

A LITTLE-KNOWN NEWFOUNDLAND 5 CENT CARIBOU

by Derek Paul



1. Earliest known use of the 21 mm wide Die I, 3/10/41.

The stamp illustrated in Figure 1 appears to be a copy of the 5 cent value of the Newfoundland 'Resources' issue, die I. This is exactly what it is, but this example is a variety which you will not find in any current catalogue. If you look up die I in the Stanley Gibbons catalogue, you will find four distinctly perforated stamps: SG213, 5¢ maroon, comb perf. 13½; SG225, 5¢ violet, comb perf. 13½; SG225b, 5¢ violet, line perf. 14 (rare); SG280, 5¢ violet, line perf. 12½ (1). SG280 is generally paler than SG225; the difference is easily confirmed by measuring the perforation.

A second look at Figure 1 will tell you that it is comb perforated. A quick and only slightly careless measurement would tell you it is comb perf. 13½, and you would conclude wrongly that it is SG225. However, typical widths of SG225 are 20.3mm between vertical frame lines, while the illustrated stamp is about 21.0mm wide, like SG280. If you measure again, very carefully, you will find that the perforation measures 13.3, not 13½. Figure 2 is the real SG280.



2. Earliest known use of SG280, 5/6/42.

As a newcomer to Newfoundland philately I was astonished to discover this variety about 18 months ago, because it is not uncommon. "How could it have been missed by experts?" I wondered. I soon found that many specialized collectors and several knowledgeable dealers were aware of it. It was described in an article by Arthur B. Moll in 1944 in *BNA TOPICS*, though he failed to notice the small but distinct difference in the perforation from SG225. It was catalogued by L. S. Holmes in several editions of his *Specialized Catalogue of Canada and British North America* (2), and it was also listed, at least until 1974, in Lyman's catalogue. The variety fell from grace, presumably from want of a proper description, and is not now listed in Lyman's.

When was this major variety issued, and for how long? The most information we can probably obtain on this subject, without a thorough search of the archives, is through a careful study of usage of the stamps. Such studies are fraught with uncertainties because the investigator can

never be sure of having an unbiased sample of the stamps; in addition, she/he may never be able to obtain enough stamps or covers to establish any firm conclusions—that is, the study may suffer from large statistical inaccuracies.

Aware of these two factors, I nevertheless began in 1981 to collect dated specimens of 5 cent Caribou stamps, as well as other 5 cent stamps of the period in question (mainly 1941-3). I was fortunate to obtain two fairly large lots, as well as several smaller lots.

In this study it is essential to be able to read the month and year of the cancellation. The post office is not important. Stamps on piece are the most useful because the dates are more often legible; such items do not seem to command a premium and are thus affordable. Although the investigation is still in an early phase, some tentative conclusions can already be made based on the histograms of Figure 3, which span the years 1940-43. The years 1940 and 1943 act as controls in this research because there were no new issues of definitives or commemoratives in those years, nor were any major varieties issued. The combined histograms for 1940 and 1943 should help to decide qualitatively whether the sample in the study is strongly biased or is a fair one, a point to which I shall return. What stands out very clearly is that the perf. 13.3 variety was in use in October 1941, the same month the 4 cent blue (Princess) perf. 12½ was issued, and about a month and a half before the 2 and 3 cent (King and Queen) perf. 12½ were issued. SG280, the 5¢ Caribou line perf. 12½ does not occur in my sample until early June 1942.

It is interesting to compare the above results with information in the literature. Robson Lowe's *Encyclopaedia of British Empire Postage Stamps, Vol. IV* gives the date of issue of SG280 as November 1941, while Moll gives it as "middle 1942". Moll gives the date of the perf. 13.3 stamp as "late 1941". My data therefore agrees well with Moll's rough conclusions, while disagreeing with Robson Lowe's. In *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Newfoundland* by W. S. Boggs, published in 1942, he described the new issue in the same way as Moll (i.e. perf. 13½) and gave the issue date as November 1941. Clearly, Boggs did not see SG280 before his book went to press; such a careful researcher would not have missed the distinctly different perforation. The histogram indicates nineteen of the perf. 13.3 issue bearing cancellations in October 1941. Of these, the earliest is dated 3 October,

thus providing the information that the new 5 cent stamp was issued ahead of the other low denomination stamps which came out that year including, it appears, the 4 cent. The 5 cent probably escaped the line perforating machine in this way.

