Burma King George VI

The British conquest of Burma was completed in 1886. It was made a part of India even though the people shared no ethnic or cultural heritage.

Decision made in 1936 to separate Burma from India on April 1, 1937
Edward VIII Essays

King George VI died January 20, 1936

Plans began for King Edward VIII stamps for Burma.

King Edward VIII abdicated December 8, 1936
1937 Provisional Issue

On December 8, 1936 the Burma government cabled the India Office, London, “Decision for stamps postponed until April, 1937. Meanwhile Indian stamps overprinted will be used.”

Inverted watermark

The 15 rupees is always found with the watermark inverted
First King George VI Essays for Burma
New India KGVI stamps and new Burma KGVI Stamps

Stamps to be printed at Security Printing India in Nasik, India. Composite photograph sent to the King for his approval January 15, 1937. King’s robes include the Order of the Star of India and the Order of the Indian Empire.
India First KGVI Stamp

India was able to get their first KGVI stamps issued August 23, 1937.
Proposed Designs for Burma

One of 7 cards of proposed designs for Burma sent to London Feb 14, 1938. The head was the same as used on the India stamp. Head and frame rejected.
Proposed Designs Sent to London
Returned March 9, 1938
Frame accepted for the annas values.
Proposed Designs Sent to London
Frame accepted for 1 and 2 rupees. Rejected head circled.
A New KGVI Head

Inter office memo from Sir Desmond Fizmaurice Master, SPI, to Thomas Archer, head Artist Engraver Feb 2, 1938.

This shows that work had already begun on a new head before the proposed designs were sent to London.

Right:
Caxton House 2-1-38
Dear Mr. Archer,

Could you come over sometime this morning to discuss photogravure.

I also want to show you the selected Competitive designs for Burma Postage Stamps.

How is the new Head getting on?

Yrs.

Archer’s note:
Attended & discussed new Burma Design alterations, gravure, new staff etc. & my new George VI head. New Perforation boxes?
One Problem Fixed

There was dissatisfaction with the shading on the ear.

The essay at the right shows the shading problem fixed but there was still the one big problem.
The Main Problem with the Head

• This message sent with the cards acknowledged the problem with the King wearing Indian orders on stamps for Burma:

  India to London: “I enclose a number of specimens of preliminary design for the new postage...be submitted for His Majesty’s approval...in the meantime the Governor of Burma is anxious to know whether the King will be willing that his effigy on the stamps should be shown...with perhaps the collar of the Garter...is observed in the specimens now submitted...his majesty wearing the collars of the Order of the Star of India and the Indian Empire. These orders cannot...appropriately be shown on the new Burma stamps.”

• Photo essay with order of the garter.
Final Designs Sent to the King

Sent June 4, 1938 from Rangoon.
Received in London July 19, 1938.
(They sent them by ship instead of air!)
Final Designs Sent to the King

All problems with the head fixed.

The pictorials were the first stamps of this size ever done at Nasik. A new perforating box had to be ordered.
The King Gives Final Approval July 30, 1938

H.M. Yacht Victoria & Albert.

30th July, 1938.

My dear Hood,

In reply to your letter of July 28th, addressed to Hardinge I am to say that The King approves the new designs for the Burma Postage Stamps, the final proofs of which I am returning to you herewith.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

The Viscount Hood,
Burma Office,
Whitehall, SW1.
First India Stamp with New KGVI Head

• June 1, 1939
Issued Stamps
November 15, 1938
Watermark
No Inverted Watermarks are Listed by Gibbons

Lithographed on elephant head watermarked paper at Nasik, India.

Printing dates and quantities issued have not been made available.
Marginal Markings
Missing Arrows

Sheet markings included arrows between columns 8 and 9, between rows 5 and 6, rows 10 and 11, and rows 15 and 16. Shown is a 3 pence multiple missing the arrows discovered by the exhibitor. Speculation includes the possibility of a very small early printing before the arrows were added to the plate or the possibility of a new plate made with arrows. Guide crosses can vary from plate to plate. Since the guide crosses on these two 3 pence multiples are identical it appears arrows were later added to the original plate.
Duplicate Examples of What Seem to be Obvious Printing Varieties
Temporary Varieties?

