

New Zealand's King George VI 1945-1951 Counter Rolls.

We may be more familiar with the later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II counter coils than those involving the 1935 Pictorials. All these counter coils had coil numbers (rubber/machine stamped) on coil joins. The coil joins occurred when sheets of stamps were attached to one another's selvages prior to guillotining into rolls for counter dispensing. The numbers on the coils were to aid the counter clerks' reconciliations of stamps sold and cash received over the course of the day's business. All the counter coils with coil number pairs listed are given adequate coverage in *Postage Stamps of New Zealand*, volumes II, IV and VI¹ and are priced in Campbell Paterson's *New Zealand Specialised Stamp Catalogue*. New Zealand's King George VI stamps were issued over a period of almost 10 years with the first few stamps being issued in 1938; some more were issued during World War II and the rest on 1 May 1947. In this article, it is not intended to identify the dates of manufacture or rolling of counter coils with different printed number fonts, but to identify at least three different production types of King George VI counter rolls.

In late 2009 whilst at Mowbray Collectables, this writer came across several unusually plain looking King George VI roll lead papers and initially believed that they were vending machine lead papers unrecorded by Stan Kundin in *The Vending & Affixing Machine Coils of New Zealand*²; however, upon further investigation it appears that these were not unrecorded vending machine roll lead papers but were in fact unrecorded counter roll lead papers! A work colleague who had initially processed these items advised that they were from the original counter rolls of stamps that had rubber stamped coil number joins.

Kundin³ illustrates various printed vending machine roll lead papers of King George VI ½d green and 1d green stamps. The ½d green lead papers bear purple ink rubber stamped dates 26 JUL 1938 and 14 FEB 1941, and the 1d green is dated 21 JAN 1947. Additionally, Kundin illustrates Lightning Roll lead papers⁴; and a counter roll that was converted into a vending machine roll is shown on page 76. This bore a purple rubber stamped date of 16 NOV 1953. All these dates refer to the date of rolling, or manufacture and not of sale.

PSNZ volume II⁵ states that: "At busy periods the larger post offices the removal of single stamps from sheets takes time and, early in 1945 it was suggested that both time and effort would be saved if the stamps could be made available in roll form. On February 8, 1945, an order was given for an experimental machine to hold the rolls. This was made by the P. & T. Workshops, Wellington, and was placed on trial at the Chief Post Office, Wellington. On February 16 and on March 13 a similar machine was sent to Lower Hut while two days later a third machine was installed at Auckland".

Initially, the machines comprised six compartments for stamp rolls; later a seven compartment machine was trialled in Timaru and eventually eight compartment counter roll dispensing machines were produced for post office use.

Figure 1 features a folded King George VI 8d counter roll lead paper with **COUNTER ROLLS,** and the denomination **8d.** printed on tan Kraft paper. A 12 FEB 1951 purple rubber datestamp appears on the outside of the lead paper between the stamps and the printed rubric (underneath the lead paper's fold). This is the style of counter roll that is normally seen. Indeed, this is the only type of counter roll mentioned and illustrated in PSNZ volume II⁶.

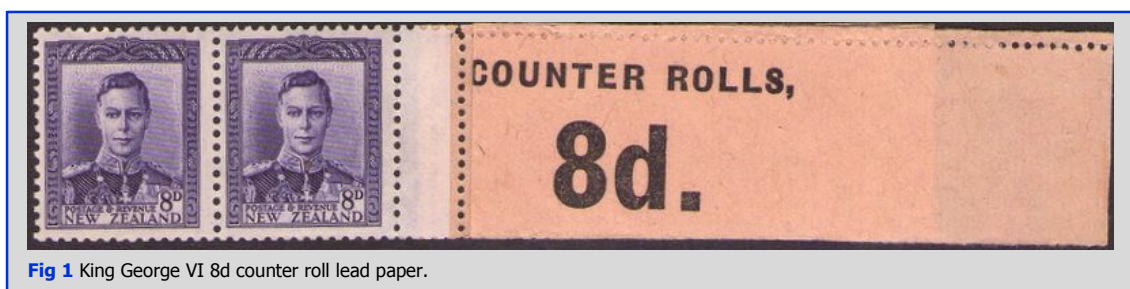


Fig 1 King George VI 8d counter roll lead paper.

