

Some Pitfalls and Traps to be avoided in stamp collecting

by
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(A talk cum display given to the Malta Philatelic Society members on
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Prepared for printing by John A. Cardona

The first part of my talk comprised outlining my early days of stamp collecting in the 1940's / 50's, the blunders I made in ignorance and leading to a guide, through sensible steps to take, in forming a collection. I do not intend to cover this section in the interests of brevity. I will concentrate on the second part in which the subject of collecting the G.B. Dorothy Wilding Definitive Issues of the 1950's / 60's is used as a "vehicle" to demonstrate how important is the need for awareness.

Following the demise of King George VI and his eldest daughter Elizabeth taking over to become Queen Elizabeth the Second, the stamp designer Dorothy Wilding succeeded with her design of the Queen's head to appear on the new British Definitive issues. These were printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure and the first two stamps, the 1½d green and 2½d red were issued on the 5th December, 1952. A basic FDC is shown in Figure 1.

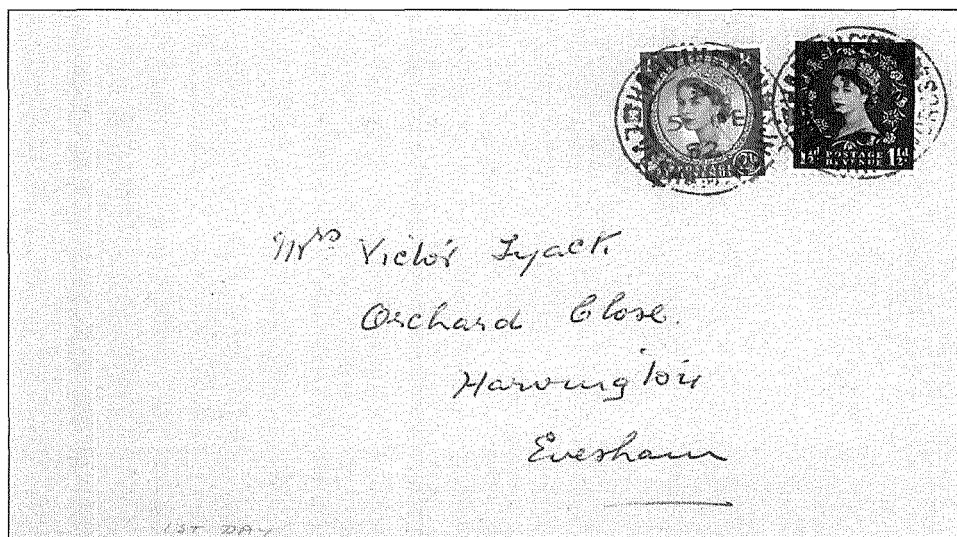


Figure 1

During 1953/4, 17 values were issued on 6 different dates, hence there are 6 different FDCs to look out for! The basic set looks as shown in Figure 2. Its watermark is shown in Figure 3 being the Tudor Crown. The Post Office also arranged for the stamps to be issued in Booklets (panes) and via vending machines (coils). These resulted in the stamps having inverted or sideways watermarks. Note that watermarks are not shown in the Stanley Gibbons Simplified Catalogue, one needs the 'Concise' or 'Specialised'. Thus *beware*, there are 3 values with sideways and 5 with inverted watermarks.