Broken Tail

Feather on shoulder-three others known
Column 1, either rows 6 or 11 or 16
Recorded Plate Varieties

The Medallion Flaw

“Medallion Flaw” R 14/3
Listed in Gibbons 2011 for first time.
Recorded Plate Varieties

Birds in Clouds—Never Changed

“Birds in Clouds” R 15/3
Listed in Gibbons 2011 for first time.
Recorded Plate Varieties
Extra Trees Listed by Gibbons by 1992
Tick Bird First Listed by Gibbons in 2011
Postage Stamp Centenary Overprint
May 6, 1940

Broken bar over TWO
Position R 14/8
1 Anna Typographed
1941

(India 1 ½ Anna and 3 Annas switched to typography at about the same time)
Commercial First Day Cover

7 ½ oz. sample post package label
1 ½ as 1st 4 oz. + 1 ½ as extra weight (3/4 as each added 2 oz. X 2)
+ 45 as air fee (3 oz per ½ oz. X 15) = 48 as or 3 rupees total
Revenue Use

Burma stamps were not postage and revenue stamps.

Burma had revenue stamps but had no revenue stamps to pay the fees on receipts. Postage stamps were sometimes used.
On at least two occasions mail from Burma to the British Isles was intercepted by the Germans.

The letters were censored in Berlin and after much delay were sent to Portugal where they were turned over to the British. The letters were then censored in London before final delivery.
85 Times Rate Horseshoe Route Cover

The earliest recorded commercial use of the 25 rupees stamp.

Bangkok July 30, 1943
1 super plus 5s 2d x 8 = 25 rupees

One of two known covers with two 25 rupees in the franking.

MESSRS. MACGREGOR & COMPANY (TEAK) LTD.
No. 6, Laurence Pountney Hill.
CANNON STREET.
LONDON, E.C. 4
India to England via Burma

Flown BOAC to Rangoon to connect with the CNAC to Hong Kong service via Chungking to connect with the PAA Trans Pacific and Trans Atlantic service to England via Lisbon.

Censored at Rangoon because not censored in India.
The Pacific War Starts December 7, 1941
At the time of Pearl Harbor it was already December 8 in Burma.
(International date line)
Stamps not Accepted at Calcutta

By mid April many post offices in northern Burma were no longer functioning. CNAC still carried mail to Calcutta using fields at Lashio, and Myitkyina.

Calcutta G.P.O. - April 14, 1942
Back stumped:
Great Eastern Hotel Calcutta - April 8, 1942

Scan of back stamp

Unknown origin. Franked for CNAC to Calcutta and BOAC to Durban, South Africa from where it would go by sea to Bermuda. Not placed in the mail stream until the Great Eastern Hotel where it was postmarked on the rear as the clerk was unsure of the validity of the Burma stamps and thus circled them in pencil. The Calcutta G.P.O. accepted the Burma stamps and canceled them. Censor hand stamp applied at Calcutta. Resealing tape applied at Calcutta and at New York (Examiner 6440).
Maymyo to Akyab Three Years in Transit

Maymyo - March 28, 1942
Simla - July 20, 1942
Akyab – December 19, 1945
After May 1942 nearly all of Burma was under Japanese control. One area still under British control was the Chin Hills district in extreme western Burma on the Indian border.

A postal service was established between Fort White, Haka, and Tiddim via Falam in the Chin Hills and Alijai in the Lushai Hills district of India. The 170 mile distance was covered by bare footed runners in relays. Mail runners had to sleep in 14 camps established along the extremely mountainous route.

The mail service was for government use only. Burma SERVICE stamps were to be used.

To,

The Additional Superintendent,
Lushai Hills,

Alijai.