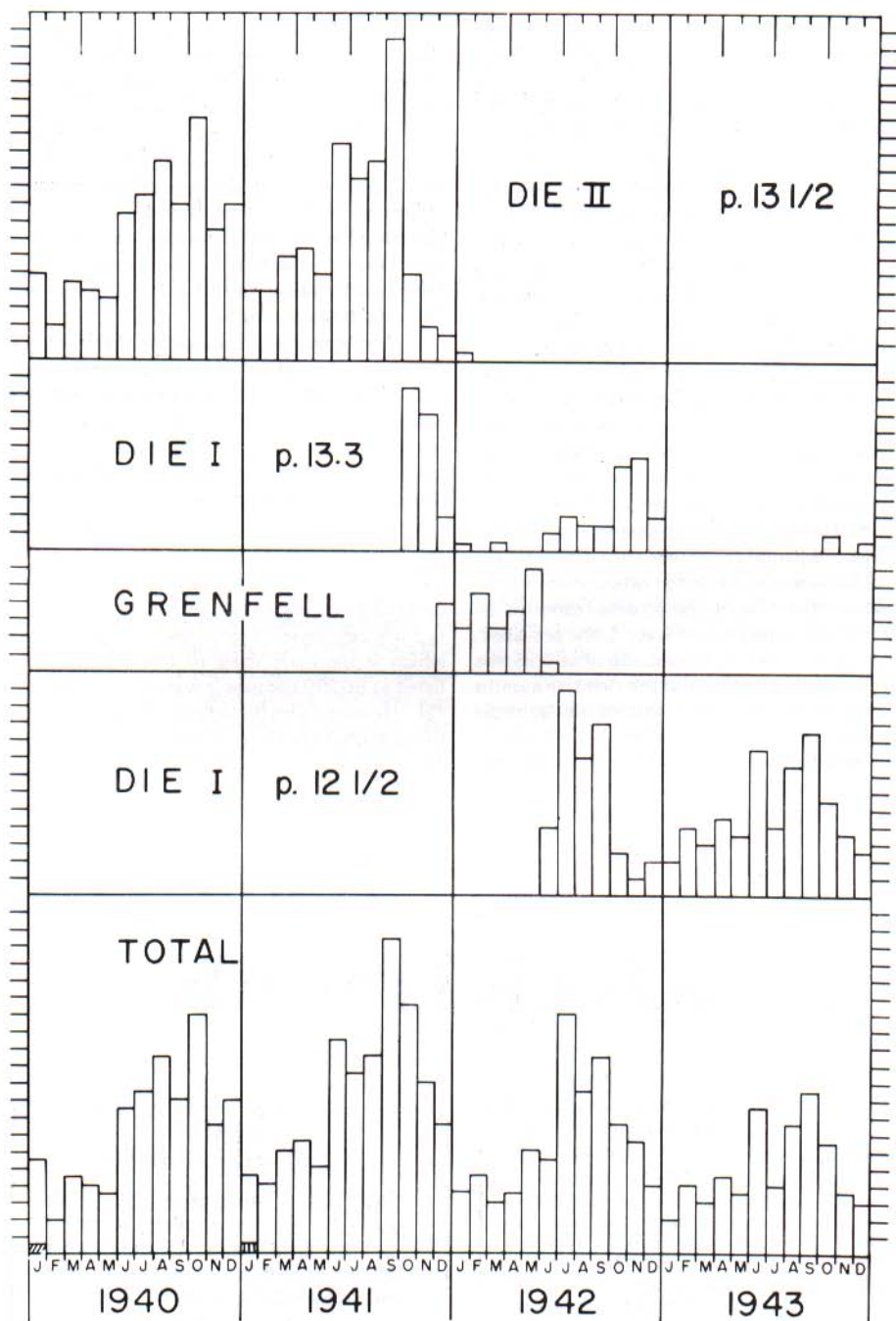
The study also sheds light on the date of issue of SG280. To date I have not seen it with a postmark earlier than 5 June 1942. This is not surprising, because use of the 5 cent Caribou dropped sharply when the 5 cent William Grenfell commemorative was issued on 1 December 1941, to be resumed only when the Grenfell stamp was withdrawn at the end of May 1942. In June 1942 the 5 cent Caribou came back into use, this time with the perf. 13.3 and the perf. 12½ used simultaneously, the former playing the minor role. By 1943 the perf. 13.3 was infrequently used.