Figure 2 illustrates a plain folded King George VI 1d green, yellow counter roll lead paper, but with three seriffed digits **1** pitched 38 mm apart and 5.5 mm high, printed in black. These were first mentioned by Claude Scott in *New Zealand King George VI Coil Stamps*⁷. Whilst only two are visible the other digit **1** appears beneath the folded lead paper. There were no rubber datestamps applied to any of the two yellow lead papers or end papers sighted, none on some others known. An undated yellow lead paper with King George VI 1d green stamps is known with repeating double numeric digits **11**.

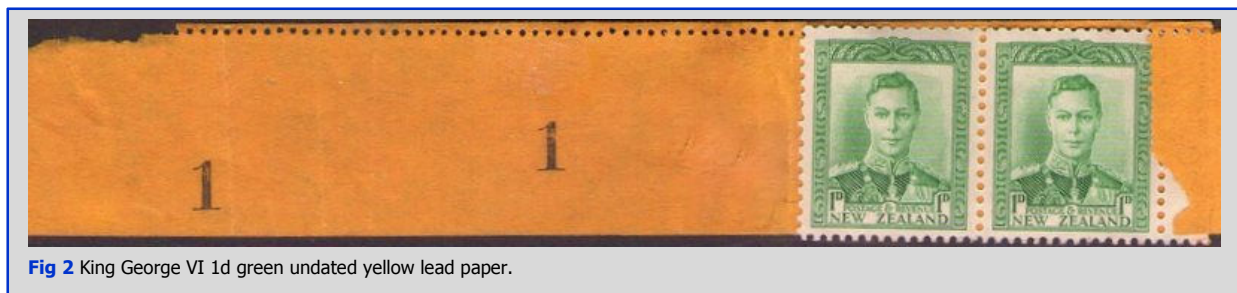


Fig 2 King George VI 1d green undated yellow lead paper.

Three similar, King George VI 1d green with lead papers stamps on tan Kraft paper with single numeric digits **1** have been sighted, see Figure 3. These bear purple rubber datestamps of 10 JUL 1948, 26 JUL 1948 and 10 AUG 1948 respectively. One tan Kraft end paper sighted bears a 10 AUG 1948 date. A similar end paper seen in greyish-blue bears no date.

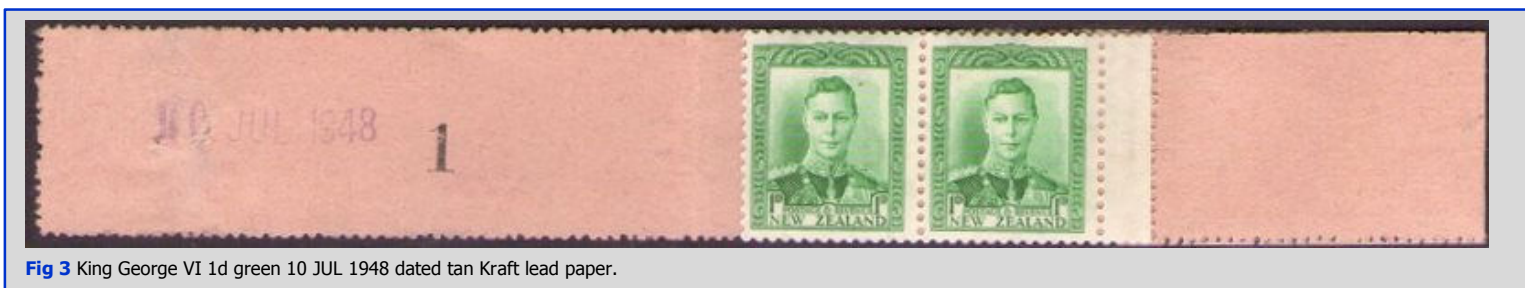


Fig 3 King George VI 1d green 10 JUL 1948 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

Similar tan Kraft lead papers with King George VI 1d green stamps are known dated 10 JUL 1948 and 10 AUG 1948 but bearing double numeric digits **11**. See later for the answer to the question: *How long were these types of lead papers in use?*

Figure 4 depicts another otherwise plain King George VI 2d red stamps with counter roll lead paper and four black seriffed printed digits **2** with a 41 mm pitch and 5.5 mm in height. In this instance, the black digits **2** can only refer to the denomination (2d) of the counter rolls as neither King George VI 2d vending machine nor Lightning rolls exist.



