

# Collecting the Victorians

## 4. The Surface-Printed Issues, 1855-1883

At first glance the typographed or letterpress-printed stamps engraved by the talented Joubert (Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferté) and printed by De La Rue from 1855 onwards may seem dull and uniform. Familiarity, however, breeds appreciation rather than contempt, and Joubert's engraved head of the Queen, closely modelled on the Wyon Medal head, is – dare I say it? – superior to the similar head engraved by Charles and Frederick Heath for the Penny Black. Subsequently, frames, inscriptions and corner letters often detracted from the quality and simplicity of the head or 'diadem', but De La Rue's first stamp, inscribed simply 'POSTAGE' and 'FOUR PENCE', was exquisite.

A rich carmine in colour, the classic 4d stamp was first introduced to prepay letters to France (which may have induced the Frenchman, Joubert, to give of his best), and it appeared with three differing watermarks – the small (1855), medium (1856) and large (1857) garter types. There were also differences of paper and shade which are of interest to the specialist. Also in 1856, 6d lilac and 1s green stamps were issued, the watermark having national emblems – two roses, thistle and shamrock – in the four corners of the stamps. An interesting and rare variety of watermark is the 'three roses and shamrock' – a rose having been substituted for a faulty thistle on the dandy roll when the paper was manufactured.

The next series, 1862-64, ranged from 3d to 1s – five stamps each distinguished by small uncoloured corner letters and by a distinctive ornamental frame – and while the 'large garter' watermark continued for the 4d red, the 'emblems' were repeated for other values, including the error 'three roses and thistle' on the 6d lilac. Another rare variety is the 1s green with the letter 'K' within a white circle in the lower left corner (part of 'KD') – unused, only two copies are known. The series was repeated, 1865-67, with *large* uncoloured corner letters and watermarks as before, the original 'three roses and shamrock' error appearing on the 3d, 6d, 9d and 1s stamps. A 10d stamp is included here by virtue of another error of watermark – 'emblems' instead of 'spray of rose' which belongs to the following issue. It is an

extremely rare stamp.

The 1867-80 series with large coloured corner letters – watermark 'spray of rose' – was, like its predecessors, inscribed with tiny plate numbers, and included a 2s stamp for the first time, first in brown, then in blue. The 6d, with and without a hyphen between 'SIX' and 'PENCE', also changed colour from lilac (and shades ranging to mauve) to brown and then grey. Issues from 1873 to 1880 employed a bewildering mixture of watermarks and changes of colour – 'anchor' (2½d mauve), 'orb' (2½d mauve and 2½d blue), 'spray of rose' (3d rose, 6d buff and 6d grey, 1s green and 1s orange-brown) and 'larger garter' (4d vermilion, green and grey-brown, and 8d orange). The series of 1880-83, including the 1d Venetian red and other new designs as well as overprinted '3d' and '6d' stamps, bore the 'imperial crown' watermark. Other surface-printed issues will be featured in future articles.

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## Forthcoming Events

### Cameo – Stampway to London – 1980

London is to be featured on a 50p British stamp which will depict a montage of the London skyline. This stamp will be issued on 9 April and will coincide with the opening day of the next in the series of Stamp Exhibitions, staged at the Cameo Stamp Centre in London's Strand.

A Cameo commemorative First Day Cover and Exhibition postmark centred on Nelson's Column and his British Lions will also be available.

The Cameo Stampway to London Exhibition will illustrate the life and heritage of London in a unique way. The great landmarks of London will be seen through the eyes of the postage stamp. You will be able to visit London's great buildings, churches and Palaces and enjoy its ceremonies. You can take the Stampway to relive London's history and learn something of its culture, crafts and traditions. You can sail the Thames, ride the buses, Change the Guard, visit the Opera, play the theatre... and hear the cries of London!