

## India (October 1, 1854)

by P. L. Pemberton (*From Mekeel's Weekly, August 10, 1907, with images added*)

[Note: We have already covered the Scinde Dawk 1852 issue of the British East India Company in our Fabulous First series. India being one of the great collecting areas, we are able to present an extensive showing of the first General Issue of India. ...first the text from our archives, then the images on succeeding pages, in Scott order. JFD.]

This set of four values is perhaps the most interesting of all the India issues and should be closely studied, for it is just possible that varieties may turn up which have not been hitherto found.

### Half Anna Red, Scott 1

The half anna *red* used to be described as an error, but it really was prepared intentionally as the first issue. The original design was drawn on transfer paper and afterwards engraved upon stone. From the latter, transfers were taken to the number of 120 to form the printing stone. This was impressed three times on each sheet, which thus consisted of three panes, each of 120. They were printed in red, but as very little lithographic ink of this colour was available, only a small printing was possible.

The stamps being urgently required at Bombay, a few hundred sheets were despatched to the post office at that town, but unfortunately there is no evidence of what eventually became of them. A few used copies are known, and the generally accepted view is that a small quantity was actually sold at the Bombay Post Office between May and October, 1854. I am not aware that any copy used on entire is known to exist.

Proofs of the 1/2 anna in red, which are not infrequently met with, are printed from lithographic transfers made from the original copper-plate of the second type, which was used for the 1/2a blue; the design of this differs in all details from that of the original 1/2a red. The most noticeable difference is in the number of arches forming the ornamental design on either side of the stamp; in the original there are nine-and-a-half arches, but in the proof there are only eight. These proofs are almost always on watermarked paper.

### Half Anna Blue, Scott 2

It was found that the red ink greatly deteriorated the surface of the lithographic stone, and a fresh die was engraved, this time on copper, for the half-anna stamps. As mentioned above this new matrix differed from the old in the number of the arches at the sides and in other details, but its general appearance was very similar. The new stone was made up of 96 transfers in twelve horizontal rows of eight, and the sheet was printed in what was officially named "indigo-blue".

This first printing consisted of 30,000,000 stamps, and immediately afterwards the stones were rubbed off. This was in May, 1854. By July a fresh lot was required and another lithographic stone of the same size as before was constructed from the original die, and a fresh supply printed. Again the stone was cleaned, and in August when more stamps of this value were required, the same process was repeated.

In entire panes these different transfers can be distinguished, and at the recent International Philatelic Exhibition in London Mr. Hausburg showed, in his marvelous collection, an entire pane of each. In the first transfer the fifth stamp in the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth rows is slightly tilted on one side, and if the reader should come across a pair containing this peculiarity he will know from which transfer it comes.

Before leaving this value, mention should be made of the fact that, just before the supply of the next issue, which had been ordered from England arrived, eight fresh dies of the 1/2 anna were engraved separately, side by side on a copper plate. This was apparently done with the object of making fresh lithographic stones more rapidly than was possible from a single die. It is presumed that the arrival of the new issue from Messrs. De la Rue took place before a new stone was constructed, as no used copies in this design are known.

The principal difference is in the upper corners, which in the ordinary issued stamp, bore four-rayed florets or stars, but which, in these essays, were replaced by Maltese crosses corresponding with those on the anna value. It was from this plate that a lithographic stone was afterwards constructed for

the purpose of making the reprints, which can thus be readily distinguished from the originals.

The color of this stamp varies in an extraordinary degree, from dark blue to a very pale washy blue. There are also many minor varieties to be found, caused by defective transfers and bad printing.

### One Anna Red, Scott 4 (There is no Scott 3 listing)

The lithographic stone of the 1 anna was made up of 96 transfers taken from one die, which was chosen from among eight separate engravings made, side by side, on a copper-plate.

It is known that, as in the case of the 1/2a, three separate transfers were made for this value, but in this case the stamps from the third transfer can be recognized, as it is what is known as the "pointed bust" variety. The eye should be trained to recognize this stamp as I believe it generally puzzles the tyro. The point to remember is that the outline of the bust, taken from the angle at the base of the neck to the end of the bust, is almost a straight line. On the other hand, in the ordinary variety the outline is curved or rounded.

