

1898 Provisional 1d on 3/-

The seeds of these 1898 provisionals were sown in 1896 when Johnston signed off the order for the values and quantities of the redrawn Arms issue of 1897. The 1897 definitive issue took a long time to arrive, but this only became a problem when BCA fulfilled their commitment to destroy the remnants of the 1896 issue as required by the Crown Agents. It may well have been that more of the old 1d stamps were destroyed then, than there were 1d stamps in the new delivery. The new definitives arrived in August 1897 and included 36,000 1d stamps, but, having had a whole year to review usage since the quantities were signed off in July 96, a new requisition was raised for the full range of values, excluding the 3/- even as these stamps were arriving.

By this time, the telegraph was installed at Zomba so, barring financial constraints, the placement of this second requisition in Sept 97 should have been straightforward yet it was not invoiced from the printers until December 97. Again, this must have been known in BCA and plans were put in place to meet a shortage. This is indicated by the Post Office Circular, issued by the acting PMG, J.T.Gosling dated 22nd December 1897, although not promulgated until Feb 26 1898 when Gosling says that it was referred to in his report for the month of December. His remark about it being a 'much-needed medium of instruction' suggests a lack of earlier instruction to the public which had caused some confusion.

'Postage stamps – The stock of penny stamps became practically exhausted on the 22nd ultimo, and the three shillings stamps surcharged 'One Penny' were brought into use at Blantyre, Zomba and Fort Anderson. The issue of these stamps had been deferred as long as possible by the adjustment of the stocks of the different offices'.

The earliest known date for use of the overprinted stamps is 30th December, 1897 and yet the 'Circular' indicates that much preparatory work had been done. The 3s stamp has been seen apparently, but probably not actually, postally used at Zomba in August 1897, but there are no examples of it with the standard double circle fiscal mark used on hut tax receipts and, given the numbers available for overprinting, it was probably never issued for that purpose. It seems likely that the overprint had been applied as early as late October/early November 1897 and then held whilst stocks of the 1d definitive were being monitored. There are in existence copies postmarked 5 Dec 97, which seems strange but they may have been early cancelled - to - order items from these stocks. It must have been known that the replacement 1d would not arrive in time and the PMG had only ordered a further 18,000. There is a suspicion, given the closeness of the raising of this September requisition and the overprinting of the 3s that the order for 1d stamps was kept low because the overprinting was already planned. This would avoid the embarrassment of having to explain why 36,000 3s stamps were ordered for Hut Tax receipts when these had already superseded by the embossed stamps⁷.

The 3/- stamp was printed originally in sheets of 5 rows of 12 stamps, and each sheet of 60 of the 3/- was impress overprinted 'ONE PENNY' at one operation by the Government printer. A sticky red ink was used which may have been the red embossing ink ordered with the embossing dies and subsequently for the 'Cheque stamps'. This, together with an uneven press, resulted in over-inking, albino and partial albino letters, smudges and misalignments,

Varieties 'PNNEY' and 'PENN'

There are two varieties with a Gibbons listing that can be tracked to position, these being the 'PNNEY', SG53a and 'PENN', SG53b.

'PNNEY' (Fig 1), is a misspelling by the printer occurring on row 4, stamp 2, (38). This is believed to have occurred in the early part of the printing but to have been spotted and corrected early. Melville puts the variety at the 2nd stamp in the fourth row (38) which is supported by De Robeck's examples and the Gibbon's listing (R4/2).

'PENN' (Fig 2), is caused by an albino or missing 'Y' of 'PENNY'. This has been recorded as being at the second and third stamps on the top row. This can be seen clearly from a NW marginal corner block of 8 (4x2) in the Royal Collection.

Variety 'PNNEY'

The overprint was applied locally, and the error 'PNNEY' would be pointed out by the printer to the Postmaster General, Gosling, who would make the decision to stop the run to correct it. In making that decision he would be aware that he had a handful of sheets of a quite spectacular spelling error. At least 20 of these can be traced through the auction catalogues, which seems quite high, but it is obvious that its value was recognised from day one and they were deliberately retained for the philatelic market, so the number of examples seen is likely to be close to the number of sheets printed before the press was stopped.



