

IRISH PROVISIONAL ISSUES.

High Value

SAORSTÁT

Varieties.

Supplement No. 20

ÉIRE PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION

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Irish High Value "Britannias"

Perhaps one of the most challenging fields for research into the overprinted stamps of Ireland is that of the high value stamps issued between December 1922 and the issuance of the definitive St. Patricks, watermarked SE. These include:

Thom Wide Date Saorstats (1922) Scott Nos. 56-58, S.G. Nos. 64-66
The Dublin Castle Narrow Date Saorstats (1925) Scott Nos. 77-79, S.G. Nos. 83-85
The Dublin Castle "Composite Plate" Saorstats (1927) Scott Nos. 77a-79a, S.G. Nos. 83a-85a.
The Dublin Castle Wide Date Saorstats (late 1927) Scott Nos. 77b-79b, S.G. Nos. 86-88.
The Dublin Castle "Waterlow" Saorstats (1934) Scott Nos. 93-95, S.G. Nos. 99-101.

Before beginning a discussion of these various overprintings, it will be somewhat helpful to review just briefly the basic British stamps which were overprinted. We are not concerned here with the so-called re-entries on the plate. These are found in past issues of The Revealer (see bibliography at the end of this supplement. For the present, we shall only consider the plates used to print the engraved stamp itself.

With the exception of the 1934 issue of the high value overprints, which are easily distinguishable, the basic British 2/6, 5/- and 10/- stamps were all overprinted by Ireland on the so-called "Sea Horses" 1919 issue, watermark Single Royal Cipher. 11 x 12, recess-printed by Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. These were sheets of 40 stamps - ten vertical rows of four stamps each horizontally.

The basic design was by Sir Bertram Mackennal and was first used in 1913. From 1918 to 1930, Bradbury Wilkinson printed these engraved values for Britain on new plates. While the exact number of plates used during the 12 years in which Bradbury did the printing is not certain, there is little question - that there were three general types employed:

1. The so-called "Dot" plate earliest used. 2. The "No Dot" plate in 1923. 3. New plates used from 1927 on in which the stamps measured 23 mm in height (outside frame lines). The previous two plates measured 22½mm.

The so-called "Dot" plate is excellently described by Rev. J. Brennan, in his article, "The Overprinted Higher Values of Ireland" in The Revealer, May-June, 1963, page 559: "The dot plates get their name from a small dot, sometimes no larger than a pin point, which appears in the centre of most stamps. Sometimes it is above the top horizontal frame line, sometimes between the inner and outer frame lines and sometimes it does not appear at all due to the fact that it coincides with the top frame line. These dots are the remains of setting points punched in the plate by hand before rolling in commenced. The dot assisted the workman in aligning the transfer roller. They exist above every stamp of every row, except the top row."

2/6 BRADBURY WILKINSON VALUE PLATES & SHADES

There are two markedly different shades of the 2/6 value which appeared with the Castle printings (Scott 77- Gibbons 83). The first has been described as chocolate brown, or russet brown, the second as sepia brown, or dark brown or even black brown. Mr. C.F. McLoughlin once aptly described the shades as warm and cold. When examined side by side, the description is exceedingly helpful. The earlier, or warm shade was on sale in Dublin roughly through 1926, while the cold shade appeared in January or February of 1927. Some sheets of the warm shade only show the re-entry on stamp 3 of row 2 (comprising the partial doubling of the outside bottom frame line, somewhat left of center; while there is a further slight doubling at the top left corner).

As to the cold shade of the 2/6, the engraving appears to have been normal up to the spring of 1927, when the right slanting stroke of the R in CROWN began to show an easily detected break near the bottom. This appeared on all forty stamps of the sheet and this continued. Because more of the Broken R variety were issued than the earlier Perfect R, the latter is at a premium.

Mr. C.F. McLoughlin in an excellent article, "British Varieties and Irish Overprints" in Stamp Collecting for March 24th, 1928, pp. 736-7 uses this as a test to distinguish the overprintings.

