

# Planned Stamp Issue for the Coronation of King Edward VIII

1936



Following the death of King George V on 20 January 1936 and the accession of Edward VIII, the General Post Office (GPO) immediately made plans for stamps of the new reign. Although there was no precedent, the idea of stamps for the Coronation appears to have come very soon after the accession. The priority though was to issue definitives in the widely used denominations as soon as possible, so plans for a Coronation issue were put on hold until the initial definitives had been prepared.

It is not clear when the idea of Coronation stamps was first discussed within the GPO: a suggestion was received by the Postmaster General (PMG), Major G C Tryon, MP, from W Ormsby Gore, MP, Minister of Works and a former PMG, on 30 January, 1936. Although there is no record of an official response, such a request from a Cabinet Minister would prompt action if none were already in mind. Nevertheless, the priority of issuing definitives meant that little was done until March when Major Tryon had an audience with the King to propose plans for the new stamps. Prior to this meeting, on 10 March, the PMG had received a brief suggesting that Coronation stamps could supplant the new definitives for a period of three months.

It appears there were ambitious plans for new designs for a series of stamps involving all current denominations up to 1/-. These Coronation stamps would then be replaced by the new definitives, different again from the so-called 'accession' stamps under preparation at the time. At an audience on 10 March, King Edward VIII agreed to the idea of Coronation stamps featuring Royal castles, but asked that the designs be kept as simple as possible. Although the decision had been taken in principle, little preparation was done. When the Canadian High Commissioner's office inquired as to plans for stamps, Lt Col Vanier was

informed that no decisions had been taken; he was, however, told in confidence that an issue was probable.

The next major development came on 21 May when the PMG took specimens of the planned definitives to the Palace for the King's perusal. During this audience the King was asked whether it was necessary to continue the tradition of using the monarch's head on British stamps to indicate the country of origin. This arrangement with the Universal Postal Union recognised Britain as the originator of postage stamps. The question of omitting the head arose over potential problems of its inclusion within a pictorial design; it was considered prudent to seek His Majesty's opinion. King Edward, much more innovative in these matters than his father, agreed that pictorial Coronation stamps featuring Royal castles could be issued without his head if better designs would result.

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## **DENOMINATION, SIZE AND DESIGN**

By June the designs for the new definitives were more or less finalised and attention at the GPO began to focus on other matters, including the Coronation stamps. The Director General, Sir Thomas Gardiner, suggested that such stamps ought to consist of three low denominations showing His Majesty King Edward VIII in the uniforms of the three branches of the services, Army, Navy and Air Force, together with two high value pictorial stamps featuring Royal castles.

Further discussions plus consultations with Harrison and Sons, which had the contract to print the stamps, continued over the following weeks and several proposals were put forward. It was decided that there would be four or five stamps including ½d, 1d, 1½d, and 2½d. The three lower denominations would feature the King in the uniforms of the three Services, while the one or two higher values depicted Royal castles. Harrison and Sons agreed to produce some designs, largely frames for the King's portrait and the photographs of the castles, by way of experimentation. Depending on the quality of the designs, the stamps could either all feature the same frame around different portraits or each have its own frame. There was also the possibility of issuing a 2s 6d line engraved stamp featuring one of the Royal castles; however, it was advised that this would not match well with a similar photogravure pictorial design as intended for the 2½d. Line engraving would, it was felt, produce a much better stamp that would inevitably lead to criticism of the photogravure stamps. Notwithstanding the potential problems, a 2s 6d line engraved stamp was proposed, featuring a Royal castle within a narrow frame. The new coinage or medal head being prepared by the Mint could be used for the King's effigy, the difference being that the coinage head looked to the right while the medal head faced left. Previous stamps had always shown the Monarch facing left, as did the new definitives.