Fig 4 King George VI 2d red 20 AUG 1948 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

The folded King George VI tan Kraft counter roll lead paper is 205 mm in length and bears a purple rubber datestamp of 20 AUG 1948. Similar dated end papers, and another lead paper dated (?) SEP 1948 have been seen. Scott mentioned a rolling date on a lead paper of 15 JUL 1947,⁸ but was unaware of any numeric double digit lead papers other than on the 6d value, thus it must be presumed that this was a single digit **2** lead paper. A tan Kraft lead paper dated 12 AUG 1948 is known with double numeric digits **22**. As well, they have been sighted on 20 AUG and 25 AUG 1948 lead papers.

Figure 5 features yet another plain King George VI counter coil lead paper. This has three black printed digits **3** with a 38 mm pitch and a 5.5 mm height. The folded 3d King George VI tan Kraft lead paper again measures 205 mm in length and bears a purple rubber datestamp of 30 NOV 1948. Tan Kraft end papers dated 20 NOV 1948 and 22 NOV 1948, and another lead paper dated 2 NOV 1948 are also known.



Fig 5 King George VI 3d 30 NOV 1948 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

Scott mentioned a rolling date on a King George VI 4d lead paper of 13 AUG 1947⁹ but, as he was unaware of any numeric double digit printed lead papers other than for the 6d value it must be presumed that this rubberstamped date was on a numeric single digit **4** lead paper. This was later confirmed by the late D.J. Wilson, see figure 6.



Fig 6 King George VI 4d 13 AUG 1947 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

Wilson advised that he had a similar King George VI lead paper – a 5d which was dated 13 FEB 1948, see Figure 7. Counter roll end papers with datestamps of 11 FEB 1948 and 13 FEB are known. In these instances, the black digits **5** can only refer to the denomination (5d) of counter rolls as neither King George VI 5d vending machine nor Lightning rolls exist.



Fig 7 King George VI 5d 13 FEB 1948 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

The three 5.5 mm high digits **5** have a variable pitch: the first two are space d30 mm apart whilst the second two are spaced 37.5 mm apart. An indistinct FEB 1948 date stamped on a tan Kraft lead paper is known with double numeric digits **55**.

The sole King George VI 6d counter roll sighted differs slightly from the others illustrated here in that the 5.5 mm high digit **6** is repeated (as **66**) and these digits are present with a pitch of 35.5 mm. The 6d counter roll lead paper seen bears the rubber datestamp of 3 APR 1947, see Figure 8.



Fig 8 King George VI 6d 3 APR 1947 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

It is believed that King George VI 6d rolls were to be differentiated from proposed 9d rolls by printing double digits (i.e. **66**) as opposed to a single digit, which if printed on a counter roll of 9d stamps and then was inadvertently turned upside down this (9d) roll could be mistaken for a 6d counter roll if both denominations bore only the one, very similar digit.

If so, then this explanation does not cover counter rolls of other denominations known with either a single repeating or double repeating digits. From the very few examples sighted, it appears that the repeating double digit counter roll lead papers were produced contemporaneously with repeating single digit counter roll lead papers. The King George VI 1d green counter rolls dated 10 JUL 1948 are known with repeating single digits **1** and repeating double digits **11** – see Table I. Both types of counter roll lead papers were produced at least during 1947 and 1948 – well before counter rolls with any identifying rubric were produced from 1949.

In the event, King George VI 9d counter rolls were not issued with this type of wrapper. There were no King George VI 9d counter rolls manufactured until November 1949. These had printed rubric lead papers and contained machine printed coil numbers.

It is evident from the above that the King George VI 6d counter rolls were prepared prior to the stamps being placed on sale throughout New Zealand on 1 May 1947. It may be presumed that some other King George VI stamps issued on 1 May 1947 were also made up into counter rolls before being placed on sale (5d, 8d and 9d) although no such dated counter roll lead papers have yet been sighted by this writer. The date in Figure 7 (3 APR 1947) raises questions about the statement that: “The 2d and 4d George VI were made available on November 17, 1947 the 5d on April 16, 1948 and the 6d, 8d 1s and 1s 3d in 1949.”⁵ It may be that these dates were the earliest rubber datestamp dates known at the time of publication; otherwise, why would King George VI 6d counter rolls be manufactured in 1947 and not be released for sale until 1949?

