

Rhodesia – Double Heads

Description of the Head-plates

The Original Plate (5555 Plate)



The different states of the **5555 Plate** itself are known by the status of the **Ear Mark** on Position 2, initially a "**Gash in the Queen's Ear**". The mark begins in the **Long Gash I** state as a very prominent dash (or gash), and through subsequent wear it becomes ever smaller and fainter, becoming a shorter gash and finally a kind of **hook** instead of a gash, before almost disappearing entirely in the last printing known as the **Hook III** – the eleventh - state of the **5555 Plate**. The state of the plates can also be identified by examining the **Printer's Marks**. These come in pairs, they are found (upper) between Positions 12/13 (extending north to Positions 7/8) and (lower) between Positions 42/43, with an additional mark between 37/38 on the **NG II** state of the **NG Plate**.

In the **5555** sequence, the **transition** from "**Long Gash**" to "**Mid-Gash**" is **based** not just **on** the length of the Ear Mark but also indicates a **complete Plate overhaul** and renewal by systematic re-entry of every position with the transfer roller die, which bears the entire head-plate design in relief. The main feature of the **transition** from "**Mid-Gash**" to "**Short Gash**" is the appearance of the mysterious "**Medal Marks**" and "**Bottom Row Marks**". The **transition** from "**Short Gash**" to "**Hook**" is marked by a **second complete overhaul** and renewal of the plate by systematic transfer roller work. There are three sub-states of the **LG** and two sub-states of **MG**, all showing different Printer's Marks; there are also three sub-states of the **SG**, and three of the **HK**, making **eleven sub-states** in all.

The Electroplates

The two **electroplates** are also named by the status of the Queen's ear on Position 2 of each plate. They were made at two different times in the evolution of wear that occurred on the **5555 Plate**. The first electroplate is called the "**Thick Ear Plate**"; it was **made from** the fourth state of the **5555 Plate**, which is known as the **Mid-Gash I** state of the plate. The "**Thick Ear**" plate is so named because, when the Gash was removed on Position 2, the size of the orifice in the Queen's Ear was reduced; this resulted in the ear lobe having a thickened appearance. The **TE Plate** started out in large part as an **exact copy** of the **MG** state of **Plate 5555** **apart from** the **Thick Ear** instead of a Gash in the Queen's Ear on Position 2, the addition of "**Two White Lines in Queen's Hair**" on Position 14, and a change to the **Printer's Marks**.



5555 Plate: The Defaced **5555 Plate** Position 2 showing the state of the plate at the end of the Hook printings (**Hook III**) with only the slightest remains of the Hook in the Queen's Ear.



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The second electroplate was made after the **Short Gash III** - the eighth - state of the **5555 Plate**. It is called the **"No Gash"** Plate, because it has no gash on Position 2. In this case the new electroplate **was** thoroughly **re-entered** before printing and the stamps from it **differ considerably** in appearance **from** those printed from its **5555** predecessor - **Short Gash III**, and from those printed from its **5555** successor - **Hook I** - which was also thoroughly re-entered. Position 2 from the **No Gash Plate** shows **no trace** whatsoever of an Ear Mark. There is reason to believe that Position 2 on the **No Gash Plate** may have been "erased" and an entirely new entry made. A **Large Dot in the West Margin** helps identify this position.

The **Thick Ear** printings break down into **two** major **groups**, determined by the change in the lower Printer's Mark, and **five subcategories** necessitated by five distinctly different printings of the 2d. These groups have sometimes been called **Thick Ear I (1-3)** - "The Clean Thick Ear" and **Thick Ear II (4-5)** - "The Dirty (or) Flawed Thick Ear".

The **No Gash** printings have been broken down into **two** major **groups**, based on changes of both upper and lower Printer's Marks, and **eight subcategories** necessitated by distinctly different printings of the 2d., 3d., and 1/-. **No Gash 1-4** have the first set of **No Gash** Printer's Marks, and **No Gash 5-8** have the second set of **No Gash** Printer's Marks. These groups have been called **No Gash I (1-4)** and **No Gash II (5-8)** respectively.