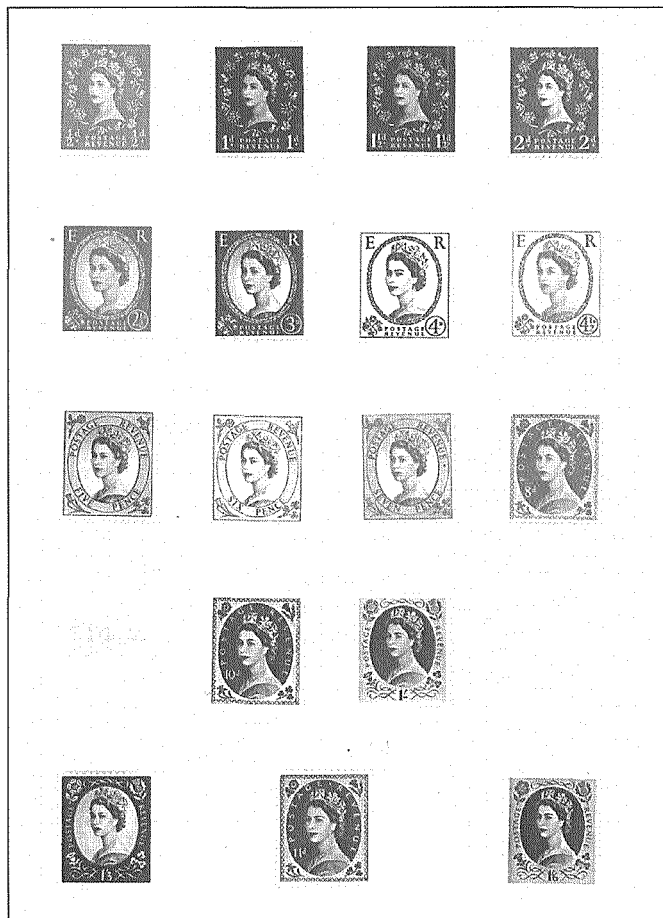


Figure 2

Watermark
Tudor Crown
Upright



Figure 3

September 1955 saw the set re-issued using the St. Edwards Crown watermarked paper, see Figure 4. The 2d brown being in two shades making 18 stamps in the set. N.B. this set has 5 sideways watermark values and 7 inverted.

**Watermark
St Edwards Crown
Upright**

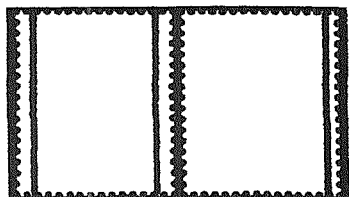


Figure 4

Graphite-lined and Phosphor Issues

These are used in connection with automatic sorting machinery, originally experimentally at Southampton but now also operating elsewhere. In such areas these stamps were the normal issue, but from mid 1967 all low-value stamps bear phosphor markings.

The graphite lines were printed in black on the back, beneath the gum; two lines per stamp except for the 2d (see below).



174 175 (2d only)

Figure 5

the watermark sideways with the crown pointing left and 4 with it pointing right. There are also inverted watermarks to look out for and the set becomes even more complex by being re-issued on white paper.

The Graphite set was reissued on 24th November, 1958 with two more values added and on multiple crown watermark paper, but only inverted watermarks need be looked out for i.e. no sideways watermarks.

18th November, 1959 saw the set re-issued but in addition to graphite lines on the back phosphor lines were added on the front. The St. Edwards Crown watermarked paper was used for ½d, 1d and 1½d values and multiple Crowns for the other 5 stamps.

During 1960 – 67 the multiple crown watermark set was re-issued now bearing phosphor bands on the front. Beware of colour variations of these – green, blue or violet and vary in number, one or two bands. There are many watermark varieties.

Other varieties to beware of on Wildings are e.g. coil joins where stamps were used in vending machines and misplaced graphite lines, see Figure 7. Figure 7a shows booklet panes which can result in sideways and inverted watermarks.

**Watermark
Crowns
Cream Paper**

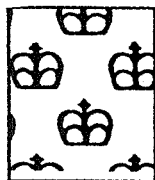


Figure 6

MIS-PLACED GRAPHITE LINES - 1958

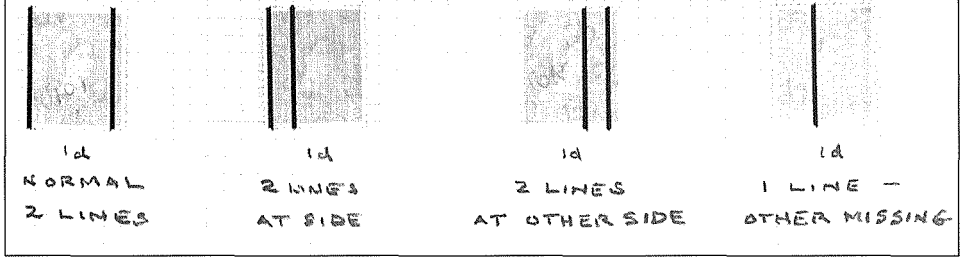


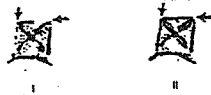
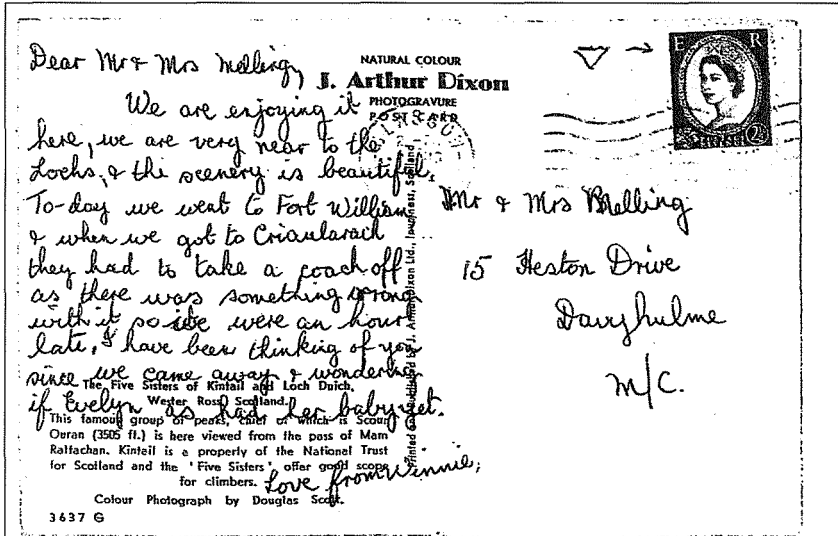
Figure 7