An interesting feature of this investigation has been to observe the almost total displacement of the Caribou stamp by the Grenfell stamp for the period Jan.-May 1942. In December 1941 there is some residual use of the Caribou, perhaps stamps which had been purchased earlier. Nowadays a commemorative never displaces the definitive in such a dramatic way.

To complete the story of the 5 cent Caribou for 1941-2, the die II (SG225c) deserves mention. It had been much used from October 1932 and continued until late 1941. In October 1941 its use declined sharply as the new 5 cent came in. The die II is not often found cancelled as late as December 1941, but there is some overlap. Thus the perf. 13.3 was never the only 5 cent Newfoundland stamp in use. It overlapped the die II, the Grenfell (rarely) and also SG280.

Some further comments are required about this method of research, in particular its limitations. Firstly, it ought to be combined with a study of the Newfoundland Post Office for the same period to find out, if possible, when deliveries of the relevant denominations were received, and any further information, such as instructions to local post offices. Such records, however, would not necessarily provide the information desired in this study because the information sought concerns varieties which were not likely significant from a postal point of view, especially considering the war which was then raging. Usage is thus probably the best guide, which brings us back to the question of biased samples.

In this context the biasing of the sample can occur through unintentional collecting of a



3. Histograms of 5 cent Newfoundland stamp usage from January 1940 through December 1943. Each division on the vertical scale represents two items. Covers, pairs and other multiples are counted as single items. Diagonal shading indicates the Royal Visit stamp (issued 17 June-31 July 1939) and vertical shading indicates SG213.

particular range of dates. For example, a large office lot may span only certain years and reflect the fortunes of the business rather than average usage. I have noticed obvious cases of such bias in larger lots, though in small lots it is not possible to tell.

In figure 3 it will be noticed that there are more items in 1940 than 1943. I simply don't know whether this is due to bias in the sample, or to a smaller usage or survival rate for 1943 stamps than for 1940. Looking at the results for 1943, one can ask whether the heavier usage in the months June-October compared to January-May, comes from bias in the sample, or statistics (luck of the draw), or a systematic effect. Here the histograms for earlier years are helpful. All of them display heavier use from June through November than from January through May, indicating that there is a systematic effect.

Next I was afraid the sample would be biased against the period December 1941 through May 1942 because it is harder to find commemorative Newfoundland stamps bearing dated cancels than it is to find dated definitives. Luck prevailed, however, and there is no evidence of serious bias in the data if one compares the first five months of each of the four years with totals for those years.

Another source of bias is due to the price

of covers. According to Robson Lowe's Encyclopaedia (cited above), covers in this issue command little premium. Recent experience indicates the contrary; many covers are priced at over twenty times the catalogue value of the stamp. This biases the sample if non-purchase on the grounds of overpricing is not random with respect to dates. Certainly this source of bias has not been serious in this study so far. This last category of bias is a good example of the experimenter being part of the experiment and thus affecting the results.

In conclusion I would like to thank Ed Wener, Gary Lyon, Lex DeMent, Bob Notemboom, Ted Wright and Bert Dudley, who supplied most of the stamps, and David Aggersberg who took an interest in this work during the last several months and wrote a column on it in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* (December 1982).

FOOTNOTES:

(1) Stanley Gibbons have stated in a letter to the author (7/3/83) that starting in 1984 the perf. 12½ caribou stamp will be listed as SG280a in their catalogue. The comb perf. 13.3 variety which is the main topic of this article will be listed as SG280 because it was issued earlier.

(2) Holmes, in his 8th edition, 1954, incorrectly listed SG280 (#247 in his catalogue) as being die II.

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