

Irish Inverted Overprints.

SUPPLEMENT No. 14

EIRE PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION January-February, 1964

The inverted overprints which appeared in the year 1922 have been the subject of much discussion and debate in the philatelic press. With the exception of the 2d Thom (Die I and II) inverted overprints in blue-black, the genuineness of the inverted overprints which appeared is generally accepted.

Unfortunately, numerous forgeries early appeared which confused many collectors and placed the whole series under suspicion for some time. Considering the pressure under which both the printers and the Provisional Government worked to issue the first overprints, it is remarkable that only a few errors actually appeared.

The desire of the Postmaster-General, Mr. J. J. Walsh to prevent any exploitation of the new stamps is no better illustrated than by his promptness in ordering removed and destroyed any imperfect stamps found in stock.

It is the purpose of this compilation to gather together in one place all of the material on the inverted overprints which appeared at the time in the philatelic press and leave to the reader the task of deciding for himself the genuineness of these inverts, especially the Thom blue-blacks.

2d THOM BLACK (Die I)

The first inverted error reported was the 2d Thom (Die I) in black which originated in Cork. (See illustration to the left, #311, Bedford Sale, 1948)

Mrs. Charlotte J. Cooke, in her "The Irish Inverted Overprints" mentions that its discovery was first noted in Stamp Collecting, March 4, 1922, and in The Philatelic Magazine, of March 11, 1922.

Mr. J. Stafford Johnson, the well-known Irish philatelist gave the most complete history of this find in the December, 1922 issue of Stanley Gibbons Monthly Circular (pp.114-115):

"A friend of mine, Mr. McCathy Morragh, having occasion to post two letters on 17th February, (day of issue of the overprints - ed.) bought two stamps at the Grand Parade Post Office, Cork. Noticing that the stamps tendered him were 'upside down', he asked if there were any more. He was given a few more, including the control number (S 22 Imperforate). The assistant further said she had another complete sheet 'upside down' and of this he bought the whole lower pane of one hundred and twenty stamps (Control S 22 Imperf.). On one of these sheets, apparently, many of the stamps showed the overprint very definitely misplaced towards the left." + + +

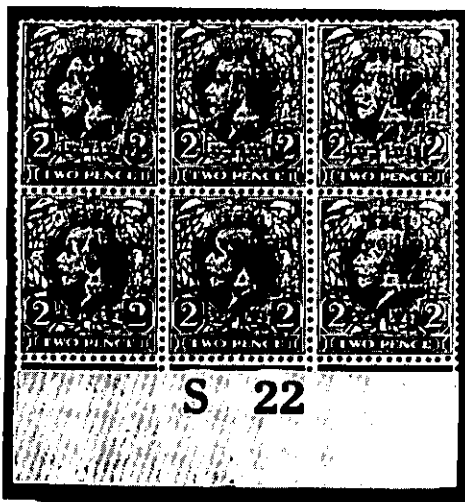
"On the 18th February, a well-known philatelist, Mr. W.E. Stears, while going through the correspondence in his office noticed a letter from Cork bearing a 2d. (Die I) stamp with inverted overprint. This stamp had the overprint much displaced as in some of Mr. Morragh's copies. Mr. Stears at once wrote down to the Cork firm to get him as many copies as they could.

Eventually he succeeded in obtaining about twenty mint and one used-all showing the misplaced overprint. Mr. Stears has shown me the correspondence he had on the matter, which proves that his copies were procured in the ordinary way at the Cork Post Office."

Item #311 of the Bedford- Hopkins Sale of December 15th, 1948: 2d. die I, variety overprint inverted, mint unmounted block with pane margin attached. With R.P.S. certificate. Cat £20 (see Photo Plate III).

Item # 456 of the Marquess of Bute Sale (incorrectly illustrated as #451: 2d. orange Die I, error overprint inverted, a control block (3x2) with control "S22", imperf. margin. (See Photo) Valuation £20.