The most striking example of this is to show it in the centre of a block of 9. As it is the second stamp in the second to bottom row, it is easy to get at by taking out the lower left block of 9 with this in the centre. Indeed, there are at least 5 different examples of these blocks that have come up at auction in recent years commanding very high prices. It also occurs in blocks of four, threes and pairs in mint condition. But here the most striking feature is the number used with the Fort Anderson postmark dated JA 1 99.

Fig 1 - Block of 4 with variety 'PNNEY' at upper right. Courtesy of British Library Philatelic Collections

Both Robin Hillman and Bryan de Robeck record this in their respective books circa 1982. Hillman queries whether it is New

Year revelry and De Robeck thinks CTO but there seems to be something more at play here. Looking through hundreds of the basic surcharge in used condition on e-bay, a high percentage are cancelled Fort Anderson JA 1 99 which would lead you to think that they were being remaindered. This may be the case and as we have seen earlier a high percentage are shown as being sold but there are also examples of the PNNEY variety here. Given the recognised value of the variety there has to be a suspicion that it was thought they would be more valuable and credible if they were available both mint and used and the sheets with the variety were 'seeded' into these 'remainders'.

In all this there is one outsider of the PNNEY variety which on the face of it may be genuinely postally used this being a single stamp which came up in the Simpson sale of 1982, recorded as having a Madagascar arrival marking, verified by an R.P.S. certificate of 1950.

Much of this is well detailed and previously covered in this Memoir, but we now move into what is less well known or can be shown to be incorrect in the light of the availability of more recent material.

The variety 'PENN'



This variety is not mentioned by Melville by 1908 and even now, Gibbons does not give its position on the sheet of 60. By its nature it is not as important as the PNNEY, being an albino print rather than a spelling error, yet it can be argued that the true 'PENN' is rarer than the 'PNNEY'. It is certainly recognised as one of the Nyasaland rarities and valued accordingly but there are indications that it was not recognised at first and it does not appear in the early catalogues. Even De Robeck in detailing it and knowing its rarity says:

'Although a number of letters in the overprints appear partially inked – or albino, there is an apparent constant flaw (supported by a top left corner block in the Royal Collection) of an albino – or 'missing' Y in PENNY on the second and third stamps of the top row. Whether this occurred on all the overprints is unclear'. Herein lies the problem; because the albino Y has been portrayed as variable it was not always accepted as a constant variety.

Fig 2 - Variety 'One Penn' Courtesy of British Library Philatelic Collection.

Hillman in listing the 'PNNEY' says 'corrected early in the printing run'. Yet for the 'PENN' he says, enigmatically, that it is 'frequently accompanied by an albino Y'. The Mc Farlane catalogue annotation goes further saying 'Note: This variety is subject to some controversy because all the known examples show an albino 'Y' which has often been manipulated to remove the embossing of the letter'.

Today it is acknowledged as a rarity and holds its value at approximately half that of the 'PNNEY' variety. Previously Memoir 20, stated that it was only half the catalogue value because there were two examples per sheet at positions 2 and 3 compared with one of the PNNEY, following De Robeck. This now appears to be incorrect. There is only one true 'PENN' which is at position 3.

The rarity of the PENN variety should have alerted De Robeck to the fact that the press was unlikely to be halted more than once to correct the setting and that both PNNEY and PENN must have been corrected at the same time.

De Robeck mentions the corner block in the Royal Collection which is in fact a top left -hand block of 4 x 2. In viewing this block it can be seen that, in addition to flaws in the Y at positions 2 and 3 the right- hand arm is also missing off the Y at position 4. So, there are in fact 3 stamps at positions 2-4 with complete or partial albino 'Y's and they are different from each another.

In his book De Robeck illustrates a block of 4, with positions 2 and 3 in the upper pair (Fig 3). It is notable that position 2 shows traces of red ink on the Y, which Position 3 does not and he mentions a partially albino E in ONE on the lower left stamp. He does not claim this latter as a constant variety because he does not know its context.



Fig 3 – De Robeck block illustrating variety 'PENN'

The De Robeck block shows positions 2 and 3 on the sheet which he says are the variety PENN yet it is apparent that where position 3 on the right is completely albino, position 2 shows vestiges of red ink indicating that position 3 may be the variety 'PENN' and position 2 may be a separate variety which could be called 'missing large part Y'. De Robeck also draws attention to the partially albino E in the stamp below position 2 (14).

