



L13: 2/- CAPTAIN COOK LANDING, TYPE L13 (Recess) Fifty Years Ago From the CP NZ Bulletin – January 1966 “New Zealand Stamps” by Campbell Paterson

We have now worked our way through the 1935 Pictorials to the 2/- value. This is certainly the most complex stamp in the set in its multiplicity of perforations, watermarks, papers, plates and plate varieties.

In the Stanley Gibbons catalogue no recognition of the special wartime papers, or the existence of three plates and their most interesting differences, is given; this is understandable in a catalogue which covers the stamps of the world – In our catalogue we have the space and inclination to deal fully with what has been called the most interesting stamp in New Zealand philately.

I cannot here go into the full story of the 2/- Captain Cook - which story can fill a book and indeed has done so; (R.G. Collins' study of this stamp is a masterpiece), but I hope to show that a methodical approach makes the recognition of various issues an easy matter.

Following the usual custom I will presume that my readers have before them a large pile of these stamps, completely unsorted and potentially including every major variation.

The first step is to divide the stamps into two piles; the first pile to include all stamps with the first (so called “single”) watermark and the second pile with the “multiple” watermark.

This division by watermark is readily enough done with the aid of the usual black tray and benzene watermark detector. If the detector is used it is well to remember that each single watermark stamp will show two watermark units: the multiple watermark stamps will show parts of several watermark units certainly more than two. (the reason for this is that the first watermark was designed for use with small stamps; where the stamps are double size it follows that there are two watermarks).

But for those whose eyes are equal to the task, the “mesh” of the paper is easily detected and since all the “single” watermark paper had vertical mesh while all the several “Multiple” watermark papers had horizontal mesh, we have here a means of dividing the “Singles” from the “Multiples” ten times faster and much less messily than by the benzene-and-tray method. (To avoid confusion here I should explain that by “benzene” I mean a highly refined

form of white petrol - I am not sure what it is called in the UK but if in doubt use Ronsonol lighter fluid. It's ideal for the job!)

So, we now have the stamps in two piles - one pile all Single watermark, the second all Multiple. Turning first to the Singles: as the Catalogue shows, there are two (and only two) perms in the “Singles”. These are the irregular 13-14 x 13 ½ and the more regular 13 ½ x 14. By careful gauging with a perforation gauge there should be no difficulty in sorting out the stamps that gauge an even 13 ½ along top or bottom.

These are all L13b. All others of the “Singles” must be L13a, i.e. the stamps with the irregular perms, partly 13 and partly 14 along the long sides of the stamps.

We now deal with the Multiples - a more complex task but not difficult if we adopt a methodical approach. The first task is to segregate all stamps on the thinnish, poor quality, rough (and often discoloured) paper used during the war years, 1942 through to 1947 when the issue ceased. This wartime paper should give little trouble - it really is low grade quality and looks like a rather poor newsprint. The watermark is usually readily visible. So - let us take it that all the coarse paper stamps are now before us - they will be perf. 12 ½ L13f, or perf. 13 ¾ x 13 ½. L13g. They cannot be anything else. Leaving these, fully sorted, for the moment, we turn back to the remainder of the “Multiples”: it is a simple matter to eliminate the perf. 12 ½ stamps - these are L13e.

We have left now only stamps on fine paper and they must be either the irregular perf. 13-14 x 13 ½ or the regular 13 ½ x 14. The latter (as we have seen in the Single watermark stamps) is easily gauged as it is a regular 13 ½ for the whole length of top and bottom. This is L13d, a stamp common in used condition but scarce mint. The remainder of our 2/- Captain Cooks must now be all perf. 13-14 x 13 ½ - by our steady elimination they can be nothing else. They are L13c.

Next month I will tell something of the fascinating variety-hunting that is open to any holder of quantities of the Captain Cook 2/-.