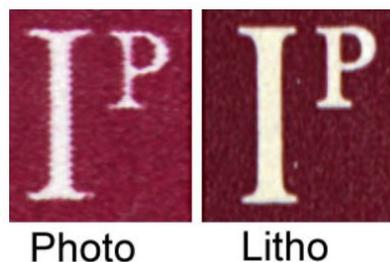


Guide to Identifying Decimal Machins

Photogravure or Lithography?

Using a magnifying glass you can quite easily identify the difference between these two printing methods. The difference can be seen where the colour of the stamp meets a white area, such as the value. In the example shown here, you can clearly see that the Lithography (Litho) print has a clean edge in comparison to the Photogravure (Gravure) specimen, which appears blurred.



Perforations



The philatelic standard for perforations is the number of holes in a 20mm (2cm) measure. For example, if there are 15 holes per 20mm this is referred to as 'perf 15'. Where the perforations on top/bottom differ from left/right, the top/bottom perforation is stated first. So 'perf 15x14' tells you that there are 15 holes per 20mm top/bottom and 14 holes per 20mm left/right. Most small GB machins are perf 15x14, with some exceptions. If there is not an exact number of holes per 20mm the fraction is also stated ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$). To measure this accurately, you will need a perforation gauge, although with experience you will be able to identify different perfs with the naked eye.

In 1993, as an added security measure, stamps with larger 'elliptical' holes were produced. These are plain to see and need no identifying equipment.

Phosphor

Phosphor bands can sometimes be detected with the naked eye under the right lighting conditions (allegedly!). Personally, my eyesight is far from perfect and I have found this method nigh on impossible. Using an Ultra-Violet lamp makes phosphor detection much easier. These are widely available from Philatelic suppliers.



2-band

Value Indicator



As the value of stamps increased, it was necessary to introduce a smaller font for some issues. In the example shown here, you can see that the old value indicator (known as Type I) is wider than the newer and narrower value indicator (known as Type II). You can also see that there are varieties of the same values and colours using both fonts. Again, these can be seen with the naked eye and need no identifying equipment.

Underprints

Underprints are symbols printed on the rear of the stamp. Below are shown examples of (left to right) Types 1, 2 and 3 underprints. As you can see, these are easily identified.

