

Under the Magnifying Glass: No.15 The 1928 South Georgia 2½d surcharge handstamp by Malcolm Barton and Kim Stuckey



Forged examples of the South Georgia 2½d surcharge both off and on cover continue to appear in auctions so with the advantage of a modern scanner, this is an opportunity to improve on the article published in the Upland Goose in 1984 and show what to look for when considering a purchase. Here is an example of a forged cover, where we will discuss the various anomalies against a genuine stamp and cover. But there is also a glaring error on this cover that should immediately arouse suspicion. Let's leave that for the end of this article.

Firstly it is a wise maxim to not rely on an Expert certificate. The story goes that one gentleman of the trade boasted he could regularly fool a particular expert committee.

Figure 1 – A forged 1928 Surcharge Cover

The first question to ask looking at your stamp or cover, is “What is the centring of the stamp and how does the cancel sit on your used stamp or cover”?



The forgers in the past have in general chosen well centred stamps, sometimes from the wrong printing and made as perfect job of it as they could, even using forged ‘socked on the nose’ cancellations on cover. In practice the Postmaster Nelson Jones franked his covers well tied to the envelopes, so do not expect to see more than a small portion of the cancel on the stamp. In addition, the majority of the stamps he surcharged are centred to the top. Well centred copies seem to have come only from the bottom three rows and even these are known off centre. It is important to realise that the strikes vary across the sheet according to the amount of the ink they are carrying. The illustration below shows how variable genuine strikes are.

The second question to ask, is “How complete is your surcharge”?

If you can see a complete “2” or a complete “½”, especially with fraction bar, it is likely you might have a forgery. The row illustrated here shows us why.

Figure 2 – A forged 1928 Surcharge - Note a well centred stamp and a complete surcharge



Figure 3 – A row of 1928 Surcharges

Nelson Jones having charged the 2½ with ink started on the left hand stamp and moved horizontally across the page. In this case by the time he reached the right hand margin the impression was underinked and here he has chosen to return to stamp number 4 and strike it again. This was not an error but common sense. Whether it is common sense to attach such importance to the ‘double surcharge’ is a matter of opinion but this also naturally attracted the forger.

The third question to ask is “Do the characteristics of my stamp match those in the guide below”?



Figure 4 – A guide to what to look for in evaluating your surcharge

We hope that the questions above help you evaluate your surcharges in the collection, or what to do when you see a potential ebay 'bargain' on offer in this tricky area of collecting. It seems counterintuitive to the quest for perfection in collecting, but look out for no socked-on the nose cancels, off centre stamps and incomplete surcharges!

In the surcharged cover illustrated in Figure 1 note that after so much time and trouble, a c.d.s of January 2 should not have fooled anyone, let alone the forged Port Stanley transit marking of 6th January.

Reference: Upland Goose Vol VII No. 4 – Special Number – The Falkland Islands Provisional of 1928 by Malcolm Barton.

Thanks to: Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions for their scan of a correct 2½d mint surcharge.