

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE

Gold Coast. The provisional issue of 1889  
1d on 6d (S.G.20)

On page 337 of Robson Lowe's Encyclopedia Vol. 11 there is recorded an 'Essay' of the above stamp - "as issued but smaller surcharge". I understand that it was first reported in "The Philatelist" Vol. 3 No. 3 Christmas, 1936, when a strip of three had been produced for inspection by a contributor. This appears to be the earliest record of this essay which is not recorded by Spowart, Poole or in The Kohl Handbook.

The surcharge on the issued stamp has the following characteristics:-  
very heavy black glossy type: 'Penny'  $9\frac{3}{4}$  mm. in length (or 10 mm. including full stop): distance between bar and Penny 7 mm. (normal) or 8 mm.

The essay, however, is printed in a flat ink, printing weakly and the cancelling bar does not entirely obliterate the word 'Sixpence': 'Penny' 8 mm. in length (or  $8\frac{1}{2}$  mm. including full stop): distance between bar and 'Penny'  $7\frac{1}{2}$  mm. In fact the type used is much more like that for the 1901 surcharges (S.G. 35/36) than that on the issued stamp (S.G.20).

Some doubt has arisen as to the authenticity of this essay and the following considerations should be borne in mind in this connection.

It is generally found in strips of three, which is somewhat unusual: such a strip has been recorded overprinted on stamps of Plate 2. As Plate 2 was not in fact used until October 1892 i.e. three years after the currency of the provisional expired, this strip is obviously a fake. Another example has turned up with the overprint inverted and in this case the B.P.A. Expert Committee gave their opinion that the inverted overprint was a forgery. They did not apparently consider the status of the essay itself.

Used copies are known on cover (a) to Sierra Leone dated 1894 where a strip of three was used together with a normal 1d and 2d and (b) dated 1908: this latter cover was regarded as philatelic by the Royal Expert Committee.

In these circumstances three suggestions as to the origin of this 'essay' have been made viz :-

(a) That it was prepared by or for a dealer in view of the fact that sale to the public of the provisional was restricted - it is stated in Kohl's Handbook that Postmasters had strict orders not to sell these surcharged stamps over the counter in bulk and these orders could well have been enforced, especially at Accra. (The provisionals were on sale at Accra only from March until July and at other offices after that date).

The fact that the 'essay' came on the market after the use of the provisional ceased, the existence of the "varieties" and the use on cover referred to above, supports this view.

(b) That it was a trial printing for a provisional surcharge circa 1893 which was ultimately found not to be necessary: against this, however, there is no evidence of a shortage of 1d values at this date.

(c) That it was a trial printing for the 1901 surcharges (copies of the 1889 6d, albeit in Plate 2, were available for this purpose since 15,000 were sent to the Colony a few months before the 6d Key Plate was issued in 1898). The use of a strip of three on an 1894 cover (see above) militates against this.

On the whole the most likely solution is that this 'essay' was not an official trial printing of the 1889 provisional but was a clandestine printing emanating from private sources i.e. (a) above.

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