

The Union's First Stamp

The South Africa Act by which the union of the four colonies of the Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Orange River Colony and Transvaal was effected, came into force on 31 May 1910.

There was undoubtedly every intention that a postage stamp commemorating the event should be issued on that date. However, the death of King Edward VII on 6 May 1910, necessitating the preparation of a new die showing the head of King George V, made this impossible. In fact the first essays in the De La Rue archives are dated 21 June 1910, and the commemorative stamp only appeared on 4 November 1910, commemorating instead the opening by the Duke of Connaught of the first Union Parliament in Cape Town on that date.



King George V

The design was by H. S. Wilkinson, Distributor of Stamps, of Pretoria, with the value shown as 1d. (the Empire letter rate) which was altered to 2½d. (the foreign letter rate). This was a strange decision, as there was little call for a stamp of this value, and it is now known that at the time of Union each of the colonies had plenty of this value. As a result, seeing that the quantity ordered of the commemorative was also in excess of requirements, the last of them was only seen in 1914.

The printers prepared two essays, similar basically, with a 'C' instead of 'K' in the Dutch version of the place name, and the names of the colonies in a second oval ring above or below the shields bearing their coats of arms. One had '1910' at top, a crown at each side and the value flanked by the words 'Postage' and 'Postzegel' at the sides, with the date at the foot. The other had the crown at the top and the value capped by

'Postage' and 'Postzegel' at the sides, with the date at the foot. A final essay was then prepared by altering the latter. It had the names of the colonies painted out of the original positions, the two lower shields moved up and the name of each colony on a scroll beneath the shields. This was accepted and printing commenced.

This printing was by Thos. De La Rue & Co. Ltd., of London, using the recess process, in Prussian blue on white wove paper, watermarked multiple rosettes and perforated 14 by a single comb appliance. The sheets comprised 120 stamps in 10 rows of 12 each with a centre-indicating line in the colour of the stamps in the centre of each margin, which was otherwise blank. The bottom margin was perforated through.

Blue ink is generally very tenacious, so that even in hand-work great difficulty is experienced in wiping the plate clean. This accounts for the fact that in most cases the surface of the paper had a bluish tinge, varying considerably in depth on different sheets during production. There was also a variation in the shades of blue, but all copies can be considered of equal value, with the exception of those on which the surface of the paper is pure white or very deeply blued. These are much scarcer.

Although it was a public holiday, post offices opened for a couple of hours to sell the stamps.



Original drawing by H. S. Wilkinson

The KE VII Essays

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| a. | The original drawing signed by H. S. Wilkinson | 3 000,00 |
| b. | The 'mock-up' study, made by altering two proofs of trial dies, in blue | 3 000,00 |

The KG V Essays, in blue

- | | |
|---|----------|
| a. With crown at sides | 2 500,00 |
| b. With value at sides | 2 500,00 |
| c. As above with lower shields moved up and name scrolls lettered by hand | 2 500,00 |



Essays

Die Proofs

- | | |
|---|----------|
| a. Vignette only on glazed unwatermarked paper | 3 000,00 |
| b. Black on white card distributed to the press | 1 500,00 |



"Specimen" in black



Die Proof

Colour Trials

- | | |
|--|----------|
| a. Blue-black on unwatermarked paper | 1 500,00 |
| b. Bright blue on unwatermarked paper | 2 000,00 |
| c. Block of four in issued colour, imperforate on ungummed paper watermarked multiple rosettes | 4 000,00 |

Specimens

- | | |
|--|----------|
| a. Handstamped in violet (35½ x 4 mm), diagonally downward, removed from the publicity cards | 1 250,00 |
| b. Overprinted in black script (11½ x 1 mm), diagonally upward | 600,00 |
| c. As above, but horizontal | 900,00 |

Presentation Card

Unoverprinted pairs on special mount, inscribed "Forwarded with the compliments of the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa" for distribution to the press 1 250,00

Publicity Card

Bearing one of the handstamped specimen stamps for display in post offices.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| a. English – in black | 1 500,00 |
| b. Dutch – in red – only one known | 3 000,00 |

