

## THE 'IDEAL' STAMP - 1912.

Roy Gault

I must admit that I had never heard of the 'Ideal' Stamp until *John Mathews* sent me a link to a block of twenty that appeared on e-Bay towards the end of August 2020. Intrigued, I decided to find out a bit more about 'it' and how 'it' came into being.

I'm sure we're all familiar with the first series of stamps issued in 1911 at the start of King George V's reign, with the controversial  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile of the monarch, the so-called Downey heads - this was a break with tradition that was not received warmly by the general public! There were a number of attempts to improve the printed image, so I've shown Die 2 versions of the issued  $\frac{1}{2}$ d and 1d stamps, with the well defined beard, and shaded Lion. I've also taken the opportunity to show you 'what might have been' in the shape of the  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d stamp.



Enter the scene a certain *Frederick John Melville* (1882-1940), who early in 1912 had the bright idea to invite the public to design a postage stamp which could be used to *replace* the 'unpopular' Downey heads. Fred (he was always known as Fred, never Frederick) was a journalist who was passionate about British Philately. As a result of him being rejected in 1899 for membership of the 'Philatelic Society, London' (now 'The Royal Philatelic Society'), he founded 'The Junior Philatelic Society' (now called 'The National Philatelic Society'). 'The Stamp Lover' is the official organ of the JPS/NPS - it first appeared in 1908, and has appeared without a break ever since. The 'Art competition' was held under the auspices of the JPS, and duly took place, with a winner and two seconds being declared. The original prizes of 10 guineas for the winner, and 5 guineas for second place, were shared equally. In the event, the 'clever' designs of three more entrants were also shown to the public.

The winning entries were displayed at the '*Jubilee International Stamp Exhibition*' held at the Royal Horticultural Hall, London, between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October 1912.



H Schubert



L S Rayner



J Ashley



Runner-up 1



Runner-up 2



Runner-up 3

All six are shown here courtesy of the publication '*British Stamp Exhibitions*' (Part 1) by Glenn H Morgan and Graham M Wilson.

**Henry Schubert** of Southgate, London, won the competition, so it's fitting that we should try to find out a little more about him.

We know from census records that he was born in Leipzig, Germany, and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr of 1889 he married Minnie Percy in Lambeth. In the 1891 census he's a 29 year old Journeyman **Die Sinker**, but in 1901 he's described as a 32 year old **Engraver** (Worker). The 1911 census has him living at 81 Oakfield Road, Southgate, and described as a **Printer** (Worker), aged 40 years. The couple don't appear to have had any children. Minnie Schubert, of 9 Shelbourne Road, Southgate, died 24<sup>th</sup> September 1919, leaving £1,342 (£70,000 today) to her husband Henry Schubert, **Die Sinker**. So we know he was still alive in 1919, and relatively wealthy, but all attempts to find his death in the UK, or a record of a return to his homeland, have failed. The suspicion is that he went back to Germany as Germans living in this country during the 1914-1918 war were given a hard time, a good many being interned.

To me the designs are overly fussy, but how was Henry's design used?

Well, the winning entry wasn't used exactly as the 'artist' envisaged, as only the four images surrounding the frame were used. The shape of the frame was changed along with the image of the King's head, and the denomination placed in a small cartouche. Interestingly, the King's head consisted of *vertical* lines which were also used for the 1913 KGV 1d issue in Australia. The head used for the KGV stamps replacing the Downey heads had *horizontal* lines - see inset.



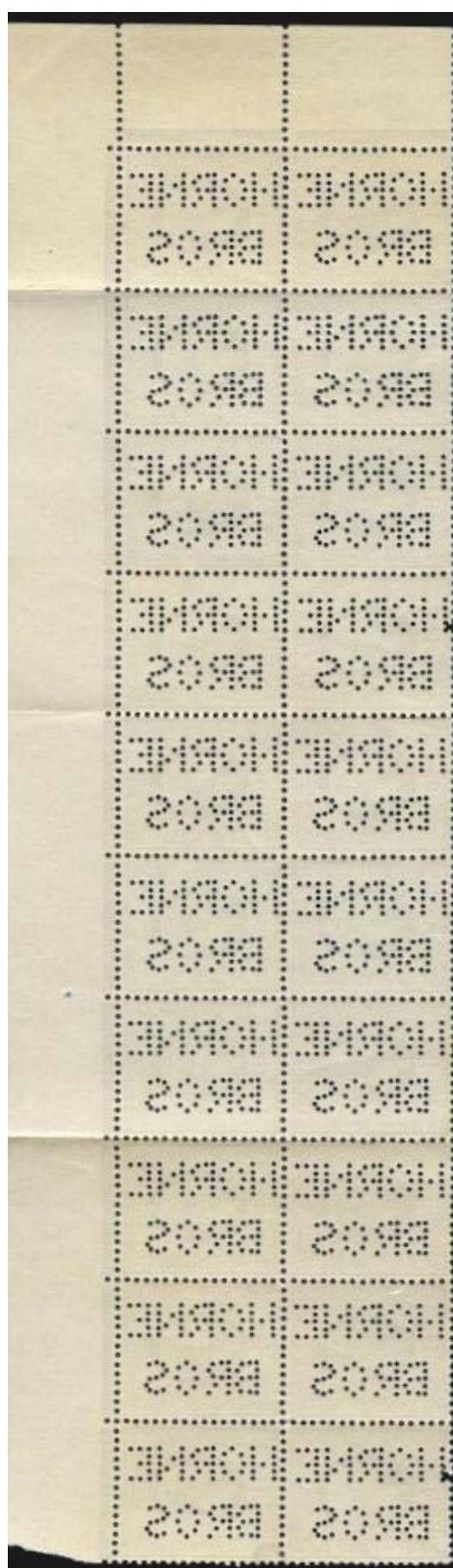
The master die for the 'Ideal' stamp was *designed* by Ronald Arthur Harrison (1891-1968) and *engraved* by his father, Thomas Samuel Harrison (1862-1933), both of whom were working at that time for 'Waterlow Brothers & Layton'. The family emigrated to Australia in 1912 where Thomas and Ronald were involved in the 1913 Australian issue shown above. The 'Ideal' stamps were printed in sheets of 240 (two panes of 120) at the Exhibition by 'Waterlow Brothers & Layton' using the 'Printex' (Surface printed) method on a Wharfedale machine made by Eliot. The sheets were perforated 15x14 using two 'Glover & Co' perforating machines. Stamps were also available imperforate, both gummed and un-gummed. A smaller plate was also made to demonstrate (and so compare) the old recess-printing technique.