The British Library example of 'PENN', (Fig 2), shows no vestige of red ink but it is also noticeable that the stamp directly below (posn 15) does not have a partially albino E indicating again that the PENN is from position 3.



Fig 4 – Block with vestige of 'Y' at posn 2

A similar upper left marginal block has recently come to light, (Fig 4), which almost certainly includes de Robeck's PENN at position 2, yet it has apparently been denied a certificate as 'PENN'. This is correct because it is the variety 'missing large part Y'. It does mean however that the RPSL expertisers are only accepting the completely albino Y as 'PENN' and, as this is at position 3, there is strong evidence that this should be acknowledged by Gibbons. The partially albino 'E' below position 2, (Fig 3, posn 14) supports thinking that this may be a constant variety and again ties this variety 'missing large part Y'. This, in turn supports the contention that the British Library example, (Fig 2) is the correct 'PENN' at position 3 as there the stamp below (position 15), lacks the partially albino 'E'.

So, instead to having just 2 varieties (PNNEY and PENN) in the first 3 columns we appear to have 4:

Variety 'large part albino Y' (position 2),

Variety 'PENN' (position 3)

Variety 'partially albino E'. (position 14)

Variety 'PNNEY' (position 38)

The varieties PNNEY and PENN command high prices for their rarity, but how can we reasonably increase this to four varieties when we have so little material to go on. The answer would appear to lie in what has already been said about the variety 'PNNEY', that after a small number of sheets had been overprinted it was spotted and corrected. De Robeck in talking about the variety 'PENN' rather fudges this issue in saying that it is not known whether it was on all the overprint sheets. We can now perhaps see that, identified as position 3, it is at least as rare as 'PNNEY' commanding a lower value because it is only an albino 'Y'. Furthermore, we can also see two more varieties that are connected with them, maybe less important, but probably rarer, because their significance was not recognised.

The contention must be that, when the press was stopped to correct the 'PNNEY', they also took the opportunity to correct the 'PENN' and most likely also the other two varieties. But this has further ramifications because this represents only the left- hand quarter of the sheet.

There is in existence a large part sheet of the overprint comprising 9 columns from the right hand side, (45 stamps). This strange configuration could be explained by the fact that the two main varieties are in the 3 left hand side columns. We have already pointed out that at least 5 examples of the variety 'PNNEY' can be seen in a block of 9. One easy way of obtaining these and the variety 'PENN' would be to rip off the first 3 columns, leaving the residual 9 right hand side columns.

This may appear speculative until you realise that the sheet of 45 also contains a number of varieties. The overprint is one of the most common BCA stamps on e-bay, but these varieties can only rarely be seen, which enables us to confirm they are indeed as rare as the better known varieties on the first 3 columns. The conclusion has to be that when the press was stopped to correct 'PNNEY' (and 'PENN'), the opportunity was taken to correct all these other errors of type. This change would be so comprehensive that it must be regarded as a separate setting, hereafter called 'Setting 1', and all subsequent sheets would therefore come from Setting 2.

Taking a whole sheet of Setting 1, we would be able to see the following constant varieties:

Position 2 – Large part missing Y of PENNY with just a vestige of the left--hand arm, (Fig 4)

Position 3 – variety 'PENN', (Fig 2.)

Position 4 – missing right- hand arm of 'PENNY', (Fig 5)

Positions 14, 16, 29, 31 and 33 – part missing 'E' of 'ONE' to varying degrees. (Figs 4,5,6 &7)

Position 38 – variety 'PNNEY', (Fig 1)

The additional varieties from the right- hand side (45 stamps) of the sheet are shown below.



Fig 5 - Posns 4 & 5, 16 & 17. Missing RH arm of 'Y' at Posn 4 and part missing 'E' of 'ONE' at posn 16.



Fig 6 - Posns 29-31. Large part missing 'E' of 'ONE' at posn 29 and lesser example at posn 31



Fig 7 - Posns 32 & 33. Part missing 'E' at posn 33 and chip from back of 'E' at posn 32.

To show that these varieties are still out there, Figs 8-10 illustrate examples obtained from e-bay over the years.