"The letters 'R' and 'O' in CROWN and the letter 'P' in POSTAGE show breaks in the engraved design, either in combination or at different periods. In association with the various overprints, these characteristics have a prime significance.

"If an 'open' date overprint shows on a Perfect R*O*P combination in the engraving it must be a Thom Saorstat; for the special breaks never showed in the British design at that period.

"These peculiarities began at a certain stage in the Castle overprint. At the outset the letters in the engraved plate were normal; later they showed fairly consistent features.

"If a 'close' date overprint shows on a Perfect R-O-P combination it must belong to the Castle period.

"In the case of the Castle overprint the Perfect R plate is rare."

10/- PERFECT S PLATE

While the high-value Riattas overprints on the 10/- Bradbury plate (Scott Nos. 14 and 38) appeared consistently to show the lower loop of the S in POSTAGE with a clean break, easily seen without a glass, as the Thom Saorstat overprintings of the 10/- (Scott No.58) came into circulation, it was discovered that whole sheets of 40 stamps no longer showed the broken S. This appeared to confirm the existence at least of a second Bradbury Wilkinson 10/- plate. When the Government took over the printing at Dublin Castle, both perfect and broken S plates continued in use for the 10/- value and this continued in the Composite overprintings. However, from the summer of 1926, again the Broken S plate seems to have been used exclusively.



The Perfect S Plate



The Broken S Plate

The British plate is consistent. If one stamp of the sheet shows the broken S, every stamp on the sheet shows it. The same is true of the Perfect S plate.
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Mr. McLoughlin in his article (above) says that the Perfect S plate is rare, and that a small minority of the Thom and Castle narrow overprints show on the Perfect S plate.

Mr. McLoughlin also uses this as a test to distinguish the overprintings. He says that an "open" date on a Perfect S plate 10/- must be a Thom wide and not a Composite or Castle "wide". A "close" date on a Perfect S plate must be a Castle (1925) for the Composite printing always showed the Broken S.

With these preliminary remarks, let us now consider the various Saorstat high value overprints.

"Thom" High Value

Three Line Overprints — December, 1922.

On December 21st 1922, the 2/6 value overprinted "Saorstat Eireann 1922" by Messrs Alex Thom & Co. Ltd., of Dublin was issued, followed on December 28th 1922 by the 5/- and 10/- values similarly overprinted.

Scott No. 56, S.G. No. 64. 2/6 light brown (shades)
Scott No. 57, S.G. No. 65. 5/0 carmine rose (shades)
Scott No. 58, S.G. No. 66. 10/- gray blue

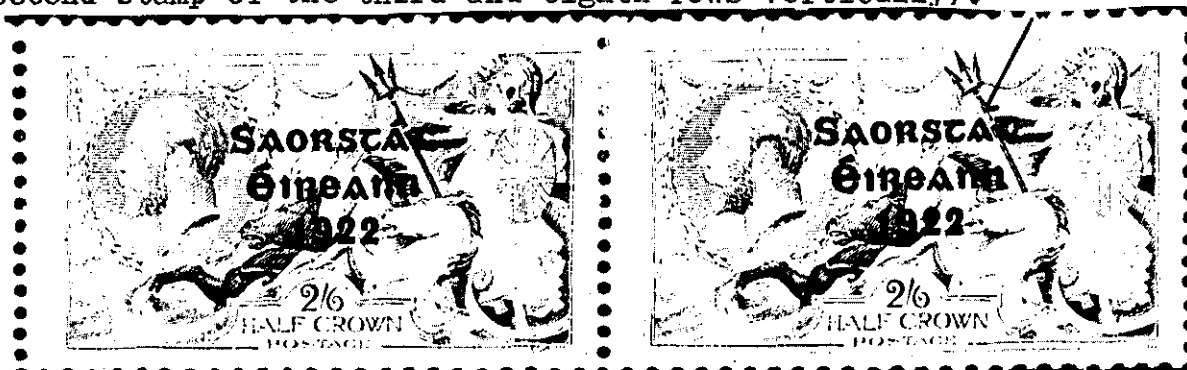
There is a tendency to confuse these high valued Thom "Saorstats" with the subsequent "Castle" overprint on the same values issued in 1925. In the case of the Thom overprints, the figures in the date "1922" are spaced well apart and measure $6\frac{1}{4}$ mm across. In the later Castle overprint on the same values, the figures of the date 1922 are closer together and measure $5\frac{1}{2}$ mm in width. The Thom's are thus called the "wide space date".