Figure 7a



FLAWS. These there are in abundance on Wilding issues, mainly spots and scratches but some are quite interesting. Also of special note is a 'design-type' variety in the Queen's Crown Diadem. See Figure 8.



Two types of the 2d.

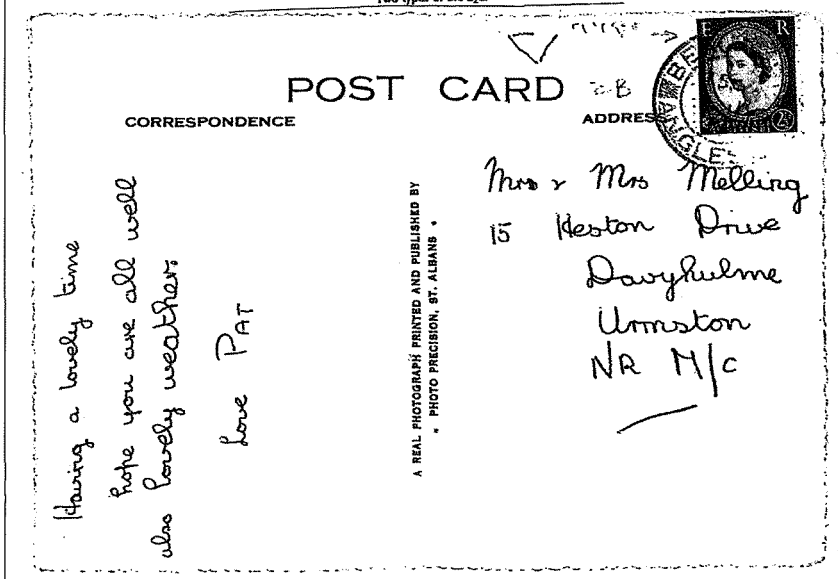


Figure 8

CURIOS. The backs of Queen Elizabeth 2d value, as shown in Figure 9, were used by someone with an incredible ‘hand’ and eyesight to write out the ‘23rd Psalm’ (Figure 9a) and ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ (Figure 9b). They are both dated 1959.



Figure 9

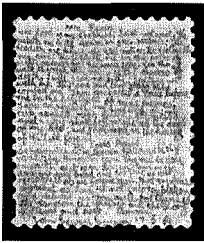


Figure 9a

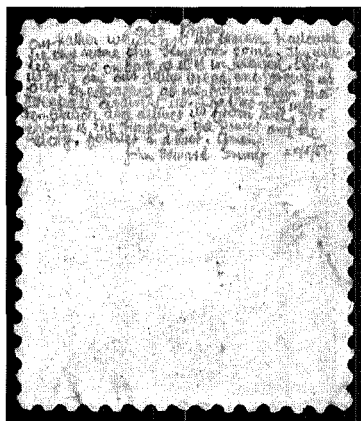
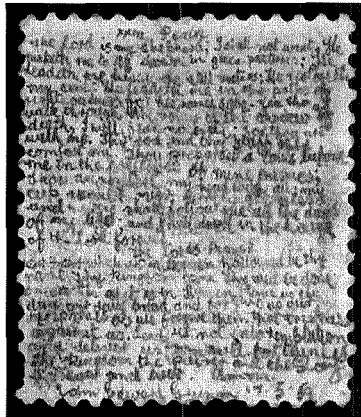


Figure 9b

A mint set of multiple crown watermark stamps is shown at Figure 10 overprinted with black bars – strictly for use by the Post Office for Staff Training and Familiarisation purposes.



Figure 10

SUMMARY. The Wildings form a good example of how easy it can be to start collecting a set of stamps which superficially may look alike, but unless you start out with enough information as was pointed out in Part I, the Traps are numerous and the Pitfalls can be deep.

Part I also gave some ideas on how to mount and arrange the mint or used stamps, hopefully without “teaching grandmother to suck eggs” as we say in England, i.e. teaching people something they already know.

Once again it was a pleasure to give a presentation to the members of the Malta Philatelic Association.

75 years ago
the first Malta Air Mail took off
on 1st April 1938