



L5: Notes from Campbell Paterson

Campbell Paterson NZ Bulletin, NZ STAMPS AS I HAVE KNOWN THEM ,January and February 1965

Pictorials to be found in seven different combinations of watermark and/or perforation and/or paper – quite a formidable number but one which is equalled or surpassed by several other stamps in the same set. It may be that the multiplicity of variations frightens off some beginners but it can be said that for the same reason the set provides a wonderful field for those who are not deterred by appearances. I hope to persuade beginners that this can be a happy field of endeavour for them too. The set is in fact an easy one to handle provided that one approaches it methodically.

Below I suggest a methodical approach that will make things easy for others as it has done for me in the past. For the purpose of description, I am going to presume that we have before us a frighteningly large pile of 2½d stamps, completely unsorted and unidentified but presumably including copies from all of the different issues.

Watermarks

As is well known, there were two watermarks used during the life of the set and it is best that the first step should be the separation of the so-called “Single” watermark stamps from the “Multiple” watermark stamps. I hope to convince readers that they do not really have to look for the watermarks at all – an easier and more reliable means of recognition is available – but for those who insist on looking for the watermarks I must make it clear that the “Single” watermark is so called because it was intended to provide one watermark unit for every stamp in a sheet of small stamps.

In cases such as the 2½d where the stamp is double size there are therefore two watermarks on every stamp of the “Single” watermark issue. This odd fact may persuade readers that avoiding looking at the watermarks is a good

idea!

The alternative method is to divide the stamps into two piles using the difference that exist between the first paper (with the Single watermark) and the later papers (all with “Multiple” watermark).

Mesh

To the experienced eye there is little resemblance between the early paper and any of the later papers but admittedly this recognition of difference is not easy for the beginner to understand. Apart from the colour of the papers – slightly greyish in the earlier paper – the main difference lies in the fact that the first paper always had a vertical mesh and all later papers had horizontal mesh.

The mesh is visible when one knows what to look for. Recognition of mesh is a tremendous help in dealing with NZ stamps – not only in this issue but in the majority of NZ issues.

But for those to whom mesh is a new subject, yet to be mastered, there is another guide, namely the tendency of all papers to curl when warmed. No better illustration of what I mean exists than the very stamps we are dealing with. When warmed, “Single” watermark stamps curl into a vertical roll; “Multiple” watermark stamps curl into a horizontal roll. This is the direct result of the lie of the mesh of the paper – vertical in the Singles and horizontal in the Multiples.

So, returning to our pile of stamps: those who can see the mesh can probably sort out the “Singles” at a rate of 100 in 5 minutes; practice can reduce this in an amazing fashion to a rate of perhaps 3 minutes per 100; those who work by the curling paper method will be neither so certain of their accuracy nor as quick as those who follow the mesh method, but they



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quick as those who follow the mesh method, but they will certainly be vastly faster and much more accurate than those who look for the watermarks either with or without a watermark detector. So there it is.

Our first move is to sort the “Singles” from the “Multiples”. It is good fun and becomes more so as practice makes perfect. For those who take the trouble to master “mesh” it is as easy as pie.

Sorting Singles

Last month we reached the point where we had (theoretically) divided a large accumulation of these stamps into two piles -- the first being of all stamps with “single” watermark, the other of all with “multiple” watermark.

Now putting aside the “multiple” for attention later, we concentrate on the “singles”.

The CP Catalogue tells us that there were two different perforations known as the “13-14x13½” and the “13½x14”. Much time could be spent on explaining the difference between these two perms and their history; I prefer to leave that to another day. This article is meant to help collectors to recognize their stamps and to sort them with ease.

So, instead of going into a long description of the perms and how they were used I will merely record this easy fact: to sort the “singles” just select all stamps which gauge an exact and regular 13½ along the top of the stamps. These are the 13½x14 and it follows that all the other “singles” are the 13-14x13½; simple isn't it?

In passing, it may be noted that the 13½x14 issue was an experimental one, made with dampened paper and perforated gummed after the sheets had dried.

The gum used was a heavy brown one and serves as an instant identification in mint stamps as no similar gum was used on any other 2½d. In the 13-14x13½ a relatively common inverted watermark exists.

No 13½x14 with inverted and reversed watermark has ever been recorded but for reasons that will be obvious to students such a thing would be a major discovery and very valuable. [One discovered (by CP) since 1965. Ed.] For the record, the 13-14x13½ is L5a.

The 13½ x 14 is L5b. A superb albino (uncoloured second impression on an otherwise normal stamp) is known on L5a; one pair only has ever been reported. It is the finest albino I know, with the doubling showing in embossed effect across the central peak and elsewhere. I can describe it with authority as I was fortunate in being its discoverer.

Sorting Multiples

Now to the “multiples”. The CP Catalogue shows that two grades of papers were used for these issues. One was the pre-war fine textured, rather heavy paper and the other was the wartime inferior grade paper with coarse back surface, easily seen watermark and inferior, dull prints. The fine-paper prints have a smoother, clearer appearance. But the best guide is the rather thin, ill-finished texture of the coarse paper seen on the backs of the stamps. We divide the “multiples” into “fine” and “coarse” piles. Turning first to the “fines”.

The CP Catalogue reveals that there are three perms on fine paper with multiple wmk. They are the “13-14x13½” and two “perf 14” issues, one of these being a “line” perf, the other a “comb” perf. The 13-14x13½ is L5c, the perf “14 line” is L5d and the perf “14 comb” is L5e.



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In sorting, the 13-14x13½ is easily eliminated by the general weakness of colour, the result of plate-wear, and the thin lines that form the outer frame are weak; in both perf 14 issues the outer frame-lines are uniformly clear and strong. Another easy way to find L5c is to select all stamps that do not gauge an even 14 along their tops.

Perf 14 issues

The two perf 14 issues are admittedly more difficult to separate. One must judge by their corner perfs when sorting single stamps. "Line" perf stamps have one or more irregular corners, "comb" perf stamps have uniform corners. The matter is much easier when blocks are examined. By their nature, "line-perf" holes tend to vary in their placing at the central point of any block; "comb-perfs" result in there being one hole only in any central point between four stamps. Practice will soon make for generally easy recognition though there will inevitably be stamps about which there is some doubt.

Having now eliminated the fine paper stamps we turn to those on coarse paper. Here the CP Catalogue tells us that there were two perfs used -- one gauging 14¼ along the top or bottom of each stamp, the other 13¾ similarly.

Exact gauging is time-wasting, a perfectly satisfactory result can be achieved by sorting out all stamps that nearly gauge 13½ along the top: these must be L5f while the remainder, (by elimination perf 14¼ along the top) will be L5g. L5g is decidedly scarcer than L5f.

The 2½d is a fine stamp for intensive study for those with time and the inclination. The final issues, L5f and g, came from Frame Plate 4 and an unnumbered centre plate; both plates were subject to repeated repair work -- no doubt to lengthen their life at a time when economy was of vital importance. The result is a series of issues showing some impressions in two or even more states. Further details are available in the recently issued Volume IV of the NZ Handbook.

Apart from the numerous variations, reentries and retouches in L5f and g there are certain flaws in the same stamps and inverted watermarks in L5c and L5d that are worth watching for. The general consensus of opinion is that this 2½d is one of NZ's most attractive designs and one of our more rewarding subjects for intensive study.