2½d Basic Stamp, Control and Varieties

		<i>Single</i>	
		Mint	Used
1	2½d Prussian blue. Shades of indigo and light to deep blue with surface of paper ranging from white to bluish	6,00	3,00
a.	Postmarked on day of issue		50,00
b.	As above on cover		250,00

Controls – per block of four

Ca. Marginal guide line	M/U	100,00
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Varieties – in wording below Cape shield

V1	'BF' for 'OF'	25,00
V2	'UF' for 'OF'	25,00
V3	'O' and 'F' tied together	25,00
V4	Parts of 'G' missing	25,00

Other Varieties

V5	Vertical mark below and to the right of the second 'A' in AFRIKA Row 1/8	50,00
V6	Line from right side of crown through to the Transvaal shield. Row 6/1 of the later printings only	75,00

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Interprovincial Usage

Once the Union of South Africa came into being, the stamps which were used from 31 May 1910 until the King George V series appeared on 1 September 1913 were those previously current in the former colonies, bearing the head of King Edward VII. As these 46 stamps were the only ones available, to be complete, a Union collection should have examples of them postmarked between those dates.

To begin with each province used its own colonial stamps, but a notice in the Government Gazette of 19 August 1910 removed any restrictions confining the use of the postage and revenue stamps to the territorial boundaries of the original colonies of issue, authorising them to be valid for use throughout the Union. The custom then arose of collecting each of those stamps with postmarks indicating use in all four provinces, during what came to be known as the Interprovincial Period.

They are identifiable solely by their postmarks on which the name and date – between 19 August 1910 and 31 August 1913, both days included, should be clearly legible. Their listing here is under the headings of “C” – used in the Cape; “N” – Natal; “O” – Orange Free State and “T” – Transvaal.

In addition to the current stamps, also officially authorised for use were all the earlier colonial stamps which had not been demonetised. By a notice in the Government Gazette of 15 October 1937 they were demonetised on 1 January 1938. Thus these then obsolete stamps can be found with interprovincial postmarks and current stamps of more than one colony used in combination. They do not fall within the scope of this work.

Further supplies of certain values of the Transvaal stamps had to be obtained in order to eke out stocks until those of the new series appeared. Of these the sheets of the halfpenny value had the plate number as 2 and the one penny ones 3 and 4. When they have these plate numbers attached they are strictly speaking Union stamps, in spite of the Transvaal inscription.

When the new definitives became available the old ones were not withdrawn, and those of the 2½d. value in particular were still being sold at the end of 1914, which is why so many of them are postmarked after the interprovincial period. As the £1 stamps of the Union did not appear until July 1916, the closing date for the £1 Natal and Transvaal denominations should strictly speaking be extended till then.



Cape stamp used in the O.F.S.

Interprovincial definitive series

Cape of Good Hope, 1902-04

		Used single			
		C	N	O	T
IP1	½d. Green	,50	2,00	4,00	2,50
IP2	1d. Carmine	,50	2,00	2,50	1,00
IP3	2d. Brown	1,50	3,00	3,00	2,00
IP4	2½d. Ultramarine	6,00	10,00	12,00	10,00
IP5	3d. Magenta	1,50	3,00	4,00	3,00
IP6	4d. Olive-green	3,00	5,00	6,00	5,00
IP7	6d. Bright mauve	3,00	6,00	6,00	7,00
IP8	1/- Yellow-ochre	6,00	8,00	10,00	8,00
IP9	5/- Brown-orange	15,00	25,00	30,00	25,00



Natal stamp used in the Cape

Natal, 1902-09

		Wmk.Mult. except when asterisk denotes single Crown CA			
IP10	½d. Blue-green	1,00	,50	2,00	1,00
IP11	1d. Carmine	1,00	,50	2,00	1,00
IP12	1½d. Green and black*	6,00	3,00	10,00	6,00
IP13	2d. Red and olive-green	2,00	1,00	3,00	2,00
IP14	2½d. Bright blue*	8,00	5,00	10,00	8,00
IP15	3d. Purple and grey*	4,00	1,00	6,00	4,00
IP16	4d. Carmine and cinnamon	8,00	5,00	10,00	8,00
IP17	5d. Black and orange	12,00	6,00	15,00	12,00
IP18	6d. Dull and bright purple	6,00	3,00	15,00	7,00
IP19	1/- Black/green	100,00	10,00	100,00	100,00
IP20	2/- Purple and bright blue/blue	12,00	10,00	—	13,00