Item # 455 of the Marquess of Bute Sale:- 2d. orange Die I, error overprint inverted, a mint pane of 120, very slightly creased. Cat. £575. Valuation £ 150.



2d THOM BLACK (Die II)

The Thom black 2d (Die II) inverted overprint apparently originated in Enniscorthy, County Wexford.

It was reported in Stamp Collecting on June 10th, 1922 (page 248) by G. J.J. Dublin that: "Some 2d Irish Provisional stamps on pieces received by me from an Insurance Company included an inverted overprint on Die II posted at Enniscorthy (obviously not by a philatelist) on May 19th, so it is evident that at least a sheet of Die II with inverted overprint has escaped the vigilance of the P.O. officials."

Mr. W. Ward writing in the Freeman's Journal of January 2, 1923 (re-printed in Stamp Collecting of March 17th 1923, page 609) gives further interesting details of this stamp:

"Another error was discovered at Matlock, Derbyshire, England, contemporary with finds of the same stamp [the die II of the 2d value] at Dublin, all postmarked from Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. The English find was a romance and a singular coincidence that an English collector walking down a Matlock street should 'spot' an envelope bearing one of the then 'new' stamps lying in the gutter - and on examination discover that the overprint was inverted. The envelope had evidently been cast aside by some agricultural labourer who had received a letter from home in Co. Wexford. Others were found among insurance correspondence, but as at least 240 (the number of stamps in a sheet) must exist, there are many yet to be accounted for."

Mrs. Cooke reported in her pamphlet on the inverted overprints that a number of copies are known postmarked Enniscorthy including the date of February 17th, 1922.

Item #457 of the Marquess of Bute Sale lists the following: 2d. orange Die II, a similar mint pane of 120, control "S 22" (perf.). Cat. £ 840. Valuation £ 250.

1/2d DOLLARD INVERT



The 1/2d Dollard invert had a somewhat dubious origin and remained under suspicion for some time. Mrs. Cooke says that it was first reported on April 1, 1922 in Stamp Collecting by an advertisement from a Birmingham dealer who received a portion of a sheet from a Dublin agent.

Mr. W. Ward writing in Stamp Collecting for March 17th 1923 said:

"The next error we have record of is that three sheets of the 1/2d Dollard overprint were discovered in a Dublin post office. Getting to the ears of Mr. Walsh, orders were given that they had to be withdrawn from sale and destroyed, but already one sheet had been sold to a collector, who in turn sold half of it to an English dealer, kept a small corner block for his own collection, and disposed of the balance to a Dublin firm."

The Irish Philatelic Club inquired of the Postmaster General about the inverted overprints and on July 26th, 1923 received the following official reply, which established the legitimacy of the 1/2d inverted error:

"A Chara - With reference to your letter of the 2d inst., I have to inform you that the only stamps with inverted overprints which the Post Office is aware of as having been issued through the Post Office were contained in two sheets of 2d. stamps which escaped notice and appear to have been issued at the Grand Parade Sub-Office at Cork, and one sheet of 1/2d. stamps sold over the counter at the General Post Office, Dublin.

(Signed) J. J. Walsh

Item #300 of the Bedford-Hopkins Sale of 1948:- 1922 Dollard overprint as issued, 1/2d. variety inverted, unmounted. With R.P.S. certificate. Cat. £ 8 Valuation 90/- (block of six)

Item #449 Marquess of Bute Sale (illustrated above):- A mint marginal block, variety inverted overprint [1/2d green, block of four]. Cat. £ 32 (see Photo). Valuation £ 15.

1d DOLLARD INVERTED



The 1d Dollard inverted variety had an even rougher history than the others, largely because so many bogus copies flooded the market. The officials of the Customs, Excise and other revenue departments were supplied with handstamps with which to overprint embossed and adhesive revenue stamps. These handstamps which appeared similar to the printed letters were used undoubtedly to fabricate inverted adhesives.