It is thought there were at least two separate printings by Thom because all three values are known both in dull black ink for the overprint and blue-black, the blue-black being much more commonly found. Which was the first printing is difficult to say. The first issued from the post office appeared to be in blue-black, followed later by the dull black. A plausible explanation is that the dull black overprints were first printed as a trial run perhaps with the lower value dull blacks and were placed at the bottom of the shipment, normally being the last to be issued by the postal authorities as stocks were depleted at the post offices. Perhaps our members can report whether the accent errors appear in the dull blacks?

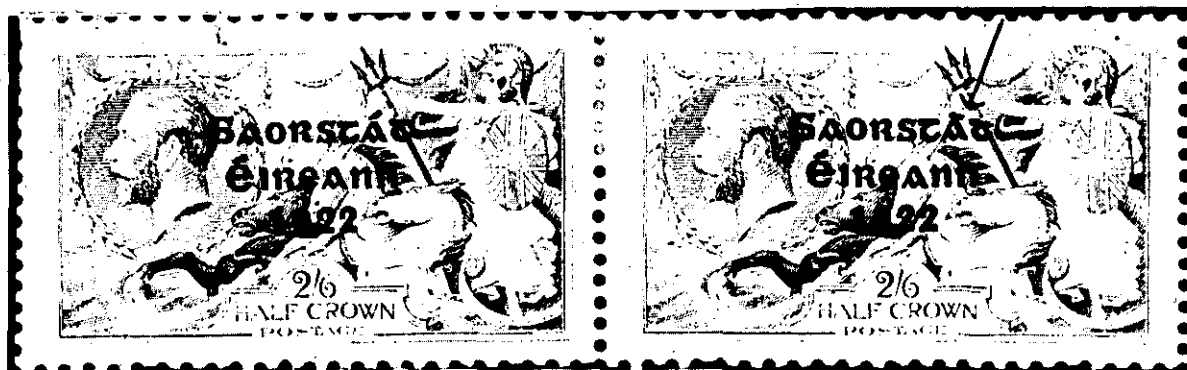
There are also shades of the basic British stamps which are worthy of notice. Mr. C.F. McLoughlin in an article, "High Value Thom Saorstat Overprints" which appeared in the Philatelic Journal of Great Britain, April 1928 wrote that there are three very distinct shades of the 2/6 and two of the 5/- stamp. He describes the 2/6 shades: A- A slight orange or yellow tint. B- A warm chocolate brown glow. C- A cold pale tint which shows a grey-brown tinge in a rather flat tone.

Missing Accents

In the early days of January 1923, English stamp firms who purchased their supplies of new stamps in entire sheets of 40 noticed certain errors thereon, in all three values (suggesting a single overprinting plate). The accent over the second "a" of "Saorstat" was missing in subjects 10 and 30 (the second stamp of the third and eighth rows vertically).



In addition, the accent on the second "a" of "Saorstat" was inverted and reversed (accent grave instead of acute) in subject 28 (the fourth stamp of the seventh row vertically).