As there had only been three previous issues of commemorative stamps, there was no standard format. The question of the size of the stamps caused a great deal of discussion, guided by two factors, design and expense. In design terms it was clear that the regular definitive size (0.95in by 0.8in) was too small to allow properly for pictorial designs but another size would require alterations to Harrison and Sons' perforating machinery. Additionally, for accounting purposes, it was considered that the stamps should be issued in sheets of either 240, as was the case for definitives, or 120. The latter-sized sheet would comprise stamps the size of two definitives (1.6in by 0.95in), like the King George V Silver Jubilee stamps of 1935. The 'Jubilee' size was the most convenient for accounting purposes and would require the least alteration to the perforation machinery. On the other hand, a size which retained a similar dimensional ratio to the definitives would be an advantage from the design perspective, so two options were put forward: 1.425in by 0.8in, which would provide sheets of 144 stamps, or 1.2in by 0.95in, providing sheets of 160 stamps. The second of these dimensions was known as the 'Australian' or, alternatively, 'Egyptian' size. There was also the possibility of using the Crown Agents' Silver Jubilee size that was larger than the 'Australian' and almost the same as the 'Liverpool' size of 1.6in by 1.11in. If it were decided to use stamps with a depth greater than 0.95in, Harrison and Sons estimated the cost of purchasing new perforating equipment at £450 for each machine, with extra overtime costs if only one machine was purchased. Harrison and Sons informed the GPO that production of sheets with fewer than 240 stamps per sheet would require overtime work and therefore additional costs. Provided extra costs were allowed and the final designs were finalised well in advance, preferably by mid-October, Harrisons saw no problem meeting the anticipated production demands. Such discussion, while necessary, remained unresolved until the nature of the stamps, which depended in many respects on the designs, had been decided.

The next step was to obtain appropriate photographs of King Edward in the respective uniforms, so enquiries were made of the King's Private Secretary on 15 July. The Post Office already had a photograph of the King in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders that was being considered for the definitives. The Palace forwarded a photograph by Hugh Cecil of His Majesty in a Naval uniform, informing the Post Office that it was understood no photograph of the King in an Air Force uniform existed. It was likely that the King would sit for more photographs in the early autumn, when it would be possible to commission one of him in the uniform of an Air-Marshall.

A further meeting was held on 24 July between A G Tydeman, the Controller of the Stores Department, the Director General and A R Kidner, the Director of Postal Services, to discuss the stamps. They were told that the Hugh Cecil photograph of the King in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet was unacceptable through lack of clarity and another would have to be found, unless the negative, which had previously not been available, could be obtained. It was decided to pursue other possibilities, such as other photographs or oil paintings that

may exist. If new photographs were required they needed to be taken by an expert aware of the requirements for use on stamps, in addition to being of the right temperament as the King was apparently a 'difficult and nervous subject'. Harrison and Sons was already preparing proofs using the Seaforth Highlander photograph featuring a three-quarter length portrait of the King and various borders. Mr Kidner suggested that the stamps ought to carry special wording as Coronation stamps with perhaps the date. Kidner insisted that as British stamps do not carry the name of the country they should all include the King's head, even pictorial designs.

This meeting was followed by another on 29 July between R Fanshawe, the Vice-Controller of Stores, and Mr Rhodes, the Manager of Harrison and Sons, at which Rhodes presented bromides of the trial designs produced by his firm. These had been produced very hurriedly to indicate what would be possible. Although they were only regarded as preliminary designs, Rhodes told Fanshawe that Harrison's was unwilling to take the designs further until the GPO had decided how it wished to proceed (whether Harrison's would be asked to complete them or whether outside artists would be commissioned). Harrison's was also very concerned about the delay in finalising the size of the stamps as it made it impossible to undertake any preliminary work such as ordering new perforating machines and threatened the ability to produce sufficient quantities of the stamps in time. In addition, not knowing whether new machines would be necessary or the amount of overtime required, made it impossible for Harrison's to give an accurate estimate of the expected costs. The bromides revealed some distinct possibilities using the Australian size for the low values, while the choice for the 2s 6d stamp could be left for some time, there being less urgency since the print run would be much smaller. These points were reinforced in a letter from Rhodes to Fanshawe on 31 July emphasising the need for an early decision about the size and designs for the stamps. Delays would lead to greater expense and possibly failure to meet the issue deadline.

