

**The “No Value Stamp” Revisited****Richard Wheatley (ESC 168)**

The piece on this subject in the last *QC* by Mahmoud Ramadan (ESC 358) was most interesting. I should like to widen the investigation into the whole issue.

This is a complicated issue of just one stamp with two printing plates, a change in paper and different watermarks and their orientation, so there is plenty here for the philatelist to study. One key element is the watermark, which is a crescent with a star between the horns. There are two sizes of this; the wide one measures 12mm and the narrow one is 10mm.

To enable me to get to grips with the issue, I tabulated the information presented in *The Nile Post*. This is easily the best source, but it is far from complete, as the table reveals:

Issue	Paper	Wmk.	Sheet size	Sheet format	Marginal marking	Perf.	Control/plate number
1893	Plain	Wide upright	240	4 panes 60 (6 x 10)	Solid buffer bar	14 x13¾	1
1903	Chalk	Wide upright inverted	240	Ditto	Ditto	14 x13¾ Imperf.	1 2 2 1
1906	Ditto	Wide upright	240	Ditto	Interrupted buffer bar & vertical ladder	14 x13¾	
1914	Ditto	Narrow sideways star to left	600	6 panes 100 (10 x 10)	Interrupted buffer bar & vert. and horiz. ladder	14 x13¾ Imperf.	1 2 3 3
1915	Ditto	Narrow sideways star to right	600	Ditto	Ditto	14 x13¾ Imperf.	3 3

There are gaps in the information given, for instance:

1893 printing.	Peter Smith says that imperforate stamps are also known ( <i>Egypt</i> , p.378). Does this exist with inverted watermark?
1903 printing.	Only Plate 1 is recorded with inverted watermark, there should also be Plate 2.
1906 printing.	There is no mention of Plate numbers. I have a vertical pair with Plate 2 in the margin ( <i>Fig. 1</i> ), so there must also have been a Plate 1. I also have a control block of 4 imperforate stamps with Plate 2 ( <i>Fig. 2</i> ). Does this printing exist with inverted watermark?
1914 printing.	I have a complete pane 100 stamps from Plate 1, top pane ( <i>Fig. 3</i> ). Peter Smith says: 1914, watermark faces right or left (p.379).
1915 printing.	I must admit that I have reservations about this being a separate printing from the 1914 one. After all, the only difference is the orientation of the watermark, which is achieved by feeding the paper into the printing press the other way round. Furthermore, Peter Smith does not mention a 1915 printing. I do have an interpanneaux block of 4 imperforate with the watermark star facing to the right ( <i>Fig. 4</i> ) and, a non margin horizontal imperforate pair. It would seem that there is evidence of a 1915 printing and I would like the opportunity of seeing it. As we read in the piece by Mr Ramadan, there is now recorded a Plate 1 and there should be a Plate 2.

From the above notes, I think that the table should look like this:

Issue	Paper	Wmk.	Sheet size	Sheet format	Marginal marking	Perf.	Control/plate number
1893	Plain	Wide upright	240	4 panes 60 (6 x 10)	Solid buffer bar	14 x 13¾ Imperf.	1 1
1903	Chalk	Wide upright inverted	240	Ditto	Ditto	14 x 13¾ Imperf.	1 2 2 1 2
1906	Ditto	Wide upright	240	Ditto	Interrupted buffer bar & vertical ladder	14 x 13¾ Imperf.	1 2 2
1914	Ditto	Narrow sideways. Star to left	600	6 panes 100 (10 x 10)	Interrupted buffer bar & vert. and horiz. ladder	14 x 13¾ Imperf.	1 2 3 3
1915	Ditto	Narrow sideways. Star to right	600	6 panes 100 (10 x 10)	Ditto	14 x 13¾ Imperf.	1 2 3 3

### Imperforate Proofs

All writers agree that the imperforate stamps are proofs.

