
Date Punch Revenues of Rhodesia

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Brian Dennis's newsletter about Rhodesian perfin in the October 2003 *Bulletin* prompted me to examine my accumulation. Though I can add nothing to his listing of commercial perfin, I decided to review my punch dated items, especially since I had just obtained a fun bunch of these issues to add to my collection.

First, a bit of philatelic-historic perspective. British South Africa stamps, listed under "Rhodesia" in the Scott catalog, were introduced in 1890. Stamps with coat of arms designs were issued until 1909 and then some were overprinted "RHODESIA". A set of six Victoria Falls Bridge commemoratives was issued in 1905, but I have never seen any date punches in these issues. In the 1910 through 1919 portraits of the British monarchs, Mary and George V appear together on large horizontal stamps, and the king alone wearing naval cap appears on small definitives. Both portrait types were inscribed "RHODESIA." When the territory was divided in 1923, the same portrait of George was used, but the small definitives were inscribed "SOUTHERN RHODESIA."

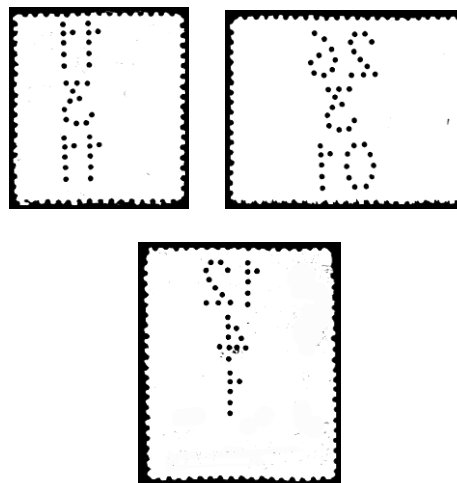


Northern Rhodesia is of no concern because no date punches have been reported in those stamps. The earliest coat of arms stamp I own is punch dated 28/3/98. Based on my material, these unoverprinted arms stamps were punched for the next 23 years until 1921 even while the overprinted arms and the portrait stamps were being used. My overprinted issues were punched from 1911 through 1915, the portrait stamps from 1911 through 1923, and the Southern Rhodesia items from 1924 through 1928, with the last date 2/11/28 in a large George V revenue issue. Other collectors may be able to

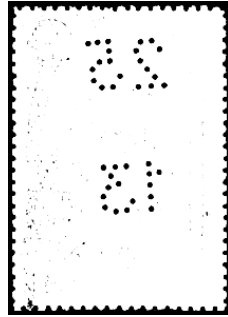
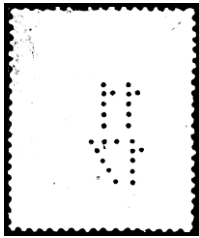
extend the punched usage dates of the various face-different stamp types.

A great variety of stamps were used to meet the required tax fees. I have examples from one penny (postal) to 30 pounds (revenue). Fifty pound revenues have been noted in auction catalogs. In the 1996 Scott catalog there are 140 major face-different varieties listed for Rhodesia. There are many sub-varieties listed for color and perforation differences. The 1983 Gibbons lists 322 possibilities including the color and perforation varieties.

There are enormous possibilities for expanding a date punch collection based on the catalog data. An examination of the punching reveals some interesting things. I suspect that all of the punching took place after the stamps were affixed to the documents. Hence the variance of the date positions with some only partially on the stamp. The year date figures sometimes vary: 1901 may be punched as 01 or just 1. Normal punching is usually a three-tier date: day/month/year, but year/month/day punches are also common.



Occasionally, one finds a two-tier date, either month and year or day and year. When there is a missing figure, the probable cause is that the pin adjustment was improperly set causing faint dumb punches, or no punch at all. The cancel date on the face of the stamp can elaborate the true date.



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these stamps is the variety of cancellations. Many punched items are found without cancels, though some are still on piece. When present, the typical cancel is a purple, double-ringed oval with the authority at top, the town at the bottom and the date in the center. Large in size they tie the stamps to documents. Because of the color of the cancel and the medley of colors of the stamps, and because most off-document stamps lack a full cancel, determining the source of the cancel is difficult. Some offices probably lacked a canceling device, so a pen was used to date and initial the stamps.

My only document with dated revenues is a deed of transfer for lots, dated Jan. 20, 1921, with "DEEDS REGISTRY OFFICE" in the cancel. The transfer was handled in the Bulawayo office of Coghlan and Welsh (attorneys). Other complete and incomplete cancellations are listed here to show the variety of offices that used punch dated revenue stamps.

- Registry Office
- High Court of Southern Rhodesia

- Magistrates Office
- Mining Commissioner
- Office of the ??
-e Civil Comm....
-ft's Office
- C C (Victoria)

Town cancellations discovered thus far:

- Bulawayo
- Gw....
- Hartley
- Mazoe
- Salisbury
- Victoria

Some town names were changed when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe in 1978, so former names may not be listed on modern maps. I don't know if the distribution of my punch date stamps for Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia is characteristic of other collections. For the record, the chart includes duplicates of some twenty dates or issues.

- 1898--1903 23
- 1904--1909 42
- 1910--1915 76
- 1916--1921 27
- 1922--1928 8

It might be fun some day to check a perpetual calendar to determine which days of the week received the most punching action. However, a much larger sample of items would be necessary to reach some conclusions.