Fig 8 - Part missing 'Y' posn 4



Figs 9 & 10 - both examples part missing 'E' of 'ONE'



Setting II

Of the original 36,000 3/- stamps, very few were used in the early weeks, and 33,400 or 556 sheets were available to be overprinted 'ONE PENNY'. Of these we have already identified 20 plus sheets as 'Setting 1' which still leaves the overwhelming majority, around 530 sheets, of what must now be regarded as Setting II. Despite this being one of the most common BCA stamps on e-bay it remains enigmatic. The printers have undoubtedly done a good job correcting or replacing Setting I, and, to date no constant varieties have been identified for Setting II. The sticky red ink causes over inking which can distort the type and create supernumerary red marks and, at the other extreme, spectacular 'dry' prints where stamps are almost albino, but these are not constant.

Varieties can be seen such as small letters, large letters, raised and dropped letters, but, given the numbers that should be available (1 in 60), no constancy can be established. This is not helped by the lack of any comparable large piece that is available for Setting 1.

Double Surcharge

There exists a further listed variety of the One Penny on Three Shillings, in the 'Double Surcharge', SG53c. There are various theories about how they have been created, but there is no doubt that they should have been regarded as 'printer's waste' and destroyed. However, as with the variety 'PNNEY', its philatelic value was recognised at once and these were retained. This can be deduced because, of the 40 plus examples seen at Auction over the past 40 years as singles, pairs and blocks, not a single one is used.

From the time of the Christies, McFarlane auction in 1989, through to the Spink 'Blanic' auction of 2021, the double surcharges have been provisionally assigned to at least 3 sheets identified by the apparent positioning of the surcharges in relation to one another as:

Double overlapping – equal intensity

Double overlapping – one impression stronger than the other

Double wide – almost equal intensity

These can be interpreted from the McFarlane catalogue as follows at Figs 11-13:



Fig 11 - Lot 159- Double overlapping
One impression stronger than the other



Fig 12 - Lot 160 – Double overlapping, almost
equal intensity



Fig 13 - Lot 161 – Double wide almost equal
intensity

Plainly we now have far more resources available than 30 years ago to see what is happening and auctions are far more frequent and visible. From records it is possible to track sales of the double surcharge back over 40 years to Gerald Simpson's collection in 1982 and identify 32 different examples (40 including multiples) from several different auctions.

The McFarlane examples above have been placed out of order because it can now be shown that Lot 160 and 161 are from the same sheet, both having the surcharges applied at an angle, whereas on Lot 159, the surcharges are applied straight.

From research it seemed apparent that it is this angle of application that differentiates the types, indicating that there are only two types; those where the surcharges are applied more or less straight, and those where they are applied at an angle. These can be identified as Type 1 and Type 2.

Type 1

The first type is where both surcharges are applied more or less straight. For Type 1 the upper image is stronger than the lower from examples seen but the surcharges can be separate, just touching, or overlapping to different degrees. The lower image also varies in intensity and in its lateral shift (to the right) of the upper image. A small sample is shown below as Figs 14-16. Being identified as ‘straight’, these should be consistent across the sheet but even a small difference of the angle of application of the two surcharges can change the position of one against the other across a row of 12 stamps.



Fig. 14 - Corinphila Nov 2022

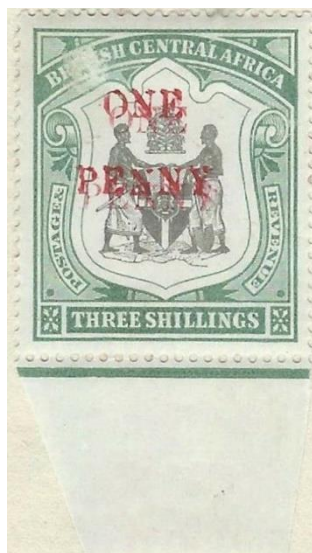


Fig. 15 – e-bay 2022



Fig. 16 – Grosvenor Nov 2008

These are ‘straight’ surcharges, showing the variation of Type 1 and can be described as follows:

Fig. 14 – Double overlapping, lower image fainter and to the right of upper image

Fig. 15 – Double overlapping to a greater degree than Fig. 3 but lower surcharge fainter

Fig. 16 – Double separate, lower image fainter but set almost directly below upper.

It is because of this variation that we cannot say how many sheets are involved in these ‘straight’ surcharges. It may well be only two, given possible variation across the sheet, but the variation in such apparently simple parameters could lead one to think there were more. Lot 159 from the McFarlane catalogue can be identified as Type 1 with the surcharges straight on one another.