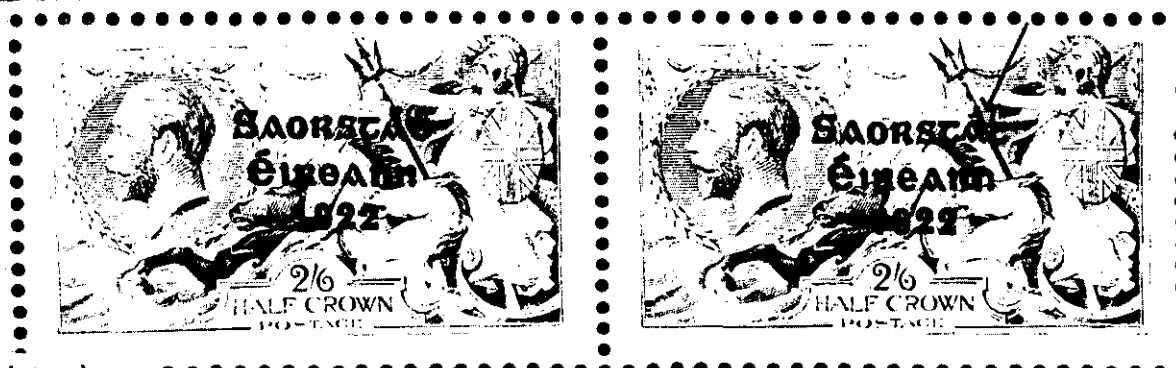
Entire sheets obtained in the later part of January 1923, however showed the errors in the three positions to have been corrected. Our member, Hans Zervas says (Revealer, page 546) that "the printers set up a new overprinting plate correcting this mis-spelling. In this new plate they were successful, having all accents present and producing only one setting variety, the second "a" of Saorstat being raised above the line common to all other letters in Saorstat". (see post).

The uneven surface of the engraved stamps prevented the typographed overprint from being strongly impressed and some sheets received a weak accent on the 40th subject (the bottom right hand stamp of the sheet - row 10, stamp 4) of the 10/- value. It is not known how many sheets with the missing or weak accent got into circulation (if any) but handstamped accents are known on this 10/- value. The Agnew Collection contained a sheet of 40 of the 10/- value with accent on the 40th stamp handstamped in blue ink.

Perhaps the best contemporary account of this appeared in a note in Stamp Collecting for December 8th 1923 as follows: "Dr. J.P. O'Connor, in informing us that he has the 2s.6d., 5s., and 10s. 'Saorstat' overprinted stamps with S over 'E' states that in the early part of the year the right hand corner stamp of each sheet of the 10s. value used to be cut out before leaving the Stores offices in Dublin. Lately, Dr. O'Connor has seen a few sheets and, on examining them, found that there was an accent inserted in a shining violet mauve ink. On examining this under a glass there was a trace of an accent visible in printer's ink. This our correspondent supposes was the reason the stamp was removed."

(a) Major Re-Entry on the 2/6 Value. The basic plate has a number of re-entries carefully delineated by both Hans Zervas and Rev. J. Brennan in recent issues of the Revealer. The major re-entry on the 2/6 value is on the second stamp of the first row of one of the plates used in printing the stamp itself in the early part of 1923. This double entry shows not only the horizontal and diagonal lines of the shield of Britannia doubled, but many of the lines of Britannia and Trident doubled. (Meredith Variety V-20).

(b) Raised second "a" in Saorstat.



The second stamp of the first row of the corrected overprint used for all values shows a raised second "a" in Saorstat. According to Mr. Zervas, this variety can be found in two forms - one, the British stamp which has the major re-entry on the same stamp, and two, on at least three British plates without the re-entry thereon.

(c) S over E. This variety is found in position 34 (the second stamp of the ninth row - all values) of one of the overprinting plates. Mr. Zervas (page 547) points out that he has a complete sheet with position 34 normal, suggesting another and third printing plate by Thom. In the normal overprint the "ea" of Eireann is set slightly to the right of "rs" of Saorstat which leaves the "E" of Eireann about below the space between the S and a above it. In the variety, the overprint is set so that now the "ea" of Eireann is directly below the "rs" of Saorstat above it and the "E" of Eireann has moved to the left slightly making the variety.

"SAC" Instead of "SAO."

(d) Saorstat. The fourth stamp of the fifth row in the sheet shows a constant broken letter "o" of Saorstat making it appear as a "c". All Values.

(e) Perfect S Plate on the 10/- Value. (Meredith Variety V-25).

DUBLIN CASTLE PRINTINGS

SAORSTAT

EIREANN

1922

August, 1925. New Setting for the High Values.