IP21 2/6d. Black and red/blue	16,00	10,00	—	15,00
IP22 5/- Green and red/yellow	40,00	27,00	55,00	40,00
IP23 10/- Green and red/green	80,00	60,00	120,00	80,00
IP24 £1 Purple and black/red	300,00	250,00	—	300,00

Note: Unpriced items have not so far been recorded.



O.R.C. stamp used in the Transvaal



Transvaal stamp used in the Cape

Orange River Colony, 1903-07

Wmk.Mult. except when asterisk denotes single Crown CA.

IP25 ½d. Yellow-green	1,50	2,00	1,00	1,00
IP26 1d. Scarlet	1,50	2,00	1,00	1,50
IP27 2d. Brown*	3,50	4,00	2,50	4,00
IP28 2½d. Bright blue*	4,00	4,00	3,00	4,00
IP29 3d. Mauve*	2,00	3,00	1,50	2,00
IP30 4d. Scarlet and sage-green	4,00	5,00	3,00	5,00
IP31 6d. Scarlet and mauve*	5,00	5,00	2,00	5,00
IP32 1/- Scarlet and bistre	20,00	25,00	20,00	20,00
IP33 5/- Blue and brown*	45,00	60,00	40,00	45,00

Note: The 4d. with "IOSTAGE" flaw is rare, but is known used in three of the Provinces during this period.

Transvaal, 1904-09

IP34 ½d. Yellow-green	,50	1,00	1,00	,30
IP35 1d. Scarlet	,50	1,00	1,50	,30
IP36 2d. Purple	1,00	1,50	1,50	,50
IP37 2½d. Bright Blue	3,00	3,00	4,00	2,50
IP38 3d. Black and sage-green	2,00	2,00	2,50	1,00
IP39 4d. Black and brown	2,00	3,00	3,50	1,00
IP40 6d. Black and orange	2,00	3,00	3,50	1,50
IP41 1/- Black and red-brown	3,00	5,00	4,00	2,00
IP42 2/- Black and yellow	5,00	5,00	7,00	2,50
IP43 2/6 Magenta and black	5,00	4,00	6,00	3,00
IP44 5/- Black and purple/yellow	7,00	8,00	10,00	5,00

IP45 10/- Black and purple/red	12,00	15,00	30,00	10,00
IP46 £1 Green and violet	15,00	20,00	40,00	12,00

Interprovincial Officials

Of the railway systems operating prior to Union, that of the Cape did not use stamps perforated with initials as did those of Natal (NGR for Natal Government Railways) and the Orange River Colony and Transvaal (CSAR for Central South African Railways). On Union all three systems were amalgamated to form the South African Railways, but stocks on hand of the NGR and CSAR perforated stamps were used up during the interprovincial period. Towards the end of 1910 two denominations of the stamps of the Cape and five of the Transvaal were perforated "S A R" (with the S above the R) by removing the letter C from the appliance previously used. The use of these perforated stamps was discontinued after 1912.

The statement in a previous edition that the sheets of stamps were folded to quarter size before being perforated with the letter "NGR" unfortunately did not take cognizance of the narrow vertical and stamp width horizontal gutters in those sheets. Had the appliance been able to perforate the initials 60 at a time (10 rows x 6) then horizontal pairs of stamps having them upright on one stamp and reversed on the adjoining one would have had to have the gutter between, which they did not. It is thus almost certain that the size was such that it could process only 10 or fewer rows x 3, and that

only upper or lower halves of the stamp sheets were folded – and then not through the centre of the gutter – which would account for the large misplacement of the initials so often found.

The inverted initials, which are actually much scarcer, must have resulted from the half-sheets being fed to the appliance upside down. Thus only the ½d., 1d. and 6d. stamps of Natal and the ½d. of the ORC, of which larger quantities were processed, are found with the initials inverted. They must be regarded as being worth five times as much as those showing them upright.

