



# G.B. POSTAGE DUES

## A Short Official History

(Reprinted, with certain additions, from the bulletin of the G.P.O. Philatelic Bureau)



THE introduction of "Postage Due" labels for denoting surcharges on letters and letter mail was first recommended in the British Post Office in 1912. The use of the labels for parcel post deficiencies on postage was also suggested. Later, came the use of the stamps in the collections of Customs dues.

It was not until April 1914 however, that the scheme was finally introduced, after the Postmaster-General had satisfied himself, following consultations with other postal administrations, that substantial savings would result from the adoption of the scheme.

On April 20th, 1914, notice was given that "no surcharges should be paid on delivery of any letter, parcel, or other postal packet, unless it bears a 'Postage Due' label or labels of the face value of the amount demanded".

Four denominations were brought into use initially, valued at ½d., 1d., 2d. and 5d. The original design of the labels exists today. They have the same dimensions as the low-value permanent issue postage stamps, but the short edge of the label is from top to bottom instead of from left to right. The paper, ink, method of printing and perforation are just the same as the postage stamps and the labels are printed in sheets of 240. Mr. G. W. Eve was the designer, and the colours selected for the first four denominations were: ½d. green, 1d. carmine, 2d. agate and 5d. fawn. The colour agate was chosen for the 2d. label because it was considered that this label would be the most used and the colour would be distinct from any British postage stamps in use at that time.

It soon became clear that a higher-value label was necessary for the collection of charges on parcels returned from abroad, and in 1915 the 1s. label was introduced in royal blue, because it was "pleasing and distinctive in appearance". Later in the same year, the introduction of a 3d. label was considered as a result of a change in the postal rates, but it was not until 1918 that this value was brought into use, and for the first time the colour chosen was the same as the equivalent postage stamp, violet. Another change in postal rates in 1920 saw the introduction of a 4d. label, grey-green in colour, which was again the same as its postage stamp counterpart.

### The "awkward" 1½d.

As a result of the steady increase in the number of underpaid items arriving from abroad, on which a surcharge of 1½d. was due, a 1½d. label, dark brown in colour, was brought into use in 1922. This label was subsequently withdrawn in 1925, when the minimum charge was reduced to 1d. However, it re-appeared in 1952 when the minimum postage for Inland Printed Papers was increased to 1½d. The former plate was still available, but a change in colour to green was necessary to fit in with the alterations which had already been made to the colours of the other labels, brought about by a revision of the colours of the ½d. to 2½d. postage stamps in 1951.

The colours of the ½d., 1d., 4d. and 1s. labels were now orange, dark blue, light blue and amber respectively. The 5d. label was unchanged. To date, the only other low value label to be used is the 6d. value, which was not introduced until 1962, although the need for its use was first realised in 1955, when a further revision of inland postal rates was made. This label is purple in colour.

The first of the high-value labels were introduced in 1924 when

the 2s.6d. value was brought into use for dues on unclaimed and undercharged parcels. It was not until 1955 that the 5s. label became necessary for use in the collection of Customs charges, while 1963 saw the introduction of the 10s. and £1 denominations, similarly for use in connection with Customs dues. The design of these four labels was the same as the lower denominations except that the words "Postage Due" were replaced by "To Pay". The only other departure from the lower values was the use of lemon tinted paper instead of white.

The first of the postage due labels were printed by Messrs. Harrison & Sons. In 1924, Waterlow & Sons took over the printing until 1936, when Harrisons regained the contract. After the death of King George V in 1936, there was a change in watermark, the new E8R watermark paper being first used in December 1936 for the 1s. label and soon after for the whole series. A further change to GVIR was made in 1937-38. Printings of postage due labels have since been made on all three watermarks of the present reign. All watermarks are sideways in relation to the design because of the horizontal format of these stamps.

### "Southern Rhodesia" Overprint

In 1950, overprinted British Post Office postage due labels were supplied to Southern Rhodesia. The denominations supplied were ½d., 1d., 2d., 3d., 4d. and 1s., the 1d. and 4d. stamps being supplied in the new colours and the remainder in the old. In 1953 however, the Rhodesian Government became suspicious when some of the original grey-green stamps came to light overprinted SOUTHERN RHODESIA. It was discovered later that, in fact, 457 sheets in the old colour had been overprinted and sent with 7,889 sheets of the new.



The "Southern Rhodesia" overprint

### Wartime Overprints

The only other occasion on which British postage due labels were overprinted was during the Second World War. In 1942, supplies were issued for the use of British Post Offices operating in the former Italian colonies. Five values (½d., 1d., 2d., 3d. and 1/-) were overprinted M.E.F. ("Middle East Forces"). The British Military Administration set up in the area in 1948 was also provided with postage due labels, these being overprinted B.M.A. with, additionally, ERITREA OF TRIPOLITANIA and a surcharge in British East African currency (100 cents to 1s.). In 1950 the M was dropped from the B.M.A. when a civil administration was formed pending the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia, and the incorporation of Tripolitania with the Kingdom of Libya.

### Still available.

Mint "Postage Due" labels have been available for purchase by philatelists since 1935. The current range of labels, which are available from the G.P.O. Philatelic Bureau, is as follows:—

*Cream paper:* 1d., 1½d.\*, 2d., 3d., 5d., 1s.

*White paper:* ½d., 4d., 6d.

*Lemon-tinted paper:* 2s.6d., 5s., 10s., £1.

\* To be withdrawn from sale at the Bureau on April 26th, 1965.