Produced at the Government Printing Department, Dublin Castle. In three lines as before, but less spaced and figures set closer.

When the definitive issue of lower values appeared in 1923 printed by the Government Printing Office at Dublin Castle, it was expected that designs for the higher values would be prepared and printed at the Castle. But delays ensued and stocks of the high values were depleted by 1925.

During August 1925, the 2/6, 5/- and 10/- values appeared overprinted "Saorstat Eireann 1922" by the Government Printing Office, Dublin Castle. Although somewhat similar to the previous Thom issue, the spacing of the figures in the date 1922 are set much closer together than in the Thom printing and measure $5\frac{1}{2}$ mm as against the $6\frac{1}{4}$ mm of the Thom.

All the stamps from the Castle setting appear to have been overprinted in glossy black ink; but the gloss is slight in many cases, blocks frequently show a light or dull overprint on one row of stamps as compared with a heavy and glossy appearance on the next. This was the subject of much speculation, but the answer can be found in "The Castle Overprint of Ireland" by C.P.Rang, which first appeared in Gibbons Stamp Monthly and reprinted in the Revealer in 1958, page 351. "The sheet, which comprised forty stamps in ten rows of four was put through the press and received overprints on the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th rows. It was then put through the press a second time to be completed with overprints on the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th rows. This curious method of overprinting is brought to light on our block by the misplacement of the second overprint, no doubt due to the shifting of the sheet. Mr. McLoughlin's observation that the inking of the overprint sometimes differed between one row and the next is explained by what would be the normal practice of putting a number of sheets through the press in the first position before making an adjustment for the second."

"In view of the known positions of the wide and narrow dates in what is called the "Composite" setting of 1927 (S.G. 83a, 84a and 85a) where they are repeated on the stamp immediately below, it is probable that this issue too was overprinted by the same method."

As previously noted, the 2/6 value appeared in a russet brown shade in 1925 and later in a colder brown; and the second shade appeared normal until April 1927 when the slanting down stroke of the R in CROWN began to show a definite break. The major re-entry on the 2/6 (subject #2) can be found.

The Castle setting contained no actual errors but during the course of the printing, in different values, definite recurring varieties consisting of broken letters appeared. Meredith lists these:

- a. First t aspirated (dot above it): 2/6, 5/- and 10/- (1 x 1 and/or 2 x 1)
- b. Needle-eye Accent on E: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (1 x 1 and/or 2 x 1 ; 10 x 4)
- c. Needle-eye Accent on A: 5/- (1 x 1)
- d. Joined Figures 22: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (1 x 1 and/or 1 x 2)
- e. Joined Figures 92: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (1 x 4 and 2 x 4)
- f. Sagrstat: Broken "o": 2/6 (7 x 3) ; 5/- (5 x 1) ; 10/- (5 x 1)
- g. Eirgann: Broken "e": 2/6 10/- (4 x 2 and 10 x 4)
- h. V Inverted (Center piece in A missing): 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (7 x 1 and/or 8 x 1)
- i. Chipped Accent on A: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (5 x 4 and/or 6 x 4)
- j. Irregular Second Z (Shamrock-shaped Center) 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (3 x 2)
- k. Faint Impression Accent (Almost Missing): 2/6 (8 x 3, 9 x 4, 10 x 3, 10 x 4) 5/- (9 x 4 and 10 x 4); 10/- (9 x 4, 10 x 4).
- l. Outline Accent on A: 2/6 10/- (7 x 2 and 8 x 2).
- m. Hyphenated At: Letters joined by rough hyphen: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (3 x 2 and/or 4x2)
- n. Double Outline At: Type not showing solid inking: 5/-, 10/- (3 x 2 and/or 4x2)
- o. Letter "t" added or improved: 10/- (4 x 2, 5 x 2)
- p. Small "arc" above S (left top): 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (9 x 4 and 10 x 4).
- q. Small "crescent" above S: 2/6, 5/-, 10/- (5 x 4 and 6 x 4).