The stamps were printed in a variety of colours, representative of the colours used in contemporary stamps - Green, Red, Brown, Orange, Blue, Purple, Grey-green, Reddish-purple, Bronze-green, Olive-green, Bistre-brown, and even Black. Orange is probably the rarest.

Hang on, isn't this a Perfins Bulletin, *so where's the Perfin interest?*

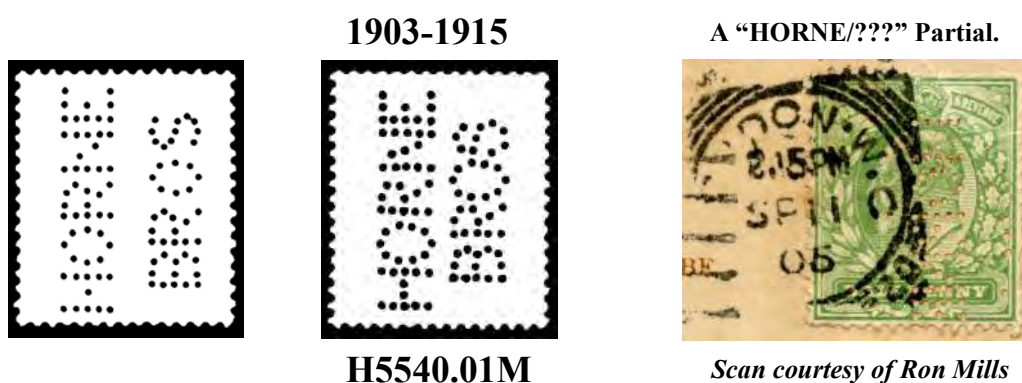
Well, this 10 x 2 top-left marginal block of twenty is the reason!



At first glance the block appears to have been produced by a multi-headed die, but careful analysis of each of the individual patterns reveals minor differences in placement which are *not* mimicked exactly in the vertical pairs. This means that the die was *single headed*. Or do the broken perms suggest 6x(?), I'll let you decide!

These stamps (technically labels) were not valid for postage, and were only available at the Exhibition, or from dealers after the event. This poses two questions: who bought them, and why were they carefully Perfinned? Of course, we may never get answers to such questions.

“**HORNE/BROS**” is a recorded Perfin, H5540.01M, *thought* to have been used 1903-1915 by *Horne Bros*, General Outfitters, 388 Strand, London WC. However, as can be seen, the two Perfins do not match!



The whole object of the ‘Competition’ was to find a replacement for the disliked Downey Heads, but five days *before* the opening of the Exhibition, the GPO spiked Fred Melville’s guns by issuing the KGV 1d Scarlet, with the 1½d and 2½d values also issued during the event!

The Postmaster General, Herbert Samuel, opened the Exhibition and gave a speech in which he acknowledged the artistic merits of the winning entries, but added that he ‘*preferred his stamp to the one produced as a result of the competition*’ - but that’s something you can decide for yourselves. Answers on a postcard please, ...



Happily that's not the end of the story for our '*Cinderella*' item, she was destined to '*go to the Ball*' on at least 3 more occasions! Once to Paris in 1913, to the USA in the 1930's, and back to 'Blighty' in 1980.

The '*Printex Co Ltd*' was actively involved in the 1912 Jubilee Stamp Exhibition, and naturally went across to the 1913 Paris International Exhibition. 'Printex' was a brand name for a printing process owned by 'Clark Miller & Alfred Motley' which produced printing plates using a photographic process.

The illustration alongside has been taken from the front of their advertising literature used in Paris, where they also printed as souvenirs, examples of the 'Ideal' stamp in a variety of colours, slightly enlarged to differentiate between the London and Paris printing.



The '*Tatham Stamp & Coin Co*', based in Springfield, Massachusetts, is also known to have used the 'Ideal' stamp image for advertising purposes. Dates are difficult to establish, although it is known 'used' in 1938 to cover an old price on one of their American coin lists.



The company produced labels with their name (in two versions) in the wreath around the King's head, in a variety of colours, sizes, either perforated, imperforate, or part perforated.

And finally, we have *Victor Short*, the philatelic historian, who produced a lithographic reproduction c1980, imperforate, but again in a variety of colours. They were printed in sheets of **8x4** by 'Arboron Press Ltd', based in Orpington.



A seventy year old echo!