

The Protea Definitive Series

The "Flying Saucer" Flaw

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The "Flying Saucer" Flaw

The "Flying Saucer" Flaw is one of the most obvious flaws in South African philately. It is easily visible to the naked eye and is an interesting and intriguing flaw. In addition, it played an important role in understanding what happened in the printing of the Protea Series.

It is a large ovoid blob of colour in the centre of the top margin of the stamp. It looks like a spaceship on the horizon. The colour of the flaw is that of the "RSA". This is an important observation and its significance will become obvious later.

This one frame exhibit tells the story of how the problems surrounding the flaw were identified and answered. The large, ovoid blob of colour raised the questions, where and how. When the answers to those questions were found, more questions were raised, and so on, until we understood what had happened.

The format is:

1. The Facts are stated.
2. The resulting question is asked.
3. The answer is given.

This then is the story of the "Flying Saucer" flaw.



Dick Findlay. 27.5.77.

RSA
 Derde Vaste Reeks
 Third Definitive Series

The Protea Series of Definitive Stamps was released on 27 May 1977. There were 17 values. Nine were printed by photogravure and eight by lithography. This First Day Cover cancelled by the Kaapstad - Cape Town - Kirstenbosch canceller is signed by Dick Findlay, designer/artist of the series.

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Fact #1: The Flaw occurs in the first issues of the 1c and the 3c stamp. It is found on Pane B, Row 9, Stamp 4.



Flying Saucer Flaw. 1c. Pane B. Row 9. Stamp 4



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Flying Saucer Flaw. 3c. Pane B. Row 9. Stamp 4



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Question1: How can the same flaw occur on two different values?

Answer: This is only possible if there is a Common Cylinder.

Fact #2: Cylinder 722 is the common cylinder.








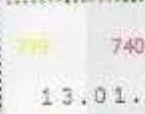

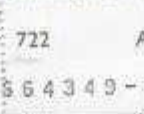


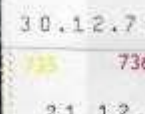

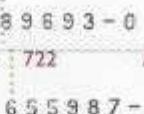
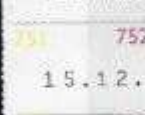


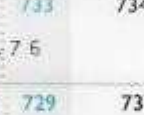

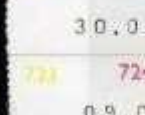
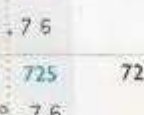


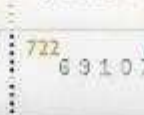




Cylinder Blocks from Issue 1 of the 1c and 3c.
The Common Cylinder 722

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Fact #3: Cylinder 722 prints "RSA" in all nine values printed by photogravure, but the "Flying Saucer" Flaw is only present in the 1c and 3c values.

						
739	740	741	742	722	A	
13.01.77				664349-0		
					A	
747	748	749	750	722	A	
11.01.77				653287-0		
					A	
743	744	745	746	722	A	
30.12.76				889893-0		
					A	
735	736	737	738	722	A	
21.12.76				655987-0		
					A	
751	752	753	754	722	A	
15.12.76				736751-0		
					A	
731	732	733	734	722	A	
03.11.76				669328-0		
					A	
727	728	729	730	722	A	
30.09.76				126508-0		
					A	
721	724	725	726	722	A	
09.09.76				799154-0		
					A	
718	719	720	721	722	A	
10.08.76				631073-0		

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Fact #4: Some sheets of the 3c stamp, Issue 1 were found **without** the "Flying Saucer" Flaw



Pane B. R9/4. The "Flying Saucer" Flaw is absent.

The Date of Printing, (10 August 1976),
the suffix (-D)
and the cylinder numbers (718, 719, 720, 721 and 722)
are the same as on the sheets with the flaw.

Q2: If Cylinder 722 prints all nine values, why does the "Flying Saucer" Flaw only occur in the 1c and 3c values?

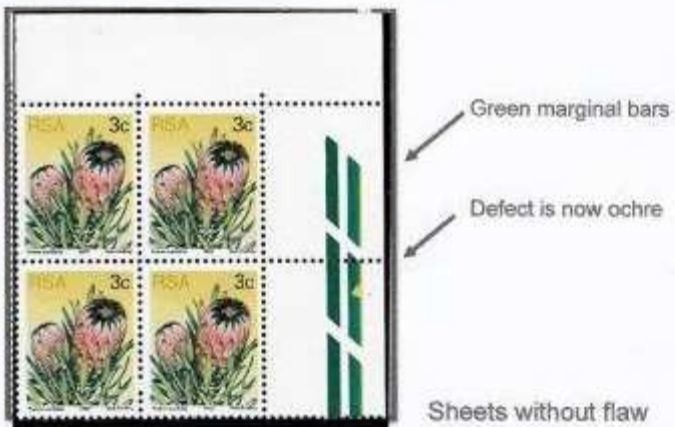
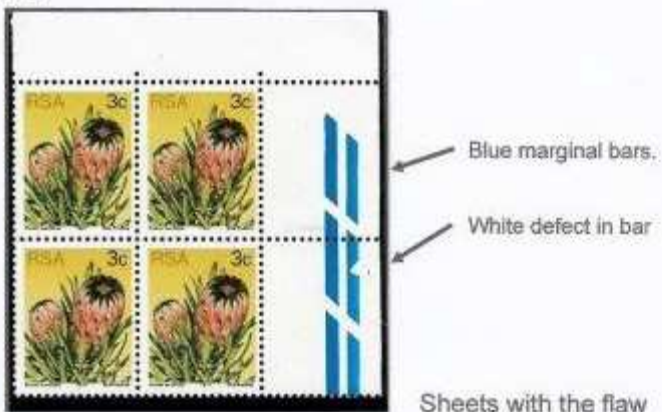
Q3: How can sheets that are printed on the same day, from the same cylinders and with the same suffix, differ?