A curious point in connection with this third transfer is that the same mother die was used, though there were seven others which might have been selected. The difference in the shape of the bust was caused by the deepening of the lines of the background on the matrix. The stamps of the first and second transfers can be discriminated when found in pairs, as the stamps are placed wider apart in the first than in the second.

### Two Annas Green, Scott 5

The three values which I have now described at some length were all designed by a native engraver named Numeeroodeen, and printed at the Lithographic Department at Calcutta, but the case of the 2 annas is different. This was electrotyped at the Calcutta mint, as the Lithographic Department had as much as they could do to keep pace with the demand for the other values.

The pane consisted of eighty stamps in ten horizontal rows of eight. All were reproduced from the same matrix, and there are no differences to be found in the design. The shades of green in which the stamps were printed vary considerably.

The relative rarity of the three lithographed values is demonstrated by the following account of the numbers:

Half Anna	36,694,180
One Anna	9,378,432
Two Annas	1,659,984

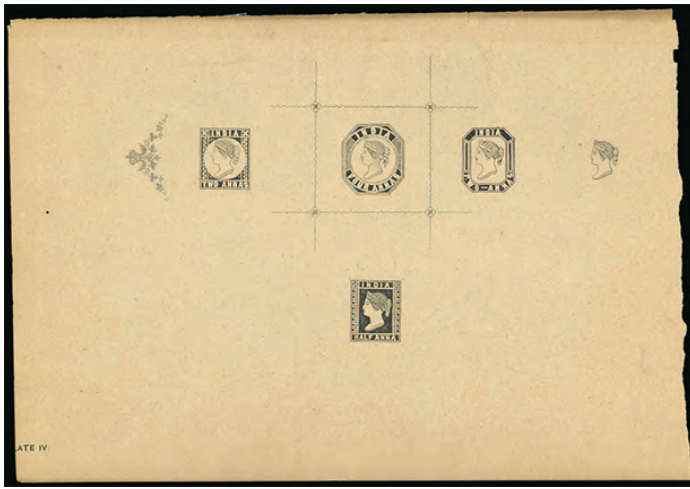
The 1 anna and 4 annas are known with serrated perforation. This was unofficial.

### Four Annas Red & Blue, Scott 6

For the highest denomination of the set, namely the four annas, three different transfers were necessary as in the case of the other values. The printing stones were prepared from copper plate engravings of the body of the stamp with the wavy dividing line and rosettes and of the head. The printing being in two colours, two different stones were necessary, which accounting for the head being found inverted, though the variety is of the greatest rarity.

The first sheets contained only twelve stamps, arranged in three horizontal rows of four 18mm apart. The first sheets were separated by wavy lines in blue with small rosettes where the line intersected. A part of the watermark appears on each stamp. In the second transfer there were 24 stamps to the sheet, the dividing lines were dispensed with and the stamps placed at a distance of 1/4 inch apart. It was found, however that by this arrangement the corner stamps did not get their share of the watermark and indeed were frequently without any, so a fresh transfer was needed. In this, the third and last transfer there were again 24 stamps but they were placed still more closely together, the distance between them being only 3mm. The stamps from this stone therefore all came in for a portion of the watermark.

I believe the different transfers cannot be distinguished in single stamps unless they have sufficient margins, but naturally the difference can at once be seen in pairs. The second transfer, with the stamps 1/4 of an inch apart, is the rarest.



Copper Plate IV in black, from a page taken from "The Postage and Telegraph Stamps of British India" by L.L.R. Hausburg, C. Stewart-Wilson & C.F.S. Crofton.

Not mentioned in the text, 1854, 1/2a Vermilion Lion & Palm Tree Essay, Die Proof on Thin Soft Yellowish Paper, Die II, estimated that less than five exist.



