

# Expert Committee – RPSL Limited

## Forensic Philately: (1) Assessing whether a stamp has been manipulated for fraudulent purposes ~ adding or removing part of the design

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Philatelists face the challenge of assessing whether an item they wish to purchase or own is an item that matches the description in reference books. Such publications may include details of rarer items that, for example, may only be found as a 'flaw', the result of the printing process. Thus, only one stamp may have this difference compared with all the other stamps on that sheet. This creates a potential premium and this article provides an example of fraudulent manipulation, demonstrated by forensic philately.

### The Addition of a Feature

Collectors of British Commonwealth material may be familiar with the 1935 Silver Jubilee Windsor Castle omnibus designs printed by three different companies, the set with its different designs consists of 250 stamps. This includes Great Britain, Antigua, Ascension, Australia etc. to the Virgin Islands. There are a number of recognised plate flaws which include an extra flagstaff, short extra flagstaff, double flagstaff, lightning conductor, dot to left of chapel, vertical or horizontal log, dash or bird by turret or a damaged turret.

Examination using our special equipment identifies the following:

- Example of the Swaziland 6d printing with the 'short flagstaff' flaw (ref. SG24b) (Figure 1).
- Examination under normal lighting at a 30 times magnification shows more clearly the apparent 'short flagstaff' (Figure 2).
- Further forensic analysis e.g. under ultra-violet light at 365 nm does not show any apparent differences (Figure 3).
- Using different visible spectrum filters e.g. 445 – 570 nm does show a difference (Figure 4).
- The filter used covering the 485 to 610 nm range shows that the short flagstaff is different from the other parts of the design (Figure 5).
- The filter used covering the 515 to 640 nm range shows that the short flagstaff has apparently been added, having a different response from other parts of the design (Figure 6).

### Conclusions

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the way that a stamp can be changed by the addition or removal of part of the design.

Potential purchasers of items that may have been changed or philatelists already possessing examples of stamps that may be similar to the examples described above may wish to have such items assessed using forensic analysis.

Analysis of similar material can be arranged through the Expert Committee, RPSL Limited. Contact: Lucy Gaut on +44 (0) 20 7935 7332, e-mail: [experts@rpsl.limited](mailto:experts@rpsl.limited)

Note: Paul and John (Paul Leonard BSc. (Hons.), CSci., FRPSL and John Shaw BSc. (Hons) MBE, FRPSL) have had an extensive science-based career and are part of the team of volunteers who help the Expert Committee.





Figure 1.



Figure 2.

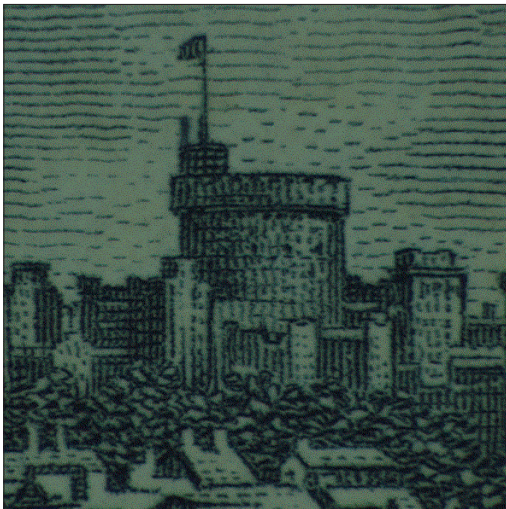


Figure 3.

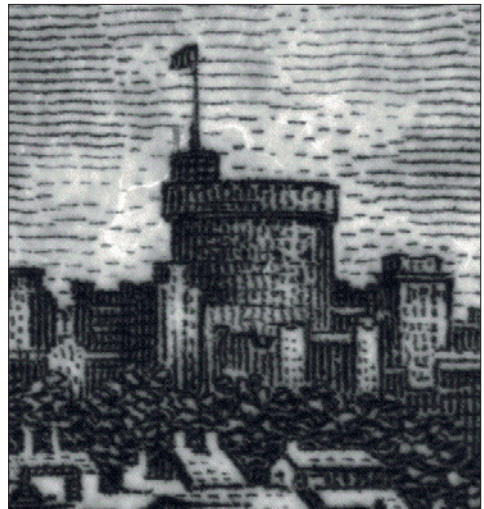


Figure 4.

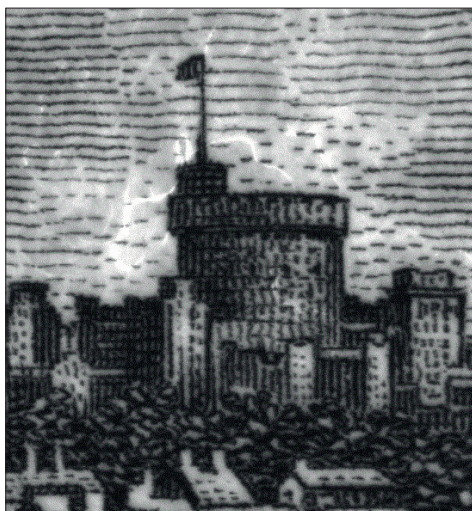


Figure 5.

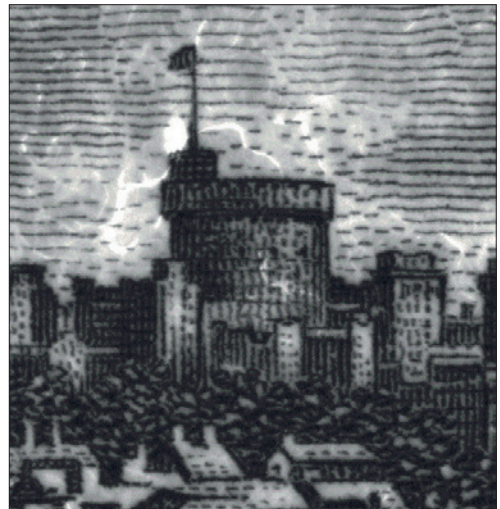


Figure 6.