These bogus" inverted overprints are easily distinguished because the overprint is usually pale and appears "spread" not normal with clear cut broken letters, just as you would expect a rubber-stamp to appear.

It seems reasonably clear that at least one sheet legitimately issued in Dublin was used up without being recognized as copies have been found post-marked "Dublin" early in April, 1922. In September, the Philatelic Magazine reported a single sheet of the 1d Dollard inverted which is believed to be in a later issued carmine red shade.

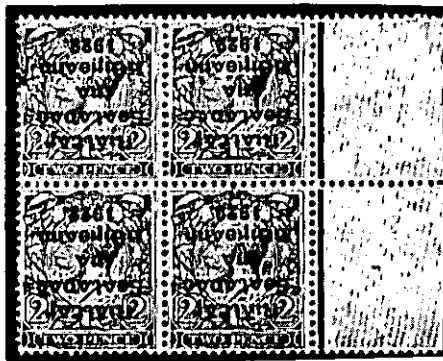
Item #301 Bedford-Hopkins Sale of 1948:- 1922 Dollard 1d superb mint pane corner block of six, variety overprint inverted. Cat. £ 36.

Item #303. Ditto, fine used but date stamp impressed slightly through to back, "11 AP 22". Valuation £ 7.

Item #450 Bute Sale of 1959:- 1922 Dollard 1d. Scarlet, a complete mint sheet ["S 22 imp.], variety with overprint inverted. Three sheets stated to have been discovered and this is said to be the only sheet now intact. Cat. £ 1140. Valuation. £ 500.

Item #451. Ditto, a mint control block of six ["S 22" perf.], two with ink marks on reverse (see Photo) Valuation £ 16.

2d THOM BLUE BLACK (Die II)



Mr. W. Ward in Stamp Collecting, March 17, 1923 (page 609) gave the following history of this stamp.

"On the morning of the first bombardment of the Four Courts, a well-known Dublin firm made a purchase of its usual supplies of stamps at the O'Connell Street Chief Office and during the stamping of the mail it was noticed that one of the sheets was inverted. The manager being a philatelist, the bulk were 'saved'. This stamp was the newly issued 2d. Die II, with the overprint in bronze-blue."

Item #314 Bedford Sale of 1948:- 1922 Thom blue-black 2d. Die II, variety overprint inverted, fine unmounted marginal block (see Photo). Valuation £ 15.

2d THOM BLUE BLACK (Die I)

In the same issue of Stamp Collecting, Mr. Ward wrote: "The 2d Die I with bronze-blue overprint was also 'discovered' in Dublin, and also has an interesting story. About the middle of November an hotel manager purchased two shillings worth of 2d stamps at a Dublin district office. It was not until he had used all except three specimens on his correspondence that he noticed that there seemed something peculiar about the stamps and he drew a customer's attention to them. It was then noticed that they were inverted. The three remaining copies were eventually distributed among friends. Thus somewhere there are 237 other specimens of Die I 2d that may be discovered."

ARE THESE LAST TWO STAMPS "PRINTER'S WASTE" ?

These last two stamps have been the subject of considerable debate over the years. The Irish Philatelic Club in 1923 recognized only the 1/2d Dollard and the 2d Thom (both Dies) in black as legitimately issued.

In 1925 and 1926, the debate broke out again with the Royal Philatelic Society declaring that the 2d bronze-blue inverts were not legitimate issues over the counter. Mr. A. E. Hopkins in Stamp Collecting, March 20th, 1926 (page 847) declared that the 2d Thom (Die I) in black and the 1/2d Dollard inverts are perfectly "authentic"; that the 2d Thom (Die II) invert in black "is probably legitimate"; that the 1d Dollard was suspicious but that one authentic sheet was "probably issued across the counter" but that the 2d Thom glossy, Dies I and II inverted were nothing "but printer's waste."

The ultimate decision must rest with the individual collector, to whose tender mercy we leave the entire subject of the inverted overprints.