Scott 1P, 1854 1/2a Vermilion Proof on Watermarked Paper bottom left corner sheet margin horizontal pair with complete corner ornaments and partial inscription at bottom, other two margins large to full, Positions 89-90. These proofs were produced using the same die used for the issued stamps, an intermediate stone of 24 impressions was created and multiplied four times to create a stone of 96 impressions.



Scott 1, 1854 1/2a vermilion design with 9.5 arches, printed but not issued for use



Scott 1, 1854 1/2a Vermilion, 9 1/2 Arches, bottom left corner sheet margin block of six, Positions 91-92/101-102/111-112, left margin with "One Hundred and Twenty PO(STAGE)" and bottom margin with "Printed under the" part inscriptions, without gum as issued.

Named "9 1/2 Arches" for the number of arches in the side panel, this issue was printed and prepared for use with a supply sent to Bombay, although it was never officially released for sale. The printing of the shipment sent by Capt. Thuillier had exhausted the Vermilion ink supplies on hand. Ink believed to be of similar quality and color was sourced, but it was quickly realized that this ink had a severe corrosive effect on the plates. The chemical reaction destroyed the printing plates. Officials in Bombay were telegraphically informed that supplies were to be destroyed, but evidently some of the sheets were released. Capt. Thuillier created a new die, with only eight complete arches in the side panel, and used it to make new plates.



Sc. 2E, 1894 (Feb.) Lithographed essay with "SPECIMEN" on back, in blue on yellowish paper, 5x3 stamps with "(SPE)CI-MEN" printing in back



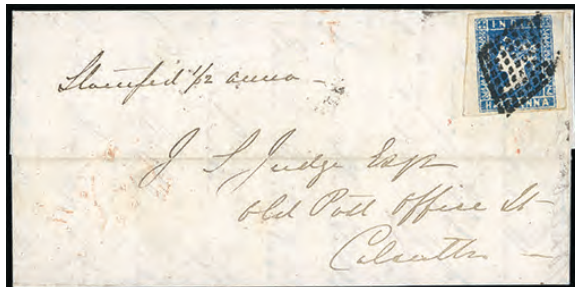
Scott 2, 1854 1/2a Deep Blue Die I unused block of six with partial right hand side margin inscription.



Scott, 1854 ½a Pale Blue, Die III, Stone "D", block of four, Positions 21-22/29-30, without gum as issued, After the printings of stamps from Die I and II—roughly 32 million Half-anna stamps in total—there was confidence that supplies would last until further printings could be handled by Great Britain. However, as the supply began to dwindle, Capt. Thuillier was requested to continue printing in June 1855. Alteration of the plates was necessary, including a complete redrawing of the head (causing it to become slightly larger), among other minor changes. From these plates an additional 4.6 million stamps were printed between July and August 1855. The vast majority of Half-anna stamps, irrespective of die type, were used. Unused examples are quite scarce, particularly those of Die III. Multiples of the Die III stamp are exceedingly rare.



Scott 2, 1855 1/2a Blue Die I single used on cover to Calcutta, cancelled with diamond of dots cancel. Manuscript shows date as 2 August 1855.



See page 4 for Scott 2, 1854 ½a Blue, Die I, Stone "A", complete sheet of 96 (8x12) with full margins showing inscriptions on each side and corner ornaments, without gum as issued. A few complete sheets of any value still exist.



Scott 2, 1854 1/2a Blue Lithograph used lot with 10 stamps for study of shades, dies and retouches.

Scott 4, 1854 (Feb.) Capt. Thuillier's lithographed essay printed singly, in blue on yellowish wave paper (141mm x 126mm).



Scott 2, 1855 (Apr 8) cover from Delhi to England with 1/2a blue die II strip of four used to pay the 2a rate, cancelled by diamond of dots cancel, reverse with despatch boxed date stamp, Calcutta, London and Bristol circular date stamps. Front shows INDIA oval cancel in red.



Scott 4, 1854 1a red, die II, unused left marginal strip of four, a scarce unused multiple.



1856 (Nov 4) Handmade cover going from Hyderabad to Ajmer with 1/2 anna (SG2) Die I franking cancelled by Cooper Type 641 cancel of Hyderabad.