Because the Cape, ORC and Transvaal stamps perforated “NGR” almost invariably are found with Durban postmarks dated in the interprovincial period, it is generally accepted that the perforating took place after Union. Actually it is most unlikely that so many different stamps were perforated with the initials of a system which had since become part of a larger one. What is much more probable is that the stamps were perforated for use where the NGR operated into the other three colonies, where Natal stamps were not acceptable. After Union the surplus stocks of them would have been recalled to Durban where they could be, and were, used up.



NGR Inverted



CSAR



SAR

King's Head Stamps Perforated “NGR”

Cape of Good Hope, 1902-04

	Used single
IPO1 ½d. Green	20,00
IPO2 1d. Carmine	20,00
IPO3 2d. Brown	25,00
IPO4 3d. Magenta	25,00
IPO5 6d. Bright mauve	40,00
IPO6 1/- Yellow-ochre	100,00

Natal, 1902-09

IPO7 ½d. Blue-green	10,00
IPO8 1d. Carmine	10,00
IPO9 2d. Red and olive-green	15,00
IPO10 3d. Purple and grey	15,00
IPO11 6d. Dull and bright purple	40,00
IPO12 2/- Purple and bright blue/blue	60,00

Orange River Colony, 1905-07

IPO13 ½d. Yellow green	25,00
IPO14 1d. Scarlet	40,00

Transvaal, 1904-09

IPO15 ½d. Yellow-green	20,00
IPO16 1d. Scarlet	25,00

King's Head Stamps Perforated “CSAR” (CS above AR)

Orange River Colony, 1903-07

IPO17 ½d. Yellow-green	50,00
IPO18 1d. Scarlet	60,00
IPO19 2d. Brown	100,00

Transvaal, 1904-09

IPO20 ½d. Yellow-green	15,00
IPO21 1d. Scarlet	20,00
IPO22 2d. Purple	25,00
IPO23 3d. Black and sage-green	40,00
IPO24 6d. Black and orange	100,00

King's Head Stamps Perforated “SAR” (S above R)

Cape of Good Hope, 1902-04

IPO25 ½d. Green	60,00
IPO26 1d. Carmine	80,00

Transvaal, 1904-09

IPO27 ½d. Yellow-green	15,00
IPO28 1d. Scarlet	20,00
IPO29 2d. Purple	25,00
IPO30 3d. Black and sage-green	30,00
IPO31 6d. Black and orange	100,00

Interprovincial Postage Dues

The only postage due labels used in the colonial period were those of the Transvaal, and they were brought into general use during the interprovincial period. Stocks were not withdrawn as those of the new series became available, and Transvaal labels of 5d., 6d. and 1/- values were still being used in the early 1920s.



Transvaal, Postage Due 1907

		Used single			T
		C	N	O	
IPD1	½d. Black and blue-green	3,00	4,00	4,00	2,00
IPD2	1d. Black and scarlet	2,00	3,00	6,00	2,00
IPD3	2d. Brown-orange	1,00	2,00	8,00	1,00
IPD4	3d. Black and blue	4,00	7,00	15,00	3,00
IPD5	5d. Black and violet	10,00	20,00	—	8,00
IPD6	6d. Black and red-brown	10,00	20,00	30,00	10,00
IPD7	1/- Scarlet and black	20,00	25,00	100,00	10,00

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King's Head Series

In January 1911 competitive designs were invited for a series of postage stamps for the Union of South Africa, and in May that year it was announced that prizes had been awarded for submitted designs by six of the entrants: Mrs Guy Brunton, Johannesburg (3d.); The Cape Times Ltd., Cape Town (1s.); Karl Greger, Leigh-on-Sea, England (2d.); C.P. Immelman, Paarl (6d.); D. Mackay, North Finchley, London (½d., 1d. and 5s.) and E. A. Nicolay, Cape Town (2½d.). (Also illustrated are unaccepted essays for 5s. and 3d. See *SA Philatelist*, March 1983.)

The Award-winning Essays