It would appear that the imperforate proofs were all printed from ONE plate only for the 1903 to 1915 printings. After this Plate had been checked, then it was coupled up to the other Plates for printing the relevant issue:

1893	Imperforate Proof	printed from Plate 1
1903	ditto	1
1906	ditto	2
1914	ditto	3
1915	ditto	3

### Printing Variety

De La Rue were such professional printers that there are no varieties to be found on the stamps themselves. However, on my complete pane of 100 stamps from the 1914 printing there is a printing variety in the lower right gutter ladder bar – southeast of stamp position 100. It is a 3mm diameter white circle with a chestnut coloured dot near the centre (*Fig. 5*). I have this variety on two other positional gutter blocks, so from my material it is constant or semi constant.

Now knowing what to look for, if we re-examine Mr Ramadan's panes we find that a pattern emerges. Unfortunately the three illustrations have either been cropped or the pane margins have been partly trimmed, nevertheless, there is just enough here for us to see the "white circle with dot" on his *Fig. 3* and *Fig. 4*. In *Fig. 3* just in the top two corners and in *Fig. 4* in the lower left, just where you would expect to find them. On this evidence I think we can say that the variety is constant. This variety would have been formed by the screw heads that held the ladders in place between the panes.

### Marginal markings

Solid buffer bar. Used to protect the stamp image from the ink roller, but it trapped air during printing, causing the paper to wrinkle. Overcome by making the bar interrupted and the corners open.

Ladders. These were inserted between the panes to prevent the paper from sagging into the gutters which caused "drag".



Fig.1. 1906 printing. Plate 2.



Fig. 2. 1906 printing. Imperforate control block Plate 2.

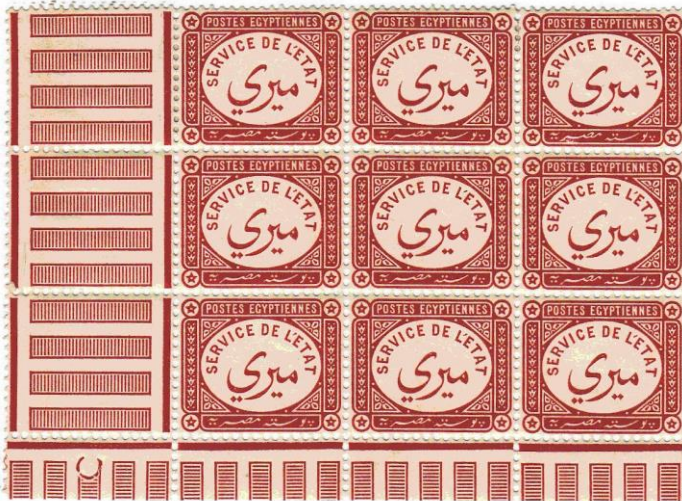


Fig. 3. 1914 printing. Top pane 100, Plate 1.



Fig. 4. 1915 printing. Interpanneaux block 4 imperforate

**Postscript**

Since writing the above I have paid a visit to the British Postal Museum and Archive in London. There I inspected the Archives of De La Rue (DLR) for the years 1913 to 1918 and in particular, the reference to Service de l’Etat (SdIE) stamps: the following is what I found there:

1914 Mar. 18	An inventory of Egypt printing items held by DLR, under SdIE it says: <i>1 working die, 3 plates 200 set. Watermark: 1 Bit die “Star &amp; Crescent.”</i>
1914 Nov. 7	Letter from PMG Borton at Alexandria to DLR: <i>I shall be much obliged if you would be good enough to supply this administration with 3,600,000 SdIE stamps. This order is required for next year and delivery should be effected in January next.</i>
1915 Feb. 26	Letter from DLR to PMG Borton: <i>The consignment, which should leave the docks tomorrow, consists of the following: SdIE 8272 sheets.</i>
1915 Apr. 6	Letter from DLR to PMG Borton: <i>In case no.90 will be found a parcel containing the following signed specimens for attachment to Contract, as per Article 2: One sheet each, 200 set 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10millieme and 1 piastre Surcharge and of SdIE. (It then continues to list postal stationery).</i>
1915 Jul. 8	Letter from PMG Borton in Alexandria: <i>Order for SdIE stamps 2,000,000 (two million). I regret that, in existing circumstances the order is smaller than usual.</i>
1915 Aug. 19	An inventory of Egypt printing items held by DLR. Under SdIE it is the same as listed 18 March 1914.