Thick Ear I (3) - Position 14 - 2d RSC-A
"Two white lines in Queen's Hair"



No Gash I (4) - Position 43 - 2d RSC-F1
Printer's Mark (NW Corner)



Thick Ear II (4) - Position 42 - 2d RSC-E
Printer's Mark (NE Corner)



No Gash II (7) - Position 13 - 2d RSC-F2
Printer's Mark (NW Corner)

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The Printings Allocated by States of the Plates



The bi-coloured Double Heads divide logically into two groups: (1) the 2d to the 2/-, (2) the 2/6 to the £1. In the first, every duty except the 8d. emanates from at least two head-plates, and most emanate from three, whereas for the 2/6 to the £1 only the original **5555 Plate** is used. For this reason the three-plate allocation template (plate diagram) appears on the pages of all duties through the 2/-, but there is only a single-plate (**5555**) template on the pages for the 2/6d to the £1.

From the printer's perspective **5555** must have been regarded as a superior product (and nothing less would be suitable for high value stamps.) They were probably as aware as are philatelists, who (often to their chagrin) try to plate these stamps, that the **5555 Plate** would print fewer, smaller, less obtrusive flaws, when compared with an electroplate-printed stamp which can often be positioned instantly. In many cases, it is almost impossible to find anything at all on a stamp printed from the **5555 Plate**. It is possible that the metal used for **5555** is different, and that the plate was faced with either nickel or alloyed iron (a process called acierage), whereas the electroplates may have been copper or some other, softer metal, possibly with no facing at all. In any case, the flaws on the electroplates (particularly the **Thick Ear**) are larger and considerably more numerous.

It is no coincidence that the electroplate printings did not appear until six months (**TE**) and two and a half years (**NG**) after the first issue, when collectors would have had every opportunity to get their "originals". (It was thought at the time that originals - first printings - were what one ought to collect; and "reprints" were regarded with scorn, and not promoted to the philatelic trade, with entire printings sent to Africa for postage and revenue use. And, of course, ironically, it is those stamps that are now rare, and avidly sought, especially mint. It is largely thanks to contemporary collectors in Rhodesia - who were very fond of the issue - that any survive.) With their reputation intact with both customer and collector, the printers could feel free to deploy their much more economic electroplate methods to fill late reprint orders for low values.

Plate Diagram for the Low Values:
2d. to 2/- Printings

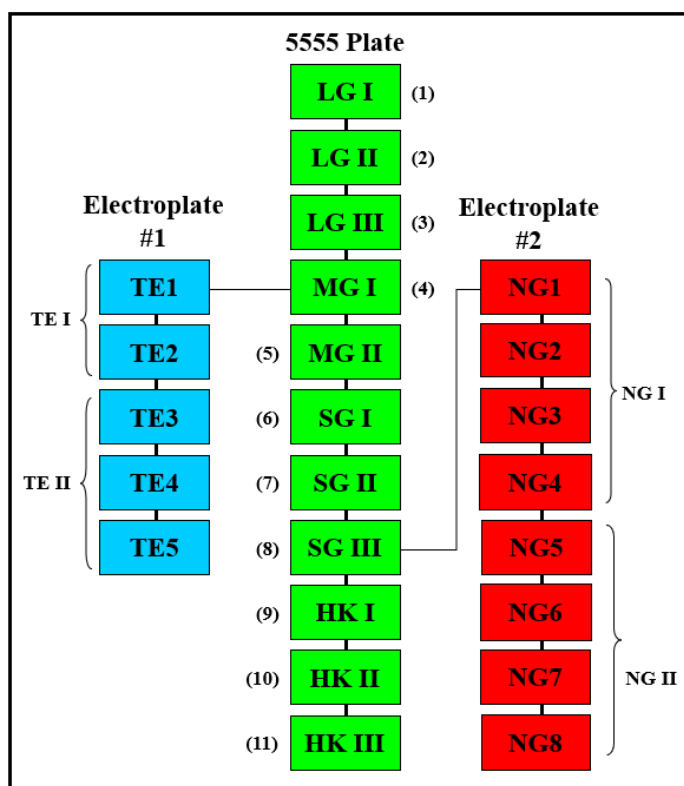
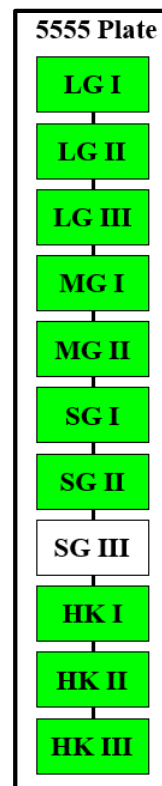