Scott 4, 1854 1a red, die I, used strip of four, neat diamond of dots cancels

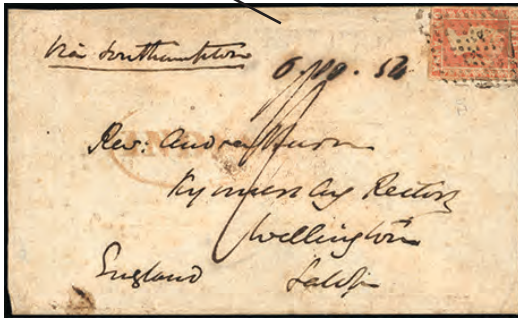


Scott 2, 1854 ½a Blue, Die I, Stone "A", complete sheet of 96 (8x12) with full margins showing inscriptions on each side and corner ornaments, without gum as issued. A few complete sheets of any value still exist.

Scott 4, 1854 1a dull red Lithograph, die II, block of six, unused.



Below, Scott 4, 1854 (Oct 6) envelope to England with 1854 1d die I, tied by diamond of dots with faint pre-stamp "KOTREE" boxed date stamp (to left of stamp, pointer) and manuscript "21" adjacent, reverse with Bombay, London, Wellington and Kinnersley date stamps.



From a Siegel Auction, Scott 6c India, 1854, 4a Red & Blue, 1st Printing, Head Die I, Frame Die I, Head Inverted, Frame Position 1, Head Position 12, tight but clear margins on seven sides, just barely touching outer frameline at left, light but clear strike of red "hollow" diamond of dots cancel of the Straits Settlements (Singapore). The India 1854 4-annas Invert ranks among the world's iconic philatelic rarities. Surprisingly, no mention of this error was made until 1874, two decades after issue, when an example was exhibited at a meeting of The Royal Philatelic Society London.



The process by which the error occurred has always been a bit enigmatic. In his book, Jatia offered his explanation (pp. 62-63). The 4a printing was done in a two-step process on separate days, which allowed the ink of the first impression to dry completely. Jatia's most significant observation is that there must have been at least six sheets of twelve printed (72 stamps), because there are six examples from the same position in the sheet (Position 4). The invert error evidently occurred only during the First Printing, based on the fact that there are no known inverts among stamps from later printings.

Of the 28 verified examples of this error, three are cut square. An additional five listed in the Williams book have not been fully verified, since the stamps have not been on the market in many years, some as far back as the 1890s. These could be duplicates or forgeries. Five of the 28 are institutionalized, leaving 23 confirmed copies in private hands.



Scott 5, 1854 2a green strip of four, neat lozenge of dots cancels.

Scott 6, 1854 4a bright blue and bright red, fifth printing, head die III, frame die II, rare unused example



Scott 5, 1857 (Nov 14) envelope from Landour (North Western Province) to England with two 1854 2a, cancelled by "173" barred diamonds and tied by "INDIA / PAID" and London arrival, reverse with despatch and Bombay transit, fine.



Scott 6, 1855 4a Fourth printing, Head die III, frame Die II, cut to shape on 1856 (Feb 5) wrapper tied with octagonal cancel from Calcutta to London via Marseille.



Scott 6, 1894 "Reproduction in Original Colours of Facsimile of 1894"



Single from an 1894 lithographic reproduction sheet of the 4a brown red and dark blue on yellowish paper, pos.19.



Scott 6, 1854 4a First printing, in hair showing the printing from the worn Head Die I, frame Die I showing separating wavy line on three sides and good margins on the other, position 6 on the sheet, lightly cancelled by dotted diamond, a fine and scarce example showing the dividing lines.



Above, Scott 6, 1854 4a blue and deep red, second printing, in horizontal pair, cut-square, "1" barred diamond cancels, fine and scarce multiple;



Right, Scott 6, 1854 4a indigo and pale red, second printing, in vertical pair, cut-to-shape with outer framelines cut into, diamond of dots cancels, fine and scarce multiple.