the rest of the stamp or not."

Apparently, Dulac was not content to let matters lie but telephoned officials enquiring if anything was being done with his designs. He was put off with some bland reply.

After the shock of the King's decision, Harrisons prepared four different essays based on the Brown design with the Cecil head. For all of these (bar one) the crown in the top right corner was modified. The variations between the essays came in the positioning of the lettering, a constant feature being the graded tone for the background, which caused problems with the lettering. The first type retained the vertical panels of Brown's original design. Panels were removed on the second type but the wording remained. For the third type the lettering was also removed and the word POSTAGE replaced the wording of the value at the foot. The fourth type removed the crown and repeated the value in figures. All four types were essayed in the values and colours of ½d, 1d, 1½d and 2½d, again in blocks of 6, and were shown to the Director General on 17th June. These were shown to Mr Kenneth Clark, newly appointed but already influential Director of the National Gallery, and he suggested that the crown be made more distinct and the lettering more ornamental. The latter suggestion was not adopted but a bromide was prepared showing an improved crown.

Three versions were submitted to the King on 26th June and he approved that one favoured by the Post Office – type 3 but with the improved crown. And these became the issued stamps, although there was still trouble with the crown.

The figures and letters used on the simple design were in Gill sans type, outlined against the toned background. This sans typeface was new, being first used in the early 1930s. Designed by Eric Gill for the Monotype Company it had created great interest in the design world. Bold and uncluttered, it was based on Roman simplicity and was inspired by the lettering by E Johnston of 1915 adopted for use in the London Underground.

Apart from the design changes, Harrisons had also been experimenting with various papers and inks prior to being asked to print the stamps. These experiments used the 1½d Seaforth Highlanders design with the seriffed lettering. It had been found that the gravure tones printed better if the paper were either coated or finely calendered. Trials with different types of paper and coating took place on 26th May. Several imperforate pairs exist with different coatings and varying pressure of print. These have the cylinder number 1 and the control Y/36. Blocks of four, some perforated, some imperforate, also exist on watermarked coated paper. All are printed in brown. The Seaforth Highlander design with Gill sans lettering also exists essayed on coated and esparto paper.

A most interesting ink trial also took place on 11th May. This was with doubly fugitive gravure ink and a block of four exists of the Seaforth Highlander 1½d serif design printed in a delightful shade of plum. This ink had a long history of trial and failure. From 1884 the 6d postage stamps, which were also used extensively for paying stamp duties as revenue stamps, were printed in doubly fugitive inks. This was to prevent the removal of pen cancellations. When Harrisons gained the contract in 1934 and produced the gravure series they also began experimenting with a doubly fugitive purple ink for the 6d value. These experiments, which involved the printing of at least 5 million stamps, all failed. The reason was that when printing at speed and pressure the cells of the design became packed, causing a mottled appearance. With other values this difficulty was overcome by binding the ink with a varnish. But to do this with the 6d would destroy the fugitiveness of the ink. Printing of these George V 6d gravure stamps continued in the reign of Edward VIII but on 6th April it was admitted that difficulties had arisen which had to be accepted as insurmountable. As a result the letterpress 6d continued in use (special printings being required) and the gravure 6d was never issued. However, this trial was undertaken with the Seaforth Highlander design as well. On 12th May, Harrisons wrote to the Post Office Stores Department:

“We beg to advise you that we are forwarding tomorrow per our van six issue sheets of King Edward VIII stamps, 1½d denomination, printed in 6d violet doubly fugitive ink.

“The printing has been fairly successful, showing that this type of etch, with the freedom from the solid background, gives more control over the ink. We should, however, have an extensive trial before we can give a guarantee that the doubly

fugitive ink can be successfully used for standard production value, and in this respect we anticipate being able to make a further statement when the Trial Paper No. 6 has been coated.”

Trials must have continued for a later design was also essayed in another doubly fugitive ink, but this was not until October.

As a sequel to the long build-up to the issue of the Accession stamps it is appropriate to record the treatment of the inspirer of the design, Hubert J. Brown. The Post Office decided to find out about him to see if some recognition should be accorded. They made confidential enquiries and were told that

“He has lived at Bramber for some years, in a good small detached house in the best part of Torquay. ... He is apparently a retired man, of middle age in comfortable circumstances with a nice car, but no telephone.

