

Recent find

by Morgan Farrell

I have collected stamps since I was 7 years old - some 52 years. I have made a few interesting discoveries during that time, but I recently made the kind of find that we, as stamp collectors, all dream about.

I purchased a large lot of Botswana in bundles. From the good yield of postmarks, it was obvious that it was unpicked from. Part of the lot included about 1000 or so of the 1 cent 1967 bird definitive stamp. I knew that there was a known watermark variety on this stamp. The variety is an error of paper with a watermark of Maltese crosses that was normally used for stamps of Malta - SG220a. As I checked for postmarks, I held each stamp up to a light. Sure enough I found one! It has a light Gaborone roller cancel. I can't make out the year.



Stanley Gibbons pegs this at £700 but I will likely never find out what price it would fetch in auction. Like a true philatelist and Botswana collector, I couldn't let it go. It'll get its own special page in my album and I'll just appreciate its rarity and how lucky I was to find it.

If anyone knows how many of these have been found, please contact me. mtf3@usfamily.net or Morgan Farrell, PO Box 1064, Hamilton, MT 59840, USA.

Botswana Bar Coded Registration Labels

by Peter Jukes



Figure 1: First style of white label - produced in-house

Having read Peter Thy's article on this subject in the last *Runner Post*, I decided to take a look at what was available on the market here in Botswana. I spent some time at Poso House where most people think one is a little unhinged if we want to know things of any details; especially if it occurred in the past. However, I managed to unearth some interesting facts, so I made up this small article. I hope that some of you will find it interesting.

In an effort to keep track of Registered Items once in the postal system, BotswanaPost introduced Bar

Coded Registration Labels in 2004. Initially, these labels were produced in-house by the IT Department of BotswanaPost, using the UPU guidelines

The first labels, black letters and numerals on a white background, were 69.5/70mm x 37/37.5mm, with letters & figures being 4.25/4.5mm in height (**Figure 1**). My earliest example is dated 2006-02-08.

A second, local in-house printed label of 53mm x 35mm appeared (**Figure 2**). The letters and numerals were 3mm in height. These were produced at intervals until mid-2006 when a contract was awarded to a



Figure 2: Second style of white label - produced in-house

local printing company; Kingsley and Associates of Gaborone.

Unfortunately, as few or no records were retained within Poso House, the dates and quantities of the “in house” produced labels cannot be accurately determined. It is quite possible that the printing was done on an “as needed” basis.

The first recorded order, for 10,000 units was placed in August of 2006 and the delivery made to the Procurement Department in the October of that year.

This was for the New Blue style (**Figure 4**), but it soon became apparent that this colour was in fact too dark. The scanners used to read the bar codes were having difficulty in distinguishing the code from the background colour. A verbal instruction for a colour change was given to Kingsleys. This led to the introduction of the pale Azure labels (**Figure 3**). A second order, again for 10,000 units was given to Kingsleys in April of 2007, delivery being executed in the June of that year.



Figure 3: Azure label from Kingsleys



Figure 4: New Blue label from Kingsleys

These labels were much different from the originals, being black letters and numerals on a coloured background. The sizes were (label) 69 x 19mm/ 70 x 18.75mm/ 71 x 18.5mm with the letters being 4.5 mm in height. Although it is presumed that these labels were distributed to the major post offices throughout the country, and quite probably to some, if not all, of the Postal Agencies, the originals were still allowed to be used, as they served the same purpose.

One of the major reasons for the two labels being in use concurrently was the fact that some offices did not have the usage (volume of mail) to run out of the white ones, so consequently they often appear on registered items, particularly from the smaller Post Offices and Agencies. Figure 2 shows the date of use from LETLHAKANE as 2007-10-15.

Since beginning to write this article, more information has come to light. Bruce Warrender has examples of some of the earlier Bar Coded labels (in blue), my own earliest date is 2007-12-10. Bruce's letter to Peter Thy piqued my curiosity and I re-checked my own collection of envelopes, set aside for another purpose.

Within these I found a strange cover. This one is in a darker blue, just paler than New Blue (see figure four), dated 2007-06-22. It was used at Molepolole new Post Office, (not Mathubantwa) which is the older of the two offices in Molepolole. Being 69 x 19mm, with figures/letters of 4.5mm in height, it is similar to the light blue labels but certainly not the same. The envelope has also passed through the EMS counter? As the two systems of tracking require different handling practices, and different labels, it can only be presumed that the counter clerk picked up the nearest cancel and applied it as the issuing office.

On checking other Bar Coded labels I have I find that the pale blue ones vary from 68.5 x 18.5mm to 71 x 18.5mm. The lettering varies from 4.5mm to almost 4.75mm, and is cut quite close to the edge of the labels in some cases.

I am indebted to both Kagiso Moalosi (Asst. IT Manager, Security section at BotswanaPost) and Kingsley Dobrowsky (Director), of Kingsley & Associates, for their time and efforts in assisting me in my research on this matter.

The Runner Post

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