The question posed earlier, i.e. How long were counter rolls in use with black repeating digits on their lead papers before being replaced with specifically printed counter roll lead papers, including the stamps’ denomination, can now be answered.



Fig 9 King George VI 4d 1 FEB 1949 dated tan Kraft lead paper.

Figure 9 clearly depicts a King George VI 4d printed counter roll with a rubber datestamp of 1 FEB 1949. This was one of the first such manufacture of counter rolls in 1949. It is likely that an instruction to facilitate the identification of stamp roll contents via printing the information on roll lead papers was made in late 1948 or in early 1949. Thus, counter rolls and Lightning rolls could easily be identified by reading the wrapper’s or roll’s lead papers. It appears that the dated numeric counter roll lead papers had a lifespan of approximately 2 years, with most of the very few numeric counter roll lead papers seen bearing 1948 dates.

The initial King George VI counter rolls all contained rubber stamped coil numbers – these are listed separately from the machine printed coil numbers in the CP catalogue. The introduction of printed counter roll lead papers, as in Figure 9, coincided with the introduction of machine printed coil numbers. Scott mentioned a 28 JAN 1949 rolling date for a King George VI 4d counter roll with machine printed coil numbers¹⁰.

King George VI Chronology:

Unless mentioned, all lead and end papers known are on tan Kraft paper and the dates given are the earliest known to this writer:

Table I - Chronology of KG VI Counter Rolls				
Date:	Event of New Zealand’s King George VI stamps:	Black printed double digits on lead papers.	Black printed single digits on lead papers.	COUNTER ROLLS printed on lead papers.

1 March 1938	½d green issued			
1 July 1938	1d red issued			
26 July 1938	1½d chocolate issued			
27 June 1941	1d green vending machine (cherry red papers) rolls produced			
10 July 1941	½d brown issued			
21 July 1941	1d green issued			
26 September 1941	3d blue issued			
1 February 1944	1½d red issued			
16 February 1945	1 st use of counter rolls in counter roll stamp dispensing machines			
Undated 1945?	1d green counter (yellow papers) roll produced	11		
Undated 1946?	1d green counter (yellow paper) roll		1	
?? November 1946	1d green vending machine (greyish-blue lead paper) rolls produced			
3 April 1947	Earliest dated counter roll lead paper with printed digits representing the stamp's denomination	66		
1 May 1947	2d orange to 3/- issued			
13 August 1947			4	
?? February 1948		55		
11 February 1948			5	
10 July 1948		11	1	
12 August 1948		22		
20 August 1948			2	
2 November 1948			3	
28 January 1949	(end paper)			4d
1 February 1949	Earliest dated counter roll lead paper with COUNTER ROLLS & stamp's denomination printed			4d
23 May 1949				8d
26 September 1949				9d
5 April 1950				1/-
24 April 1950				1/3d
31 May 1950				5d
16 June 1950				6d
3 January 1951	(end paper)			2d
15 January 1951				3d
?? April 1954	Queen Elizabeth II counter rolls released			3d, 4d, 6d & 8d

Miscellaneous Varieties:



Fig 10 two different printed 1/3d denomination King George VI lead papers dated 28 FEB 1951 & 1 MAR 1951.

COUNTER ROLLS, and the appropriate denomination were printed on lead papers with differing type as may be seen in Figure 10. There probably were other type fonts used for these and/or other King George VI counter roll lead papers, making them collectable varieties.



Fig 11 Purple 19 rubber stamped coil number.



Fig 12 Red 19 rubber stamped coil number.

Mention was earlier of counter rolls having number counter coil joins, these being aids to counter clerks when reconciling sales of stamps made and monies received. As may be seen in Figures 11 and 12, the counter roll join numbers were handstamped, initially in purple and later in red ink.

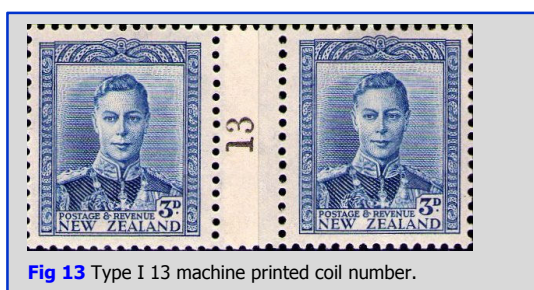


Fig 13 Type I 13 machine printed coil number.



Fig 14 Type II 13 machine printed coil number.