Falam-September 8, 1942
Back stamped: Alijai, Lushai Hills—September 16, 1942

This was amongst the last batch of mail where normal SERVICE stamps were available.
The Chin Hills quickly ran out official stamps.
At the end of 1942 the Chin Hills ran out of Burma stamps. Stamps of India were used in 1943. Falam fell to the Japanese in Nov 1943.
Japanese Occupation

Overprinted at Myaungmya by the Burma Independence Army.

The King’s portrait obliterated by a peacock.
Burma Government in Exile

Headquarters-March 17, 1944
Back stamped: London-April 3, 1944

• Simla, India
The British 14th Army recaptured Mandalay on March 20, 1945 and Rangoon on May 6. New stocks of the fourteen pre-war stamps were overprinted MILY ADMN at Nasik, India because most stamps in Burma had been looted by the Japanese.
Pre War Flaws Carried Forward

“Medallion flaw” R 14/3. Found on pre-war stamps as well
First acknowledged by Gibbons in 2011.
A very few pre-war stamps remained in India and were overprinted. For the most part new stamps had to be printed first. Some pre-war plate flaws were corrected.

Extra trees-R 11/8
Not found on the post war printing at the right.

Rangoon-December 12, 1945
Right Stamp Doubled
9 Pies Doubled Impression
Listed in the Commonwealth King George VI Catalogue

Right side doubled
Vignette Tripled or More

Occurred on 12 stamps on the sheet from which it was taken.
Overprint Flaws

Some constant flaws have been reported on the overprint letters.

BURMA POSTAGE
MILY ADMN
R 13/8

1 PIE BROKEN M OVERPRINT
Gibbons Lists Overprint Omitted in Pair With Normal
Doubled Overprint-Blanket Tension
True Double Overprint

Double-not caused by blanket cylinder tension problems.
Mail to India

Resumed as soon as post offices opened. Letters limited to 5 tolas.

Mandalay-July 12, 1945; delivery back stamp August 16, 1945
2 annas 1st tola + 1 annas each additional tola x 3 = 5 annas
DGA/4 censorship applied at Mandalay; resealing tape and DHD/7 hand stamp applied at Madras, India.

Many British who escaped Burma in 1942 resided at the British Evacuee Camp at Coimbatore in India 1942-1945.
No Printed Matter Rate

- 3 ½ annas 1st oz. foreign letter Rate used.
No Post Card Rate – No Commonwealth Rate

• UPU letter rate 3 ½ annas first oz. was used.
Letters limited to 2 oz.
No parcel or insurance services available.

Rangoon-Dec 20, 1945 - 2 oz. registered airmail to Great Britain

Postage 3 ½ annas 1st oz. 2 annas 2nd oz. plus 3 annas registration
Air fee per ½ oz. 1 rupee 3 annas X 4 = 4 rupees 12 annas

Total=5 rupees 4 ½ annas (Embossed India stamp cancelled but ignored.)
Not Valid After January 1, 1946
1946 Civil Administration
Same Stamps in New Colors
Curved Plough Handle

High Value Use

Register wrapper from Rangoon
New York Registry hand stamp-
February 21, 1947
CUSTOMS PASSED FREE hand stamp
New York Station F hand stamp-
February 24, 1947

Rates 11 oz. package:
Postage 1st oz. = 3 ½ annas
Additional postage:
2 annas per oz. X 10 = 20 annas
Registration = 3 annas
Air fee per ½ oz:
2 rupees x 22 or
32 annas x 22 = 704 annas
Total 730 ½ annas
or 45 rupees 10 ½ annas
Crash of the Portland

BOAC flying boat Portland crashed on landing at Bahrain August 2, 1947. Ten people were killed.
Victory Issue

Issued on May 2, 1946 to commemorate the victory of the Allied Nations in World War II. It is thought by some that this was to be the beginning of a new definitive set for Burma.
The Bearded King

“Bearded King” variety  Hand painted correction
Catalog status with Murray Payne
On October 1, 1947 an Interim Government composed of Burmese nationals took over the administration from the British. The Civil Administration stamps were overprinted “Interim Government” in Burmese by letterpress at the Government Printing Works in Rangoon. Civil Administration stamps were demonetized.
Interim Government Stamp Variety

Position R 7/16. Has not been reported on the Civil Administration Stamp.
10 Rupees
Solo

AIR MAIL
REGISTERED.