Type 2

The second type of double surcharge is where it is possible to see that the surcharges have been applied at an angle. These appear far more chaotic, yet they are easier to analyse and can demonstrably be assigned to just one sheet. Here, the two surcharges are of approximate equal intensity. A number of examples can be seen in Auction catalogues which show that both surcharges are at an angle, rising upwards to the right. The upper surcharge at the left hand of the sheet is rising at a shallower angle than the lower and as they progress across the sheet, as a consequence, the lower surcharge crosses over the upper surcharge to itself become the upper surcharge. It then proceeds to move away and to the right of the sheet it even impinges on the row above. This can be identified as a 'Crossover surcharge'.

Examples showing progressive 'Crossover' of surcharges.



Fig. 17 Grosvenor Nov 2008



Fig. 18 Grosvenor Nov 2008



Fig 19 Blanic Auction 2021

What we can see from Fig 17, a lower marginal from column 2 of 12, is that the upper surcharge is set at a shallower angle than the lower one which is starting to impinge on it. Fig. 18, which will be from mid-sheet, shows the lower surcharge has risen to be virtually superimposed on the upper one, (one letter to the right), and Fig. 19 towards the right of centre shows that what was the lower surcharge has risen above the surcharge with the shallower upward angle. Hence, what was the lower surcharge at the left of the sheet has crossed over to become the upper surcharge by the right of the sheet. At Figs 12 & 13, Lots 160 and 161 can be identified as coming from this single sheet. Lot 160 maybe one column to the left of Fig 19, whereas Lot 161 is more towards the right of the sheet where the surcharge at a steeper angle is starting to impinge on the row above.

One query that does need answering is why, when examples from the right-hand side of the sheet can be seen going off to the top right of the stamp (Figs 17 & 19), do other examples, likely to be from the middle of the sheet (Fig 18), appear more centred? The explanation for this is probably because, not being applied straight, the surcharges hit the right-hand margin at an angle and coming off at 90 degrees move inwards up the sheet. So, the stamps with the double surcharge going off to the right-hand side are from the lower row(s) whereas those where it falls more central are from the upper row(s). This means that each stamp on the

sheet is unique because, although the same pattern is repeated for each row, it moves backwards as it goes up the sheet.

Conclusion

From the examples of the three types of double surcharge referred to and illustrated in McFarlane, two, 'Double overlapping of equal intensity' and 'Double wide of almost equal intensity' come from the same sheet, and that, given the progression of the 'crossover', it is possible to identify in which column of the sheet that they fall. Here, almost equal intensity is the common factor.

The third type 'double overlapping –one impression stronger than the other' is variable. The common factors are that the applications are more or less straight and the lower impression is fainter than the upper.

the conclusion is that, for purposes of description, there are two types of double surcharge as follows:

Type 1 - Double Surcharge applied straight

Surcharges both applied straight with the lower surcharge more faint and to the right of upper, overlapping or separate. These parameters are variable, making them subtly different and, because most examples are single stamps it remains difficult to ascertain how many sheets are involved. It is probably no more than 2 or 3 despite the numbers seen at auction because it is apparent that the sheets were saved and subsequently broken up for the philatelic market.

Type 2 – Double Surcharge angled crossover

Surcharges of approximately equal intensity set at an angle rising across the sheet. That which is the lower surcharge at the left of sheet is set at a steeper angle than upper surcharge and, as a result, crosses over it to become the upper surcharge, heading away to impinge on the row above on the right of the sheet. Despite the apparently chaotic appearance, these can be mapped to just one sheet, again, kept for the philatelic market.

At present all the double surcharges are lumped together as SG53c yet it is shown that, despite the variability, the two types above are substantially different from one another in a consistent manner and there is a strong argument for them to be listed separately.

More to the point, these double surcharges are desirable but not cheap. There is an example in most Nyasaland auctions, and it is important that you know what you are buying whether you just want one or want to show a more comprehensive study.

Use of the Surcharged stamps

A circular by Gosling to the stamp trade on 23 Mar officially notified the disappearance of the case of stamps last seen at Chinde on or around 25 January. By this time stocks of the surcharge had also run low and with effect from 11 Mar 98, the first 'Cheque' stamps were in use for internal postage. The surcharge continued to be used for external and revenue

purposes until April when a further postal circular was issued restricting its use to revenue only:

It is anticipated that a new supply of stamps will be received within the next two months; in the interval Postmasters are requested to be as economical as possible in the use of 2d stamps (also in short supply). The penny surcharged stamps should only be sold for Revenue purposes; the public being requested to pay in money for the postage of all packets liable only to charge to one penny.