CASTLE "COMPOSITE" ISSUE OF MAY, 1927

IRISH FREE STATE

DUBLIN CASTLE PRINTS WITH
WIDE and NARROW DATE in PAIRS.

In the month of March 1927 Irish newspapers reported that within a few months a definitive issue for the high values would be issued and in already accepted designs. It has been reported that the pictorial designs chosen were those of the old General Post Office in Sackville Street, the Four Courts and the Customs House in Dublin, and that plates had been prepared and proofs submitted. Further delay occurred probably the result of a dispute over the subjects chosen. These were never used and eventually the St. Patricks were used.

Apparently the high values became depleted in the post offices about this time, with the result that about the middle of May 1927, a few sheets of the 10/- value appeared showing a combination of "wide" and "narrow" spaced figures in 1922. The 5/- value appeared next with the same "mixed" combination and had a life of a few weeks. About the middle of June, the 2/6 value also appeared.

The ink used for this "Composite Printing" is blue-black and glossy. It is generally thought that this overprinting was done at Dublin Castle but the unanswered question throughout the years has been "Why"? The previous Castle "narrow" plate was certainly far superior to the "Composite" which followed in terms of condition of the type. The answer might well be that the Castle had broken up the overprinting plates in view of the announced definite high value designs and suddenly found itself in need of high values. Unable to find enough cliches of its own, it probably asked Thom to supply any available cliches it still had. The result was a haphazard combination of Thom and Castle.

Since it is somewhat difficult to distinguish the single stamps of the issue from the others, it is generally collected in pairs.

Apparently, one overprinting plate was made up for the 2/6 value and another for the 5/- and 10/- values. They appear as follows:

Ovpt. Plate 2/6 Complete Sheet

W W N N
W W W W
N W N W
W W N N
W W N W
W W N W

13 wide 26 wide N- Narrow

7 narrow 14 narrow W- Wide

Ovpt Plate 5/-,10/- Complete Sheet

N N N N
W W W N
N W N N
W W N N
N N N N
N N N N

6 wide 12 wide

14 narrow 28 narrow

Certain constant varieties appeared in the Composite Printing: Meredith:

- a. Raised A and t improved: 2/6 (3 x 4 and 4 x 4)
- b. Bad impression s (small) and E defective: 2/6 (4 x 3)
- c. Faint impression S (almost missing) 2/6 (5 x 2)
- d. Double outline S (capital): 2/6 (4 x 1, 5 x 1 and 6 x 1).
- e. Cireann: Broken E: 2/6 (8 x 1)
- f. 1022 in date: 2/6 (5 x 2 and/or 6 x 2)
- g. Blurred accent and large t: 5/- (4 x 4 and 6 x 4)
- h. Blurred S and E: 2/6 (2,7,8,9 and 10 x 1 and/or 2)
- i. Second t aspirated and short bar: t: 2/6. 5/-,10/- (1 x 1 and/or 1 x 2; 2 x 2, 3 x 1).
- j. Small crescent above S: 2/6, 5/- 2/6 (1 x 3) 5/- (1 x 2)
- k. Faint impression accent (almost missing) 2/6 (1 x 2, 2 x 2, 4 x 2, 7 x 2, 8 x 2). 5/- (4 x 2) 10/- (4 x 2)
- l. Thin tail to 9; Flat-tail nine: 1922: 2/6 (1 x 4 and 2 x 4).
- m. Saorstat: broken last t: 2/6 (1 x 1 and 4 x 1).

The original supply of the 5/- and 10/- printings was short and prices rose sharply. In the middle of November 1927, a further supply of each value was then placed on sale and lasted until the middle of February 1928 (see Weekly Philatelic Gossip, June 2, 1928).

CASTLE "WIDE-DATE" ISSUE - LATE 1927

Scott Nos. 77b-79b

Stanley Gibbons Nos. 86-88

About December 1927, another setting of the Castle overprint appeared on all three values. In this value, the figures in the date 1922 are all wide-spaced like the original Thoms. The overprinting ink is black instead of the blue black of the Thoms.