With the advent of printed **COUNTER ROLLS**, and the stamp's denomination on counter roll lead papers a change was made to machine printing the counter roll coil join numbers, these were only printed in black. Two differing types of font were used for these coil join numbers. The first type, featured in Figure 13, will be found on 2d to 1/3d King George VI counter roll coil joins. The second type, featured in Figure 14, was only used for 2d, 3d & 4d King George VI counter rolls. Figures 15 & 16 depict coil join pairs with rubber handstamped numbers doubled.



Fig 15 Double 7 rubber stamped coil number in purple.



Fig 16 Double 12 rubber stamped coil number in red.

Figures 17 and 18 both feature King George VI machine printed 6d coil join pairs with different orientations. The coil join numbers should read upwards, very easy to see with digits like "4" & "7" but much more difficult with the digit "8". The lower "bulge" of the printed digit "8" is larger than the upper "bulge". Looking at Figures 17 and 18 again, one can now see that the orientations of the digit "8" are read up (normal) and read down (inverted), respectively.



Fig 17 6d upright machine printed coil number 8.



Fig 18 6 inverted machine printed coil number 8.

Accidents occurred occasionally with the manufacture of stamp rolls, as may be evidenced in Figures 19 and 20. Figure 19 illustrates official patching applied at a coil join prior to guillotining, whilst Figure 20 clearly shows official patching applied twice!



Fig 19 5d coil join pair 10 officially patched at right.



Fig 20 6d coil join pair 15 officially patched both sides.

Figures 21 and 22 illustrate amazing tête-bêche coil join pairs. Both machine printed coil numbers have Type I numerals. There is no evidence of patching, and their guillotining is consistent with these not being artificially contrived.



Fig 21 2d Tête-bêche 19 coil join pair.



Fig 22 3d Tête-bêche 19 coil join pair.

CP lists only the King George VI 1d green with a tête-bêche coil number pair [as MC1b(x)], yet Scott illustrated a 9d tête-bêche coil number 19 pair¹¹ and mentioned a King George VI 1/- tête-bêche coil number pair in his listing¹². As the last such coil join the roll there is no corresponding tête-bêche coil number pair at the end as the last counter roll stamp was affixed the end paper.

It is not too difficult to explain these occurrences; when assembling the sheets, it is possible that one sheet was affixed inverted in relation to the others. Scott mentioned that he had sighted the 1d with tête-bêche coil number pairs 10 and 11¹³. Figures 21 and 22 depict previously unrecorded relatively recent discoveries. That they were part of a complete set probably indicates that these oddities were produced during the manufacturing of the counter rolls.

Another, unrecorded tête-bêche error is illustrated in Figure 23, viz. a new King George VI 1/3d variety. Figure 24 features a King George VI 1/- counter roll coil join pair with centre Dies I and II, this variety is listed by CP.



Fig 23 1/3d Tête-bêche 18 counter coil join pair.



Fig 24 1/- Die I & Die II 14 counter coil join pair.

Figures 25 and 26 feature double coil numbers as a result of accidents. The former bears one machine printed and one rubber stamped number **19**, whilst the latter clearly shows machine printed number **8** doubled.



Fig 25 6d double printed coil join 19.

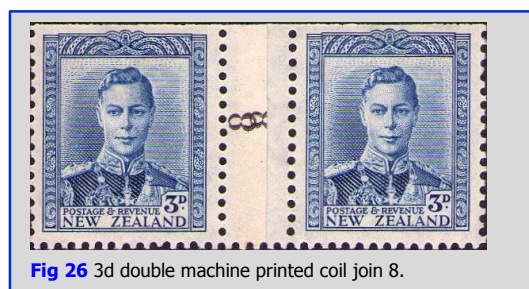


Fig 26 3d double machine printed coil join 8.

Figure 25 was part of a complete set of machine printed numbers. At a quick glance, the machine printed number **19** may be mistaken for the number **10**. Part of the tail of the digit **9** was not completely printed on the trimmed sheet selvage. Subsequently someone handstamped the number **19** in purple ink in full, to avoid any confusion at the time of sale of these stamps.¹⁴

So far, the fronts of King George VI counter roll stamps have been discussed. Figures 27 and 28 depict two more varieties, best seen from the rear of the coil joins. Figure 27 depicts a King George VI 1/- coil join pair with two different watermarks and Figure 28, another King George VI 1/- coil join pair, clearly shows a machine printed number offset.