The warnings from Harrison's sparked some action in the Supplies Department where a memorandum was produced for the Controller, Tydeman, prior to his meeting with the Director General on 4 August. Among the issues highlighted for immediate resolution were the questions of size, design and denominations. The Australian size was recommended for the ½d, 1d and 1½d, and the Silver Jubilee size for the two pictorial stamps, one of which would be 2½d. The only drawback to the Australian size was that in the sheets of 160 stamps (8 x 20) the watermark would appear sideways. This was becoming a matter of some urgency since, if it was not possible to finalise the sizes before 1 September, the estimated additional cost would be at least £500 and possibly as much as £1,000. As regards design, it was suggested to allow Harrison and Sons' staff artists to continue development to a finished stage in order that a proper assessment be made. However, the denominations for the issue were far from settled. It had more or less been established there would be three low values, ½d, 1d and 1½d, featuring the King in military uniforms, but the high value

pictorials were less certain. It was likely that one would be a 2½d, with proposals for a line engraved 2s 6d. There had been discussion of a 2d value stamp but serious objections were raised. First, this value was used largely for revenue rather than postage and as such about 80% of the income from sales would go to the Inland Revenue rather than the Post Office. Second, the colour of the definitive, orange, if used for a commemorative would not show a special design particularly well.

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## DESIGNS SUBMITTED

During August the first bromides of completed designs were submitted to Fanshawe at the GPO by Harrison and Sons, based on the designs submitted in late July as roughs. The first set of 18 Bromides, 12 large (nos. 81 - 92) and 6 small (nos. 93 - 98), were despatched on 7 August based on a charcoal sketch by a Mr Montgomery, one of Harrison and Sons' staff artists. These were followed on 14 August by another set of eight specimens (the exact nature of these is not clear) numbered 102 - 109, which Fanshawe viewed and then returned with a request for the following changes to be made to three of them, and some bromides in the Australian size (nos. 103 and 104):

No. 107 - Border to be narrower

The border design seems 'fuzzy'. It might be better if it were symbolic, eg leaves, etc, or something that can be recognised, or a more or less formal design. It might be desirable to leave in the ties.

1937 to be smaller.

'1937, Postage and 1½d' do not stand out as well as on some of the other specimens. Possibly a little more tone in the background of the border would be an improvement.

No. 109 - Put more tone into the frame background.

Improve the drapery; possibly shorten it.

Figures and letters might stand out a little better; more of the recess or alternatively relief effect might be produced.

Improve the oval.

No. 102 - This is a promising design.

Improve as you think desirable.

Suggest dark tone should be somewhat lighter.

1½d panel might possibly be very slightly shallower. If so, carry leaves very slightly higher.

'Postage' might stand out better.

Further designs were sent to Fanshawe on the following day, 15 August, by Harrison and Sons: however, details of these are not available. Assuming the numbering system was continued, there were at least five of these, as references to design no. 114 are found in the production files. On 27 August, Fanshawe submitted a request for colour essays of five favoured designs: nos. 104, 103, 112, 114, 113. These designs were to be essayed in the colours of the ½d, 1d, 1½d and 2½d definitives if possible, and if not then in one or two of these colours with at least one of them in the ½d, 1d or 2½d colours. He included the following instructions for the printers:

No. 104 - Satisfactory. Improve details. In photo remove evidence of arm on left.

No. 103 - 3 in 1937. Make as in No. 104.  
Make Postage and 2½d as in No. 104; but leave the four emblems grouped at top. The 1½d is too big.

No. 112 - This design is considered to be good.  
Left and Right borders need to be slightly narrower. 1937 and circles too large.  
Remove 1937 to top and 1½d to bottom. Also change position of shields and circles if this will not upset balance of the design. Presumably leaves, etc, in side borders will have to be carried down slightly lower to meet circles or shields

No. 114 - The criticism here is that the 1½d and Postage seem detached but it is proposed to see what they look like in colour unless some improved alteration can be suggested which will be in keeping with the general design.

No. 113 - Perhaps 1½d and Postage can be improved. 1937 and circles might be very slightly smaller.

General Crown to be the up-to-date pattern - as in the stamps now being printed - but in a size suitable for each design.

These essays were required for the Director General to see on 7 September.

In the interim, it was decided that for the two pictorial designs suitable photographs of the Royal Castles were needed. A number of commercially available photographs were considered but were all rejected by Harrisons as unsuitable for reproduction. Fanshawe decided that the only course was to obtain photographs taken with stamp reproduction in mind and submitted a request to the Lord Chamberlain for permission to have the castles

photographed. These were received towards the end of August and passed to Mr Grierson of the Post Office Film Unit for the work to be undertaken.