Mr. & Mrs. J. Schifferli-Pfister
46 Hirschmatthstr. 46
Lucerne.

Switzerland

SWISS BURMA TRADING CO.
NO. 1, MG. TAULAY STREET
POST BOX 1028
RANGOON.

Rangoon-March 10, 1948
Back stamped: Luzern-March 17, 1948

Rates-7 oz. letter:
Postage 1st oz. = 3 ½ annas
Postage each additional oz. 2 annas x 6 = 12 annas
Air fee 10 annas per ½ oz. x 14 = 140 annas
Registration = 3 annas
Convenience overpayment = 1 ½ annas
Total = 160 annas or 10 rupees
Overprint Varieties

Extra character end of 2nd row
Partially erased
3 Pies Transposed Overprint at R 6/15
Hand Stamp Correction at R 6/15
6 Pies and 2 Annas
Transposed Overprint also at R 6/15
Never Corrected by Hand Stamp
3 Pies Only
Transposed Overprint at R 14/14
Position R 4/13 on the 1 ½ annas has two distinctive traits. There is an extra mark below the second character in the top row. The fourth character in the top row has a break at the lower left.
Different Multiple - Same Variety in the Same Position
Overprint Variety - Missing Character

The 2 annas can be found missing the last character of the overprint on the second line.

Position R 2/1.

The character is not always missing. Most likely it disappeared over time due to wear.
By Air Mail

Registered

240

J. S. Page Esq.

103 Clive Street

15th February

Balmer Lawrie

103 Clive Street

India
Inverted Overprints
Split Inverted Overprint
Inverted Overprint
Missing Character

Inverted overprint
Missing character
BPA Certificate
Inverted Overprint Fake

3 ½ annas with fake inverted overprint
The 9 pies inverted overprint is the only inverted overprint known used on cover in 1947 before the British gave up control.
Nearly all covers with apparent genuine inverted overprints are from 1948 and 1949 after Burma gained independence. There is speculation that after the British gave up control the genuine overprint plate was used to make intentional inverted overprint stamps which were then used on contrived covers in Rangoon suburbs.
In some cases a right to left shift was so pronounced that a split overprint resulted.

Shifted and split overprint resulting in one overprint on four stamps.
Shifted Overprints

Gibbons Lists The 1 Anna and 2 Annas With Missing Overprints In Pairs With Normal.
Fake Shifted Overprints

In many cases split overprints are bogus. All those below are fakes.
Double Overprints

Gibbons lists the 6 Pies but Gibbons says double overprints are known on other values.
Fake Second Overprint Added

It is much more common to find a genuine overprint with a fake second overprint added.
Interim Government Officials Use

Death Sentence Case
On His Majesty’s Service - October 30, 1947
After Independence - 1948

Victory issue stamps and interim government stamps remained valid.
Interim Government Officials in 1948

February 2, 1948 – On Union of Burma’s Service
The Burma Republic issued its first officials Jan 4, 1949
To The Director General
World Health Organisation
GENEVA
SWITZERLAND

Rates: 13 ½ oz. letter
3 ½ annas postage first oz. — = 3 ½ annas
2 annas postage each additional oz. x 13 = 26 annas
10 annas air fee per ½ oz. x 27 = 270 annas
Total = 299 ½ annas
or 18 rupees 11 ½ annas
Used With 1949 Independence Anniversary Stamps

Rangoon-May 8, 1949-2 annas postage per tola + 4 annas air fee per tola
BY SURFACE ROUTE hand stamp: Karen National Defense Organization revolt paralyzed much of Burma at this time. The few available planes were used to fly essential supplies to small pockets of government held territory. Many Union of Burma Airways flights to India were abandoned.
November 16, 1949 – On State Service
Victory Issue and Interim Government became invalid June 10, 1950
This ended the King George VI era in Burma