

1966 Christmas and Hasting issues gold head errors & varieties



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

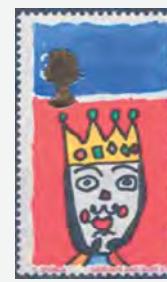


Image 4

Shifts of gold on the Christmas issue are common. Knowledge of the process in which the gold is applied to the stamp are useful to the collector as it may provide some basis on how much significance should be attached apparent "shifts" and ultimately how much an individual item may be worth from the both the collectability aspect and the value (price) attached to it.

The method used was new. A polyester film in the form of a ribbon had a mixture of aluminium, coloured lacquer and an adhesive applied to one side. A heated die was then used and passed through the upper surface of the ribbon to emboss the stamp. The gold (head) was applied to one column of ten stamps at a time.



Image 5

Images 1 to 4 above demonstrate the extreme variation in positioning of the embossed gold head. Image 5 above illustrates variation in the position of the gold head when passing from left to right along sheet. However it can be seen that the position of the head on stamps within the same column is consistent and in keeping with the method of application described.

Some may argue (the author included) that images 1 and 2 show a variation in position that may be expected and deemed to be "normal" taking account the method of production. Whereas it may reasonably be argued that images 3 and 4 show positioning that is outside the boundaries of what may be deemed "normal" and justifiably be designated error status and command a premium regards value.

Another attractive and relatively common error involving the gold on this issue is that of the partially missing gold. This results in a clear silhouette impression of Queen's head overlaying the main gold imprint.



It can be appreciated with knowledge of the production process that the above errors may arise as a consequence of the embossing die being applied through a part of the ribbon already used. This results in varying proportions of either the back or the front of the head missing, the silhouette of the omitted portion matching that of the printed portion.

Missing gold.

Most recognised catalogues when referring to the missing gold errors mention that it is possible to remove the gold and essentially fake the error. The advice given is therefore to only purchase expertly certificated examples. The same catalogues however do also mention that it is almost impossible to do this without leaving some evidence that there has been a deception. The error occurs on both values.

There is also reference to a large shift of gold on the 3d value which was sufficient to leave the stamps in column one of a sheet missing it, it appearing in the margin. There is also record of a missing gold error on the 1/6 as the result of a paper fold between the printing of the stamps and the application of the gold.



The Battle of Hastings issue that immediately preceded the 1966 Christmas issue also had gold heads feature on the 6d and 1/3 values. These were applied in a similar but slightly different manner. As with the Christmas issue a thin film ribbon was employed, on which a mixture of bronze and aluminium was applied. This was then transferred to the stamp under heat and pressure. Again there is concern that methods exist that can remove the gold and create fake errors of omission.

It is quite widely known that there are two quite distinct shades of gold head on the 6d value. Although mention of such is not made in Gibbon's specialised catalogue. One shade is distinctly yellow the other a clear bronze-gold.

A short article "On removing the gold foil from the Battle of Hastings and 1966 Christmas issues" by B.E. Clark was published in Stamp Collecting Weekly Vol. 110 No.14. May 30th 1968 and is reproduced for the interest of subscribers to The Philatelic Register along with two letters on the subject in later issues of the magazine, on the following page.

On removing the Gold Foil from the Battle of Hastings and 1966 Christmas Issues

By B. E. CLARK

A GREAT deal of publicity has been given to the fact that it is possible to remove the gold foil, used for the Queen's head, from the 1966 Battle of Hastings 6d. and 1s.3d. and the 1966 Christmas stamps by use of certain chemicals. It has also been noted that the gold foil on the Hastings 6d. appeared in two distinct shades: a RED-GOLD shade, which was also used for the Hastings 1s.3d. and a YELLOW-GOLD shade similar to that used for the Christmas stamps. The tests that I have carried out show that the reason for these shades was the use of two different types of foil rather than two batches of the same foil with a different colour.

When I was told that a certain chemical would remove the foil from the Battle of Hastings 6d. and 1s.3d. stamps I decided to verify this. I found that this chemical did remove the RED-GOLD foil from the 6d. and 1s.3d. stamps with very little trouble, leaving the paper completely unmarked. It was also noted that the foil retained its gold colour throughout the operation.