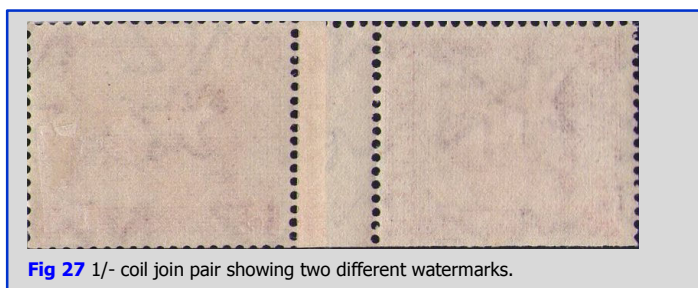


Fig 27 1/- coil join pair showing two different watermarks.

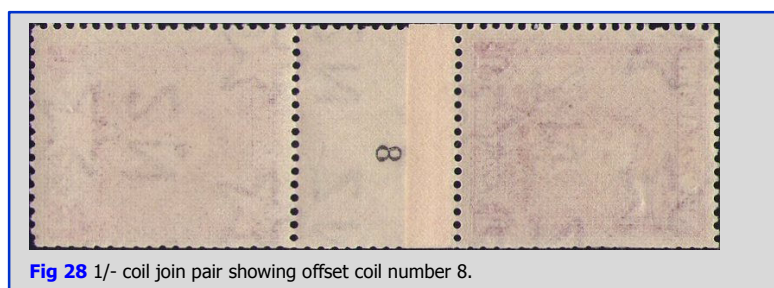


Fig 28 1/- coil join pair showing offset coil number 8.

Summary

Kundin stated that: "Vending machine rolls, and their lead papers were not normally available to the public. Also, there was probably not much philatelic interest in the coils at the time since the stamps were readily available to collectors in sheets at their local post office, without the clipped perforations."¹⁵ The same comment is probably applicable to the counter roll stamps and in particular to the lead papers; "In most cases, at least into the 1960s they [roll lead papers] also show the date that the rolls were made giving some insight into when the various paper varieties came into use. Most lead papers give the number of stamps and the total value of the roll, and in certain cases, are also stamped with the intended usage of the roll such as 'Lightning Roll' and "Counter Roll". Lead papers from rolls made after the Queen Elizabeth II issue are common, at least in New Zealand. Those from King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II series are not common but [are] usually found except for the early King George VI counter coils and Lightning roll lead papers for both series."¹⁶

There were no counter roll dispensing machines made until early 1945, and the 5d 8d and 1/- 1935 pictorial stamps were issued in counter rolls in 1945.⁵ It has already been established by Kundin that the King George VI 1d green vending machine rolls were made from 27 June 1941. Initially, these rolls bore deep cherry-red printed lead papers and by 20 November 1946 these rolls were being produced with light green coloured lead papers.¹⁵

It is unlikely that different coloured papers were used for the lead and end papers of vending machine and counter rolls if they were being used contemporaneously. It does seem rather strange that the repeating numeric **1** and **11** King George VI 1d counter roll yellow lead papers are undated. At the time of the production of the counter roll dispensing machines there were already in existence King George VI 1d green stamps in vending machine roll format, which from 1941 bore cherry-red coloured lead papers. Perhaps one explanation for the yellow lead and end papers may be that in order to differentiate counter rolls from vending machine rolls a different coloured wrapper was deliberately used? At the time, there would be no need for the yellow paper wrapped rolls to be dated for the trialling of the counter roll dispensing units if it was uncertain whether these would be successful.

Dated King George VI numeric counter roll lead papers were in use for about two years (1947-1949) before being replaced by King George VI counter roll lead papers with printed information. These were in use until replaced by Queen Elizabeth II counter rolls in early 1954.

Finally, whilst counter roll lead and end papers and their associated counter coil join numbers may not be too easily found today, there are interesting varieties and errors that exist.

David Smitham

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- 3 *ibid*, pp 74-75.
- 4 *ibid*, pp 100-102.
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- 6 *ibid*, p 75.
- 7 *New Zealand King George VI Coil Stamps* by Claude Scott, published by Gaskia Corporation, Nigeria, 1970, p 11.
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- 13 *ibid*, p 19.
- 14 *ibid*, p 34.
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