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## ESSAYS RECEIVED

Essays of the designs submitted in July and August arrived on 7 September as ordered, and shown to the Director General and others on 8 September. Five of the designs for the low values were essayed in various colours each using the Henry Cecil portrait of the King in the uniform of the Welsh Guards with different backgrounds and frames. A sixth design showed the King in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders from the photograph by Bertram Park and was stylistically quite different from the others.

Designs submitted as essays on 7 September:

- A - Full Frame
- B - Curtain with Frame
- C - Oval wreath - emblems in corners
- D - Oval wreath - emblems at top
- E - Curtain without Frame
- F - Seaforth Highlanders.

All of these designs had been essayed in the same denomination, 1½d, and in four colours: green (½d), red (1d), brown (1½d) and blue (2½d) on Royal Cipher paper. In addition, another set of the six designs was printed in green (½d) on coated paper. Unfortunately actual essay numbers themselves are not found in the Post Office production files; however, it would appear that about 22 essays of each design in the various colours were submitted, making a total of 132 essays. The first essays of the pictorial design featuring Windsor Castle arrived at the Post Office on 8 September. The designs showed Windsor Castle with the King's head facing to the left placed in an oval on the left of the essay. The denomination (2½d) was below the head and the designs included the year 1937. These had been printed in the 'Australian' size on both coated and uncoated paper and mounted on six cards, each with two stamps in different colours. Actual essay numbers are not available.

The essays listed were shown to a meeting of senior GPO officials including the Director General, the Director of Postal Services and the Controller on 8 September. It was agreed to have some of these essays prepared with a few modifications and seek the recommendations of the Royal Fine Arts Commission. It was also decided to seek a modification of a design prepared for a possible Accession issue in January featuring the King in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders. There was no wish to invite outside artists to submit designs since the officials felt that such exercises had not been particularly productive in the past. As to a pictorial design, it was necessary to approve a fifth

denomination, as the 'Australian' size, which they had approved for the four low value stamps, was not considered suitable for pictorial purposes. They agreed to suggest to the PMG that a 1/- stamp be issued rather than a 2s 6d, because the latter was rarely used. The PMG approved these proposals the following day, although he suggested that the new designs should be kept as simple as possible. He doubted that the King would approve the use of a portrait in which he wore a military uniform and asked that a simple design based on the head used for the new definitives, the Hugh Cecil portrait, be obtained. As for the Royal Castles pictorial stamp, a 1/- stamp was approved; however, the PMG decided that the choice of castles ought to be limited to either Windsor or St James's Palace.

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### ROYAL FINE ARTS COMMISSION

On 15 September, Harrison and Sons' Manager, Mr Rhodes, wrote confirming arrangements whereby the company would obtain two perforating machines for the production of stamps measuring 1.2in by 0.95in, with 320 stamps to view, on a mill sheet in two panels divided by a margin of 0.8in. These machines would produce final sheets of 160 stamps. Meanwhile the Royal Fine Arts Commission agreed to meet on 23 September to consider the stamp design, with Kidner and Tydeman, Director of Postal Services and Controller of Stores respectively, present. Prior to this meeting, further essays were received from Harrison and Sons incorporating the changes that had previously been selected. The following arrived at the GPO on 23 September:

Essays of modified and new designs -

1 card containing four 1½d stamps in each of six designs in ½d colour.

1 card containing four 1½d stamps in each of six designs in 1d colour.

1 card containing four 1½d stamps in each of six designs in 1½d colour.

1 card containing four 1½d stamps in each of six designs in 2½d colour.

Six cards each containing 16 1½d stamps (ie, four each in ½d, 1d, 1½d and 2½d colour).

Two panels of six 1½d stamps each of six designs in four colours.

(These six designs appear to be the five shown to the RFAC as listed below and the version of design C featuring the Hugh Cecil head.)

Two cards each of four 1½d stamps in ½d colour of Seaforth Highlanders design as developed but not used for the definitives.

Two panels each of six stamps of the same.



Two panels of four 1½d stamps in ½d colour mounted with Medal head by Humphrey Paget.

Two panels of six of the same unmounted.

Two panels of four 1½d stamps (design C without emblems) in ½d mounted with the revised Hugh Cecil head.

Two panels of six of the same unmounted.