“It seems hardly appropriate in the circumstances to offer monetary recognition.”

The Post Office were rather grudging in affording recognition of Brown’s services. Despite the clear similarities between his original submission and the final, issued stamps, it was noted that:

“We are quite entitled to say that we have not adopted Mr Brown’s design, and there is no difficulty in demonstrating that the main feature which has been adopted, namely the crown balancing the figure of value, is by no means new. At the same time Mr Brown deserves much credit for his suggestion and I feel that it would be only right he should have some expression of appreciation before he sees the new stamps in circulation.”

So, a letter was sent on 26th August, the day of the unveiling of the stamps to the press.

“I am directed by the Postmaster General to refer to your letter of the 4th of April, with which you enclosed a drawing for a suggested postage stamp of the new reign.

“The design was not considered suitable for adoption as it stood, but it appeared to present certain suggestions which, although they were not novel, might be successfully developed in designing a stamp for printing by the photogravure process. It was therefore shewn to Messrs Harrison & Sons who hold the contract for the supply of postage stamps and who were engaged at the time in the preparation of designs for consideration.

“Stamps of the new reign will appear shortly and you will see that the design which has been selected bears some features in common with that which you suggested.

The Postmaster General desires me to express his warm appreciation of the interest which you have taken in this matter.”

There must have been considerable surprise when a reply came dated 1st September, from Brown’s father.

“On behalf of my son Hubert John Brown who some months ago submitted a suggested design for a new Postage Stamp, I beg to thank you for your letter of 26th inst. addressed to him.

“It is a matter of gratification to me as well as to my son – who at the time had not attained his 18th birthday, & who devoted much care & consideration to his sketch – to find that so many of his suggestions have been embodied in the new stamp which is issued today.

“You will, no doubt, recognize the fact that in taking up philately seriously, my son has made a study of the various processes, and had in mind the production of a stamp by the photogravure process.”

And there the matter rested, without payment or public recognition, until an article in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* of January, 1937, revealing Brown’s part in the stamps’ design. This was taken up in the national press. The Post Office’s reaction remained the same. A note attached to the article in the files reads “(we) have come to the conclusion that the best course is to lie low and say nothing. The article seems to us scrupulously fair.” Their reaction might have been different had they realised from the outset that H.J. Brown was only 17 years old.

Cecil, the photographer, fared little better. He was originally offered nothing other than warm appreciation, and had to approach the Post Office himself, even though his profile portrait was the only photograph taken specially for the stamp designs of whatever type. His letter of 22nd December, 1936 and the subsequent negotiations netted him the sum of 25 guineas.

REFERENCES

British Postal Museum & Archive files:

POST 33/4972	Postage stamp printing by photogravure (File no 15, letter from Vandyk dated 1 February 1936 relevant)
POST 33/5218	Watermarked paper for postage stamps and postal orders: design changes for King Edward VIII (and King George VI)
POST 33/5265	King Edward VIII – loss of essays of 1½d ‘Seaforth Highlanders’ design
POST 33/5575	King Edward VIII general papers
POST 33/5577	King Edward VIII (and King George VI) general papers
POST 42/734	Records of storage and destruction of plates, bromides, positives and negatives for King Edward VIII (and King George VI) reigns
POST 52/363	Record of Drawings Drawing Book letter or number, list of designs, those for which bromides were recorded, including King Edward VIII
POST 52/924	Plates and dies sent to Headquarters Includes negatives for the King Edward VIII issue
POST 52/967	Rolls – King Edward VIII (and King George VI) Stock figures and dates of first issue
POST 52/990	Unified stamps – King Edward VIII issue Various correspondence relating to portraits, designs, essays, bromides, plaster casts, abdication
POST 52/991	Unified stamps – 6d photogravure including essays of King Edward VIII design
POST 52/992	Unified stamps – King George VI However, includes correspondence from Dulac of relevance
POST 52/967	Rolls – King Edward VIII (and King George VI) Stock figures and dates of first issue
POST 52/1242	Stamp Books – King Edward VIII issue Replacement of GvR cypher by an Edward VIII cypher, dates of issue