Fig 20 – 4 stamps of the surcharge on cover to England

Regardless of notices the 1d on 3/- continues to be postally used through this period including multiples on both internal and external covers.

Despite the Cheque stamps being officially withdrawn from the end of July 1898 it becomes a moot point as to which was the main 1d stamp left in use, with usage of the two provisionals, the 1d on 3/- and the cheque stamps plus the 1d definitive continuing concurrently through to October 1898.

It does become apparent, however, that large numbers of the surcharge were either remaindered, possibly cancelled to order on certain dates, principally the 15th September, 1898 for Zomba and the 1st January 1899 for Fort Anderson. This is the only source of the two main varieties, i.e. the misspelt 'PNNEY' and 'PENN' in used condition in positional blocks. The only apparent exception is a single stamp, showing the 'PNNEY' variety cancelled with what is assumed to be a Madagascar arrival mark that reappeared in the Simpson sale. The fact that the 'PNNEY' variety was not discovered until 1901 has been taken as indicating that it was discovered at that time by chance and yet it may not be coincidence that at around the same time Gibbons reported that they had found copies of the Cheque stamps with the embossed centre inverted.

POSTAGE STAMPS. A further supply of Postage Stamps has arrived, and there is now no danger of a recurrence of the circumstances, which together with an accident to a case of Stamps, led to the recent surcharging of stamps and issue of Tokens. Of the Three Shillings stamps surcharged One Penny 33420 were sold, and returns, which have recently been received, show that 23901 of the Tokens were used in accounting for the postages paid in cash at the different Post Offices in accordance with the notice published in the Gazette of the 19th March last.

There has been a noticeable falling off in the number of stamps purchased by persons abroad for Collecting purposes. Stamps to the value of £289 were issued during the month of August, but these were for the most part applications which had been held over owing to the shortness of the stamp stock.

POSTAL GUIDE. A Postal Guide is now in the press and will I hope be issued by the 1st. December. The work of printing, binding, and publishing has been entrusted to the Blantyre Mission.

J. T. GOSLING,
Acting Postmaster General.

An entry in the BCA Gazette of the 12th November 1898 recording receipt of a delivery of the 1d definitive to regularise the situation is often used as the closing date of the usage of these 1898 provisionals. It is illustrated here because, with consignments of the 1d definitive stamp being sent out in May and July it seems likely that the 1d stamps were available before November 1898. This has led to speculation that the definitive was held back on first arrival in order to use up the provisionals. There may be some truth in this, but the second paragraph of the notice seems to confirm that, what must be the May consignment arrived in late July/early August. Gosling records the extent of sales to collectors and one hesitates to think how many of the 1d definitive stamps, so hard-earned were put straight back on a ship to England. Yet even the depredations of collectors should not have substantially diminished an order of 147,000 stamps. There must be other factors involved because it obviously takes the arrival of the July consignment to achieve the situation indicated in the report.

Neither would all the stamps issued to collectors in August 1898 be of the 1898 definitive. The wheel turns full circle as in these May and July requisitions a further 8,000 of the obsolete 3s stamp was ordered. It has already been indicated the 1d on 3/- stamp was, but how much more attractive is a high value stamp when all remaining stock had been surcharged 'ONE/PENNY'? There seems to be no justification for these orders other than to meet such a demand. Thus, the 3s stamp can be seen neatly cancelled as late as October 1900.

Fig – 21 A notice in the BCA Gazette of the 12th November 1898 accounting for the use of the 1898 provisional Stamps (courtesy of the national Archives, Kew).

The Cheque stamps can be seen used through to October 28th, 1898, and they cannot appear after this date because their use is fully accounted for by the postmasters who affix them, (Fig 21). By contrast, sales of the 1d on 3/- are given to the same date, but they are sold to the public to use and there is no official withdrawal date for them. Hence they can be seen used at main offices through to 1902 and even as late as 1904/05.