**Bromides:**

Nos. 131, 132, 133, 136 - large medal head

Nos. 134 - 5 set small image

Nos. 137, 138 - Shadow Hugh Cecil head.

The GPO also received the artwork for the design utilising the effigy head from the Royal Mint's official medals engraved by Humphrey Paget, which had been prepared by Harrison and Sons staff artists and essayed. A plaster cast of this effigy together with one of the crowned Coronation medal effigy by Percy Metcalfe had been requested during production of the Edward VIII definitives but had only recently been completed.

Essays of five designs were shown to the members of the Royal Fine Arts Commission on 23 September:

Seaforth Highlanders design

Seaforth Highlanders design with typography from design C

Design C without emblems

Design B with frame strengthened, all with Welsh Guards portrait

Plaque frame (Design G).

Although the version of design C featuring the Cecil head is not included in this list, the subsequent discussions indicate it was seen at the Commission's meeting. It would appear, however, that the essays featuring the Paget head were not shown to the Commission at this juncture although the reason is not clear. There was some feeling among the Commission members, who were somewhat guarded in their response to the GPO, that they should have been consulted at the beginning of the process, and that the designs they were seeing were already largely finalised. The GPO was under pressure to include the Commission in the selection process as there had been some criticism in the House of Commons, and considerable criticism in the press, over the Edward VIII definitives and the fact that the Commission had not been consulted. Nonetheless the Commission did offer its view on the Coronation stamp designs on 5 October in a letter to the PMG. It was quite strong in its opinion that the stamps should not feature the same portrait of the King as the

definitives (eg, the Hugh Cecil portrait), and suggested that a crowned effigy might be more appropriate. At the same time it was critical of the crown that did appear on some of the designs, saying that it was insubstantial and should not be left floating in space. The oval wreath frame was described as 'serviceable' but the laurel wreath itself required reworking to give it some life. The Commission's main criticisms, however, were that the typography on all of the designs was poor and should be revised regarding spacing, scale and relation to the numerals. It suggested that a professional typographer be called in. The other main criticism was that shading of the background was inconsistent and made the lettering appear uneven. Criticisms along these lines had previously been made of the new definitives by those who advocated the participation of the Royal Fine Arts Commission in the stamp design process.

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## FURTHER DESIGNS DEVELOPED

It is not clear what action the GPO took as a result of its consultation with the Commission; however, it would seem that many of the approaches were abandoned at this point and the Commission's recommendations acted upon. The use of photographs of the King in the uniforms of the Services was superseded by the engraved head by Humphrey Paget used for official medals. A set of essays was produced by Harrison and Sons on 12 October incorporating the medal head into the background from design G used earlier, creating a new design which subsequently became known as the 'Plaque' design:

One mounted card bearing four 1½d stamps, Australian size in brown.

Two unmounted sets of four of the same stamps.

One card bearing four panels of four 1½d stamps, Australian size, in green, red, brown and blue.

Two sets of each colour unmounted - eight panels of four stamps.

These essays were shown to the PMG and the Director General who suggested that Eric Gill, a well-known typographer and stamp designer, be asked to carry out modifications to the technical details. Gill was also asked to work on the full frame design A with the Hugh Cecil head on the assumption that it would be replaced by the medal effigy. Specifically Gill was asked to review the following:

### **Design A: Hugh Cecil Head**

The wreath surrounding the portrait is lifeless and stiff. The leaves I gather are laurel. Is there any alternative?

The Crown: Can be made larger and clearer for printing. No objection to design of crown being slightly altered.

The Head: It is proposed to substitute medallion head for the Hugh Cecil portrait.

Figures, 1937: The figures in each group of two are too close together.

The lettering to be revised if necessary, as regards spacing, scale, and its relation to the numerals generally.

### **Design B: Medallion Head**

Produced from approved Mint design for medals. Question whether dark and light tones in the left and right of the oval are correct. Larger and clearer crown, probably with a base.

Question whether figures 1937 to be spaced out. General review of lettering and numerals.

While this work was being undertaken, the PMG approached the King to seek approval for the use of the medal effigy. Without this approval it was absolutely essential that new photographs of the King be made available immediately. King Edward, to complicate matters further, asked to see essays of the Plaque design with the crowned effigy by Percy Metcalfe to be used on the Coronation medals. If these proved unsatisfactory, it would be possible to have uniformed photographs taken specifically for the stamps.