However, when exactly the same technique was tried on the 6d. with the YELLOW-GOLD foil a completely different reaction was obtained. The chemical first dissolved the "gold" colouring and when the resulting solution was absorbed with a tissue all traces of gold had been removed from the foil, leaving a "silver" Queen's head. Further application of the chemical completely removed the foil in the same way as before. However, no matter how much care was taken, some of the original "gold" coloured solution was absorbed by the paper in the region of the Queen's head, thus staining it yellow. This staining was very noticeable after removal of the foil and it was impossible to prevent it or subsequently remove it.

The foil used for both of the 1966 Christmas set reacted in the same way as the YELLOW-GOLD foil used for the Hastings 6d. However, due to the blue background the slight yellow staining after removal of the gold colour (i.e. at the "silver" head stage) is not very noticeable from the front of the stamp but it can usually be seen from the back. Complete removal of the foil could not be accomplished on these stamps without affecting the background colour, particularly in the case of the 3d.

The following conclusions can be drawn from these tests:

1. Two distinct types of gold foil were used for the Battle of Hastings 6d. (As these are easily recognised by shade perhaps there is a case for their inclusion in the catalogue.)

2. It is possible to remove the RED-GOLD foil from the Hastings 6d. and 1s.3d. stamps, leaving no visible trace of what has been done.

3. It is not possible to remove the YELLOW-GOLD foil from the Hastings 6d. without leaving a tell-tale yellow stain on the paper in the vicinity of the head.

4. It is not possible to remove the foil from the 1966 Christmas stamps without disturbing the background colour. Slight yellow staining is also produced which, if not visible from the front, can usually be seen from the back of the stamp.

NOTE.—Mr. Clark submitted with this article stamps showing the effects he describes above by way of verification for the statements he has made.

REMOVING GOLD FOIL

SIR,—With reference to the excellent article by B. E. Clark (STAMP COLLECTING, May 30th) on the removal of gold foil portraits, the assertion that it is not possible to remove the yellow-gold foil from the 6d. Battle of Hastings stamp, or the 3d. and 1s.6d. Christmas stamps, without leaving a yellow stain is not correct.

From my own experiments, which otherwise confirm Mr. Clark's findings, I discovered that, by completely immersing the stamps in ethanol, it is possible to dissolve the colouring dye without staining the stamps. The foil may then be readily removed and, since the gum is not affected by this solvent, there is no trace of tampering. In the case of the 1966 Christmas stamps, the ink of the design also dissolves to a small extent, but this is undetectable on the dried stamp since the effect is uniform over the whole design and is too slight to be perceptible.

University College of Swansea,
Department of Chemistry,
Swansea, Glam.

A. J. BARNES.

STAMP COLLECTING, June 27th, 1968

REMOVING GOLD: THE FACTS

SIR,—In view of the fact that recent correspondence in your columns regarding the removal of gold heads from British stamps has not yet produced definitive answers regarding the possibilities, you may perhaps be prepared to publish one further letter on the subject.

The facts are these. On all the stamps mentioned—to wit, the 6d. and 1s.3d. Hastings and the 3d. Christmas 1966—the head can easily be removed without trace, irrespective of its visual appearance. The problem regarding the staining of the surrounding paper on the Christmas value is resolved simply by using sufficient solvent. Further, with all these stamps, adequate rinsing in further baths of solvent will remove all traces of metal dust from the stamp and gum.

Fortunately, however, with all three stamps there are pointers to the deception. In the case of the Hastings issue, on the 6d. the violet colour is slightly soluble also and, besides being lightened by the procedure, tends to produce very faint pink staining of the white background. On the Hastings 1s.3d., although it does not stain the paper, the violet colour is again considerably lightened. In the case of the 3d. Christmas stamp, the only test one need apply is

to run one's finger across the surface of the stamp and into the margin. Normally, the colours are fast, but on stamps which have been treated, this procedure smears the red or blue somewhat.

"WOODSTOCK."

Letter published in July 4th 1968 issue of Stamp Collecting Weekly