This was a separate and distinct issue from the so-called "Composites"

Those who have difficulty in distinguishing these wide-space Castles from the earlier Thom wide-date Saorstats would do well to follow the advice of our fellow member, Hans G. Zervas (Revealer, November-December 1962, page 548):

"This overprint was issued in black and grey black ink in contrast to the blue black and dull black used by Thom to produce their overprints. Aside from the ink distinctions, which suffice for the discerning eye to separate the two issues, there is another characteristic that serves to separate the two overprints. It seems that Thom did their printing against a fairly firm blanket which resulted in a sharp impression of the overprint and only a slight embossing of the overprint on the back of the stamp, whereas Dublin Castle used a much softer blanket resulting in a deeper and fuzzier impression and a very prominent embossing of the overprint on the back of the stamp."

This issue is a very regular printing showing few varieties. The 2/6 appeared on the Broken R plate, later printings being on the Perfect R plate.

Variety

On one of the Castle wide date plates, a damage occurred to position #34 - the second stamp of the ninth row, causing the accent over the second "a" of



"Saorstat" to give the appearance of being like a circumflex and the "a" below it to have a flat and even slightly concave top as compared with the usual rounded top as can be seen in the first "a" of Saorstat. During the use of the plate the circumflex gradually wore down until it practically disappeared. This is sometimes erroneously thought to be the Thom "missing accent" but close examination will show a very slight trace of the circumflex remaining and of course, the flat top "a" confirms this fact.

Scott Nos. 93-95

1934 ISSUE

Stanley Gibbons Nos.99-1

Finally in 1934, when the high values again became depleted in the post offices and no definitive high values had been yet printed, Dublin Castle again issued the three high value British stamps of the period overprinted "Saorstat Eireann 1922".

No difficulty is presented by this issue: 2/6 brown, 5/- carmine and 10/- dark blue since they were all overprinted on the new Waterlow current printings of Great Britain which can be distinguished from the Bradbury Wilkinson plates of the earlier days by the fact that in the Waterlow plates of the British design there are crossed lines in the background of the portrait of George V instead of the horizontal lines of the Bradbury.

Although we have no reports available of any notable variety in the overprints, your editor while preparing this section of the supplement discovered in his own collection two very interesting varieties of the overprint which are worth mentioning. Two single mint stamps of the 2/6 value appear with damaged accents, both quite similar in appearance (sheet position unknown). The accent is weak in each case and approaches a horizontal position over the "a" of "Saorstat" and in addition the top of the "a" is flattened. The S of Saorstat in each case is ink-heavy and looks like a figure 8. The only difference in the two copies is that in one, the final t of Saorstat has either a slight damage or nick or the ink didn't take or a foreign substance prevented the impression of the downward stroke.

This raises the interesting question whether the Castle used the same overprinting plate it used in late 1927 which contained the flattened a and damaged accent in position #34, the second stamp of the ninth row. The overprint does give the appearance of a worn plate also.

The next high values to appear were, of course, the definite St. Patricks.

Simple Tests for Distinguishing High Values

1. The 1934 issue is easily distinguishable by the crossed lined background
2. The narrow date 1922 is always a Castle printing, either the first or composite plate.
3. The wide date 1922 single copies of the composite plate can be separated out by their grey-black ink and the fact that many letters are badly formed and the type shows distinct signs of wear, sometimes pronounced.
4. The wide date 1922 of the late 1927 Castle printing, can be distinguishably separated because their ink is always deep black and the overprint cuts deeply into the paper and is visible on the back of the stamp. This also helps in distinguishing the Thom "black" trial printing Saorstats.
5. The wide date 1922 of the Thoms is in blue-black and does not cut into the back of the stamp.

Bibliography

"Irish Saorstat High Value Overprints". W.G. Meredith. Weekly Philatelic Gossip, June 2, 1928; Thom Saorstat Wide Date on the 2/6 Value. Zervas. Revealer, p. 543; Page 88 (J-8) see also, O'Reilly, p. 557; Rev. J. Brennan, page 559, etc.