Meanwhile photographs of the Palace of St James had been procured from the Post Office Film Unit. These were sent to Harrison and Sons who selected one of the photographs. Essays in three colours of this design in the 1/- value were forwarded to the GPO on 23 October:

Four mounted cards, each containing three stamps in different colours - two of these cards bear stamps printed on coated paper.

Six mounted cards each containing four stamps

Six sets of four stamps, unmounted.

These were considered unsatisfactory because the view of the Palace did not reproduce with sufficient clarity when reduced to stamp size. Photographs of Windsor Castle, Tower Bridge and the Tower of London were obtained and Harrisons began preparing essays of these. Attempts were also being made to have photographs taken of Caernarfon and Holyrood House but these did not arrive for some time.

Eric Gill submitted his amendments to the designs and included a fresh design of his own which used the Paget head in a square frame surround. These were shown to the PMG on 1 November who asked that Harrisons produce colour essays with the head slightly reduced so that it did not impinge on the frame quite so closely. Eric Gill was also asked to prepare a design featuring the crowned effigy from the Coronation medal by Percy Metcalfe as the

King requested. Gill was not entirely pleased with the use of a photographed head rather than a drawn one and made his opinions known in a letter to Tydeman:

'I hope very much that those who have the responsibility of judging will agree to the simplicity of the design. Assuming that the photograph of the Coronation medal (without the inscription) is to form the central feature of the stamp, my proposal is that the background be a plain background very finely lined so as to obviate the difficulties of printing ... and that above the head there be the date, 1937, and below, the word postage, filling the entire width of the stamp and thus allowing of good fine, well spaced letters. The tilt of the head allows for a fairly good space at the back of the neck for the placing of the denomination of the stamp. There will be no border lines or other ornaments.

'I am only too pleased to help in the matter and I hope that the part [of the design] for which I am responsible will be good, but I am so much averse to the photographic reproduction of a plaster model that I would not like it to be supposed that I was responsible for the whole design.

'Photography may be an unworthy method for making a pictorial representation of the King of England, but you don't really get out of it by having a photographic representation of somebody else's sculpture.'

(Eric Gill to Tydeman, 7 November 1936)

Essays of the retouched Plaque design and Eric Gill's design together with essays of the pictorial designs featuring Windsor Castle, Tower Bridge and the Tower of London were received on 12 November:

#### **LOW VALUE ESSAYS**

16 Mounted cards, each card containing four 2½d stamps.

A - Plaque design amended by Eric Gill - large head.

B - the same with slightly smaller head.

C - Eric Gill's design with large head.

D - the same with slightly smaller head.

The above stamps printed in ½d green, 1d red, 1½d brown and 2½d blue.

#### **PICTORIAL ESSAYS**

Three small mounted cards each bearing three 1/- pictorial stamps: Windsor Castle, Tower Bridge, Tower of London, in three colours - grey, umber and brown.

One large mounted card containing nine 1/- pictorial stamps as above.

On 13 November the PMG was shown artwork for Eric Gill's design incorporating the crowned medal effigy of the King as well as the essays mentioned above. He decided to proceed with essays of Gill's design but wanted Harrisons to reduce the shading on the Mint's photograph of the head. As for the other two designs for the low values, the PMG agreed that the Plaque design should be abandoned and that Gill's uncrowned head design should be essayed again with the lines of the frame carried out slightly to allow use of the larger head. Modifications to the tone and shading of the head and background were also requested. Of the pictorial designs, the PMG rejected the design featuring Tower Bridge as wholly inappropriate to the occasion and asked that efforts be made to obtain better photographs of St James's Palace and Buckingham Palace

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### ROYAL FINE ARTS COMMISSION AGAIN

A large number of essays incorporating the changes requested arrived at the GPO on 27 November. The low value designs were Eric Gill's rectangular frame with the uncrowned medal head and his design featuring the crowned Coronation medal head with no frame. The essays, all in 2½d value, varied according to the shaded background and are marked as designs A to D, a designation which bears no relation to designs A to G used earlier as these had been abandoned. Design E is a Windsor Castle pictorial design.

#### **Essays received on 27 November**

Design and description

A - Head and Crown, printed in green, red, brown and blue on Royal Cypher paper - 16 stamps.