At the time of De Robeck in 1982, it was considered that the use of the surcharged stamps was more limited than that of the Cheque stamp. This now seems doubtful, it being possible to replicate most of the Cheque stamp offices, as shown below. In addition it was authorised for fiscal use and use abroad.

A range of examples illustrating both postal and fiscal usage of the 1d on 3/- surcharge is shown below.

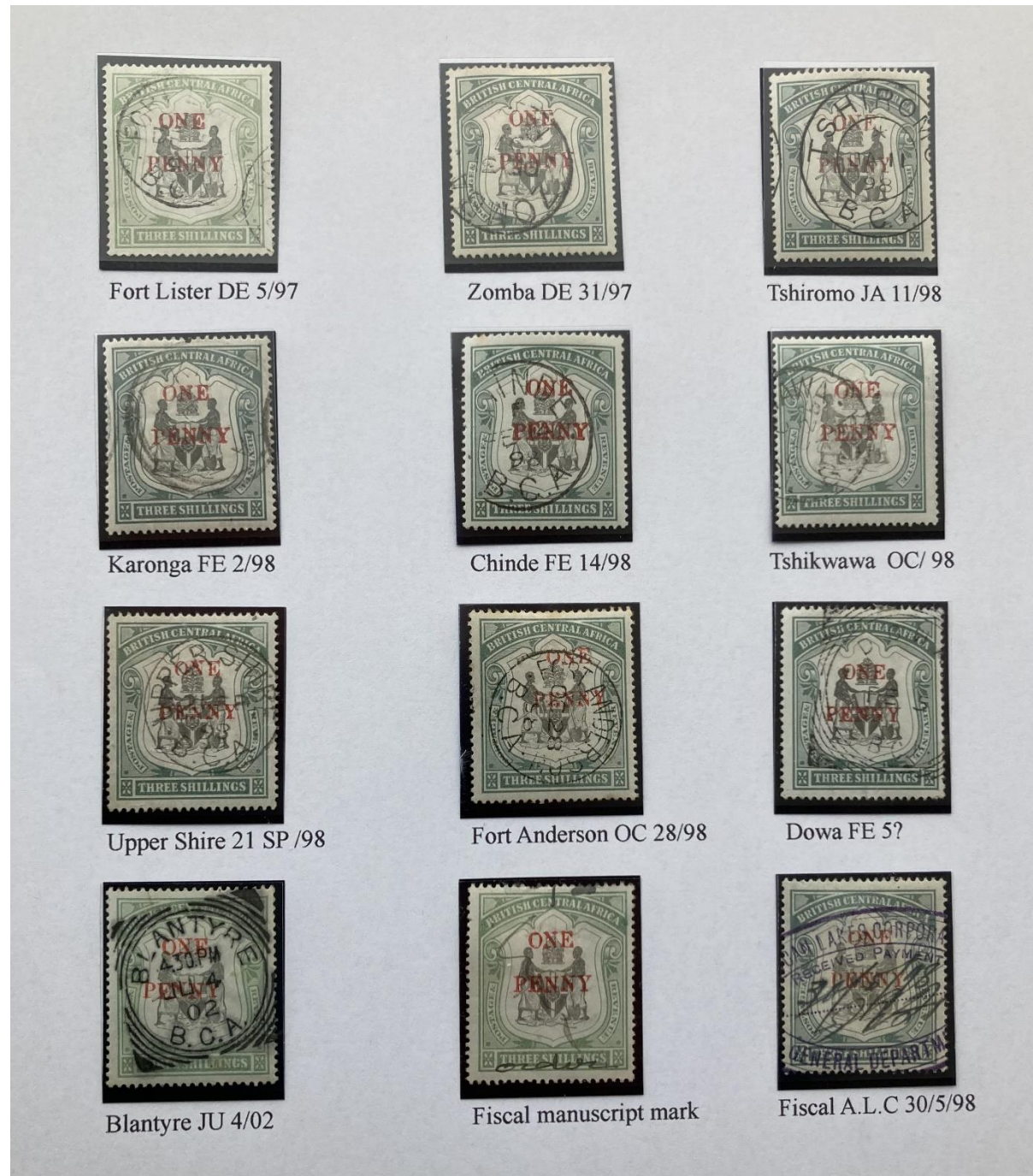


Fig 22 – Showing use of 1d on 3/- Provisional

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Spink, April 2021 - The 'Blanic' Collection of Nyasaland & Rhodesia.

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