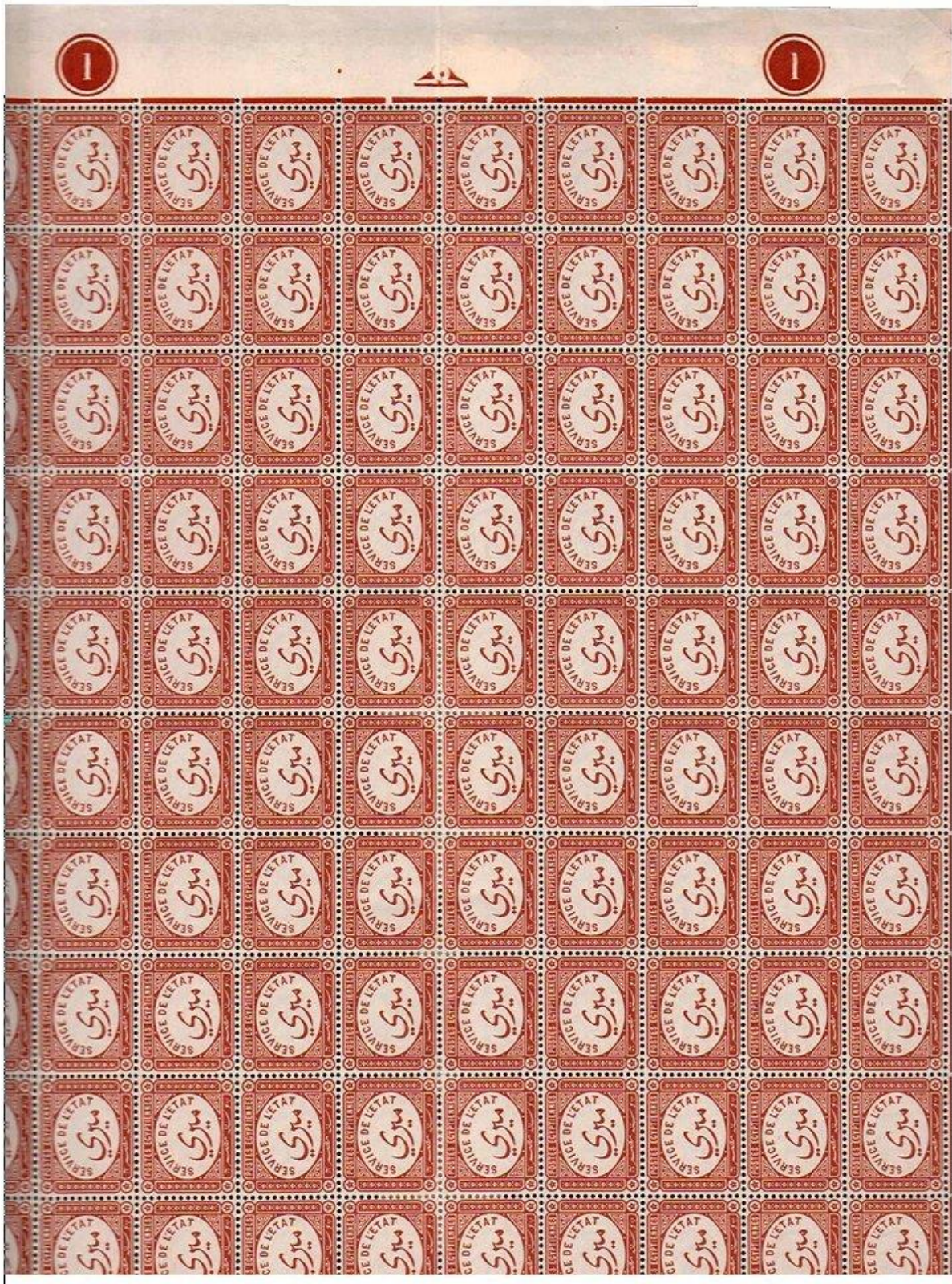


Fig.5. 1914 printing. Variety "White circle with dot"

#### Bibliography

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