B - Head, printed in green, red, brown and blue on Royal Cypher paper - 16 stamps.

The following were delivered by hand to Mr Fanshawe on the same day:

Design and description

A - one mounted card bearing two stamps of each of four colours.  
four mounted cards each bearing two stamps (four different colours).  
three pairs of each of four colours unmounted.

B - stamps in the same quantity and format as design A.

C - one mounted card bearing two stamps of each of four colours.  
four mounted cards each bearing two stamps (four different colours).

D - stamps in the same quantity and format as design A.

(The colours referred to above are the ½d, 1d, 1½d and 2½d.)

E - one mounted card bearing three stamps (Windsor Castle) in different colours.  
three mounted cards each bearing one stamp (Windsor Castle) in different colours.  
three unmounted stamps each of three different colours.

As had occurred previously, these essays were shown to the Director General and subsequently to the PMG who had already agreed that the Royal Fine Arts Commission should be consulted again. The Commission, which met on 30 November, was much more positive about these essays. It was of the opinion that the King should be shown crowned as the stamps were to commemorate the Coronation and also felt that the uniform colouring of the background was preferable to the shaded one as used on the Edwardian definitives. Specifically, the Commission preferred the design using the Metcalfe effigy from the Coronation medal but made a few technical comments. The reduction of the crown to stamp size had led to a loss of detail that was inevitable, but the velvet lining of the crown had lost its texture and appeared flat. This would be relatively simple to remedy. The angle of the base of the crown appeared to have changed in reduction from that on the medal where it was almost horizontal. As for the lettering the Commission felt that the word 'Postage' ought to be fractionally reduced in size and the 'P' strengthened. The '2' of the denomination appeared too prominent.

The Commission was somewhat less complementary over the pictorial designs, which it saw on an informal basis only. The essays of Windsor Castle, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge were felt inadequate as the views when reduced lost all character, while the framework needed complete reconsideration. It was suggested that rather than try to incorporate large scenes, a selection of smaller views should be chosen which would be distinctive and manageable within the confines of a stamp. The Commission suggested some of the following: the gateways of St James's Palace and Hampton Court; the Round Tower at Windsor; the Middle Tower entrance to the Tower of London; the Wakefield Jewel Tower; the processional gateway to the Victoria Tower; the entrances to the Castles at Edinburgh and Caernarfon; the gateway of the Palace of Holyrood House; the western facade of the Horse Guards; and the North Transept of St Paul's Cathedral. Because of the difficulty in obtaining suitable photographs of the views that had been used, the Commission suggested they be hand-drawn by any one of a number of experienced topographical artists. This was not really practical given the amount of time that remained before the planned date of issue, 13 May 1937, and because it did not wish to be associated with whatever was eventually issued, the Commission did not make its comments official. H C Bradshaw, the Commission's secretary, summarised the position:

'The Commissioners very much regretted that so little time should be available for considering the interesting and delicate issues involved. The subject was one to which they would have been very happy to give the closest attention, but they feared that from the information at their disposal, the time factor would make it impossible to study the matter with due care and consideration.'

(H C Bradshaw, Secretary's note, 1 December 1936)

Eric Gill's design with the crowned effigy of King Edward VIII that had been selected by the Royal Fine Arts Commission was sent to Harrison and Sons for final essays incorporating the recommended changes. The essays were forwarded to the GPO on 8 December. The crowned head had been tilted slightly and the typography touched up, but otherwise they remained the same:

Essays received on 8 December - Medal Head with Crown.

Two mounted cards each containing four sets of two stamps, 2½d value, printed in green, red, brown and blue.

Three panels of two stamps in green

Three panels of two stamps in red

Three panels of two stamps in brown

Three panels of two stamps in blue

All in 2½d value.

On 9 December Harrison and Sons received two photographs, of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. On 11 December 1936, King Edward VIII abdicated the throne in order to marry the American divorcee, Wallis Warfield.

Alan Griffiths  
National Postal Museum.  
March, 1994

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## REFERENCES

Post Office Archives File:

Post 33/5575 Edward VIII General Papers

Post 33/5577 Edward VIII and George VI General Papers

Also a series of twelve articles by Douglas Muir in STAMP MAGAZINE, January - December 1987 on the philatelic items of King Edward VIII.