

GB 1870 – 1/2d Bantam Stamp

This is a study to distinguish between the different Plate numbers that are not adequately differentiated in any publication that I could find.

The Halfpenny Rose Red, was first issued on 1 October 1870, following a reduction in the postal rate for newspapers and postcards.

A plate number was engraved in the design, in the left and right side lace work. They were numbered from 1 to 20, but plates 2, 7, 16, 17, and 18 were not completed, plates 21 and 22 were not used and plate 9 is now scarce because it was a rarely used reserve plate. Mint stamps are not common, and blocks, particularly with marginal imprints are difficult to obtain.

Plate 9, of which only 50,000 sheets were printed, compared with the most common plate, Plate 5, of which 533,200 sheets were printed. The stamp was replaced in 1880.



Rose
Plate 13, Letters JK



Rose-red
Plate 13, Letters SR
On piece, Barnstaple, dated 19 JUL 78



Plate 12, Letters HS, IS / HT, IT
Block of 4
London, dated 5 JU 75

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There was a mixed reception for the 'Bantams'. The *London City Press* described the halfpenny stamp as 'about two thirds the size of the ordinary penny stamp and printed in a similar red. But the portrait of Her Majesty in a circular medallion is disfigured by large halfpenny symbols on the left and right.' The stamp's design continued to meet with disapproval well into the 20th century, probably culminating in 1943 with the disparaging remarks of John Easton, author of *British Postage Stamp Design*:

'The Halfpenny of 1870 was a freak with a miniature head of the Sovereign floating in a small white circle, with figures of value of huge disproportion flanking to left and right.'

The design of the Victorian halfpenny of 1870 was not as easy as the postal authorities would have liked...

- . Difficulties had arisen from the unexpected introduction of the word HALFPENNY into the design mix.
- . The word was almost twice as long as PENNY, yet required to fit on a stamp much smaller than a Penny Red.
- . The paper on which bantams were printed had the word *halfpenny* in manuscript style as a watermark that stretched across three stamps.
- . Perkins, Bacon & Co's solution to space restrictions on the surface involved moving the *d* abbreviation of *denarius* to a position above the ½ symbols on both sides of the portrait; an innovative if puzzling value figure on a postage stamp.
- . The printer's original intention had been to issue the miniature HALFPENNY in a shade of light green. Experiments to produce a fugitive ink in that hue proved, too time-consuming; so they dropped the plan and used rose-red ink instead.



Watermark *halfpenny* as seen from the back.



Watermark *halfpenny* as seen from the back.



Plate 6, Letters TM

The watermark can often be seen from the front of the stamp as if cancelled lightly.

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Distinguishing between plates 1 and 11



Plate 1, Letters TM
Only one vertical stroke, close to the bar of $\frac{1}{2}$.
Earliest Known Date - 01 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 121,500



Plate 11, Letters NL
Two vertical strokes, close to the bar of $\frac{1}{2}$ and
half way along the '1' of $\frac{1}{2}$.
Earliest Known Date - 04 June 74
Sheets Printed - 411,000



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Distinguishing between plates 3 and 13



Plate 3, Letters MB
On the right the 3 is above the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 3 aligns with the bar.
Earliest Known Date - 01 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 192,500

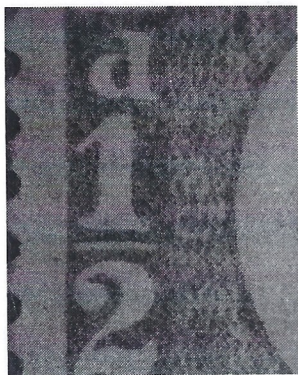


Plate 13, Letters ET
On the right the 3 aligns with the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 3 aligns with the middle of the '1'.
Earliest Known Date - 27 June 76
Sheets Printed – 300,000 Estimated

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Distinguishing between plates 4 and 14



Plate 4, Letters VJ
On the right the 4 is above the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 4 aligns with the bar.
Earliest Known Date - 15 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 264,600



Plate 14, Letters CS
On the right the 4 aligns with the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 4 aligns with the middle of the '1'.
Earliest Known Date - 09 Mar 77
Sheets Printed - 250,000 Estimated

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Distinguishing between plates 5 and 15



Plate 5, Letters PD

On the right the 5 is above the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 5 aligns with the bar.
Earliest Known Date - 24 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 533,200



Plate 15, Letters GM

On the right the 5 is aligns with the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 5 aligns with the middle of the '1'.
Earliest Known Date - 10 July 78
Sheets Printed - 200,000 Estimated



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Distinguishing between plates 6, 9 and 19

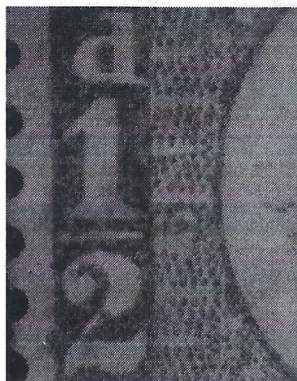


Plate 6, Letters BH

On the right the 6 is above the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 6 aligns with the bar.
Earliest Known Date - 19 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 402,100

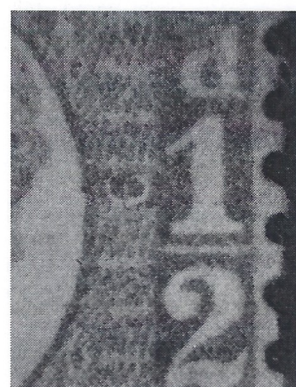


Plate 9, Letters NR

On the right the 9 is above the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 9 aligns with the bar.
Earliest Known Date - 05 Dec 71
Sheets Printed - 50,000 Estimated

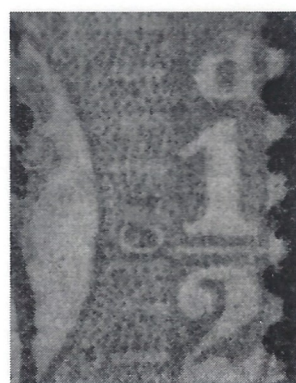
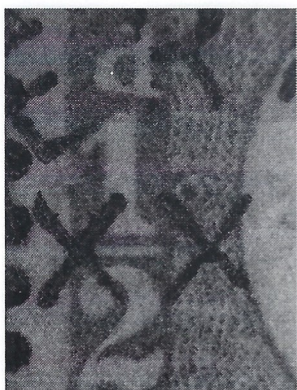


Plate 19, Letters LF

On the right the 9 is aligns with the bar of the $\frac{1}{2}$, on the left the 9 aligns with the middle of the '1'.
Earliest Known Date - 23 Aug 78
Sheets Printed - 175,000 Estimated

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These plates have numbers that cannot be confused with others.

Plates 8, 10, 12 and 20



Plate 8, Letters WS
Earliest Known Date - 31 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 120,000 Estimated

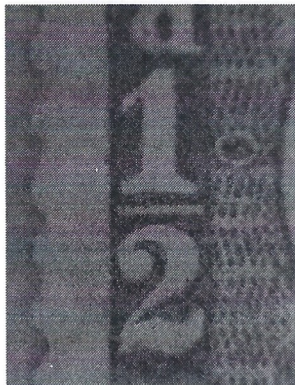


Plate 10, Letters QK
Earliest Known Date - 19 Oct 70
Sheets Printed - 402,100



Plate 12, Letters BB
Earliest Known Date - 28 Aug 74
Sheets Printed - 400,000 Estimated



Plate 20, Letters VK
Earliest Known Date - 04 Oct 79
Sheets Printed - 150,000 Estimated