Plate Diagram for the High Values:
2/6d. to £1 Printings



5555 (1) LG I		5555 (6) SG I (Cont.)		Electroplate #1 TE II (4)	
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
2d.	128-1, 128-2 (128-A, 128-B)	5/-	160, RSC-E	2d.	RSC-E
3d.	134	7/6d.	162, RSC-F, G	3d.	RSC-D
4d.	138, 140	5555 (7) SG II		5d.	RSC-C
5d.	141, 141A, RSC-A, B	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	1/-	RSC-E
6d.	144	3d.	136	2/-	154
8d.	185, RSC-B, C, D, E, 185a	6d.	RSC-D	Electroplate #1 TE II (5)	
10d.	149, RSC-A	2/-	RSC-B	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
1/-	151, RSC-A	£1	RSC-H, I, J	2d.	RSC-J
2/-	153	5555 (8) SG III		3d.	RSC-E, F
2/6d.	155a, 157, RSC-F, G	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	4d.	RSC-E
3/-	158, RSC-A, B	2d.	RSC-B	6d.	RSC-H
5/-	159, RSC-A, B, C, D	4d.	RSC-D	Electroplate #2 NG I (1)	
7/6d.	161	5555 (9) HK I		Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
10/-	164	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	2d.	RSC-K1
£1	166b	4d.	RSC-C	Electroplate #2 NG I (2)	
5555 (2) LG II		6d.	RSC-C	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	£1	RSC-K	2/-	RSC-C
2d.	126, 130	5555 (10) HK II		Electroplate #2 NG I (3)	
4d.	139-1	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
6d.	RSC-A, B	3d.	RSC-C	2d.	RSC-K2
10d.	150, RSC-B	4d.	RSC-B	3d.	RSC-I
7/6d.	160b, RSC-A, B	5d.	143a	Electroplate #2 NG I (4)	
£1	166a, RSC-B, C, D	2/-	RSC-A	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
5555 (3) LG III		2/6d.	RSC-A	2d.	RSC-F1, G
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	£1	RSC-F, G, L	1/-	RSC-F1
2d.	127	5555 (11) HK III		Electroplate #2 NG II (5)	
3d.	135	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
4d.	139-2	2d.	129	1/-	RSC-F2, G, H
6d.	145a	3d.	RSC-B	Electroplate #2 NG II (6)	
8d.	147, RSC-A	2/6d.	155	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
1/-	152a, RSC-D	7/6d.	RSC-C	2d.	RSC-H
2/6d.	156, RSC-B	10/-	163, RSC-A	3d.	RSC-G, H
5/-	160a, RSC-F	Electroplate #1 TE I (1)		2/-	RSC-E
£1	165, RSC-E, A1, A2	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Electroplate #2 NG II (7)	
5555 (4) MG I		2d.	RSC-D	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	3d.	137	2d.	RSC-F2
4d.	RSC-A	5d.	142	5d.	143
8d.	146, 148	6d.	RSC-E, F, G	6d.	RSC-I, J
10/-	RSC-B	10d.	RSC-C, D1	Electroplate #2 NG II (8)	
5555 (5) MG II		2/-	RSC-D	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	Electroplate #1 TE I (2)		3d.	RSC-J
1/-	151a, 152, RSC-B, C	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	4d.	RSC-F1, F2
2/6d.	156a, RSC-C, D, E	2d.	RSC-I		
7/6d.	RSC-D, E	10d.	RSC-D2, E, F		
10/-	RSC-C	Electroplate #1 TE I (3)			
£1	166	Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)		
5555 (6) SG I		2d.	RSC-A		
Value	Catalog #s (S.G. & RSC)	6d.	Roulette		
3d.	RSC-A	3/-	158a, RSC-C, D		