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The "Flying Saucer" Flaw

Q4: IF the cylinders numbers are the same, where does the GREEN come from?

Fact 6: When the colour ochre is superimposed on the colour blue, a green colour results. This can best be seen at the top right corner of Pane B.



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The Answer

In the sheets **with the flaw**, the marginal bars are blue, and the defect is white, the colour of the paper. Cylinder 720 prints the MAP in blue and Cylinder 722 prints the "RSA"

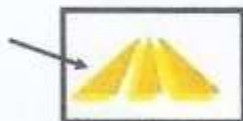
In the sheets **without the flaw**, the marginal bars are green, but the defect is ochre, proving that the green is a result of the superimposition of blue and ochre. Cylinder 720 is unchanged and still prints the MAP in blue. Cylinder 722 still prints the "RSA", but it has been modified to print the MAP in ochre. The MAP is thus printed twice, once by Cylinder 720 in blue, then by Cylinder 722 in ochre. This results in a green MAP.

If the superimposition of the two cylinders is not perfect, a DOUBLE PRINT results

Double Print: 1c:



Double Marginal bars



Double Arrow

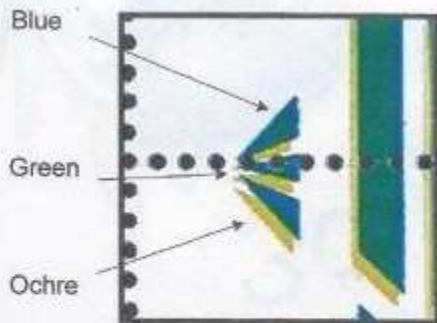
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Double Print: 3c



Triple Print: 3c



The arrow and the marginal bars have three colours

Note: These double and triple prints can only occur in Issue 2 of the 1c and 3c values.

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Q5: How did this happen?

How can sheets printed on the same day (10 August 1976) and from the same set of cylinders (718 – 722) differ?

The Answer:

This is yet another example of Philatelic Services and the Government Printer providing incorrect information on the cylinder blocks. (Ref. 1) To fully understand what happened, we must know the order of printing of the photogravure stamps in the Protea Series. These dates can be obtained from the cylinder blocks displayed on page 6 of this exhibit. The data is summarised in the following table.

Date	Value	Issue
10 Aug 1976	3c	1
09 Sep 1976	1c	1
30 Sep 1976	2c	1
03 Nov 1976	15c	1
13 Dec 1976	5c	1
21 Dec 1976	20c	1
30 Dec 1976	4c	1
11 Jan 1977	8c	1
13 Jan 1977	10c	1
14 Mar 1977	5c	1
24 Mar 1977	2c	2
06 Apr 1977	3c	2

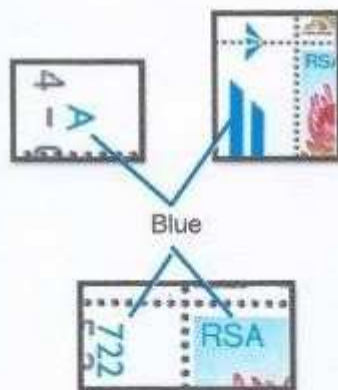
Cylinder 722 was the Common Cylinder. It was used in the printing of all nine values printed by photogravure. However, Cylinder 722 was altered or changed on several occasions but retained the number 722 throughout its long life. These different cylinders have been named Stage 1, Stage 2 etc. If a cylinder is changed or modified, the result is a new issue. The cylinder number, 722 and the suffix (-0) should have been changed to alert collectors to a new issue. Philatelic Services and the Government Printer did neither of the above. Hence the confusion.

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The Answer. (continued)

Cylinder 722 was then altered or changed. The "Flying Saucer" flaw disappears. The MAP becomes the same colour as RSA and 722. This explains why the "Flying Saucer" Flaw appears on the 3d and 1c values, but not on any of the other values printed with the Common Cylinder. Cylinder 722, State 2 printed the 2c and the 15c values.



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Q6: Why are there sheets of Issue 1 of the 3c with and without the "Flying Saucer" Flaw?

Answer: Although the Date of Printing (10 August 1976), Cylinder Numbers (719 – 722) and the suffix (-0) are identical, these sheets do not belong to the same issue. Those with the flaw and a blue MAP are from Issue 1, and those without the flaw and a green MAP are Issue 2. Cylinder 722, State 4 was used in the printing of Issue 2 on 6 April 1977.



3c: Issue 2: Green MAP: No "Flying Saucer" Flaw.
Date of Printing: 6 April 1977



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Fact # 7: The Marginal Bars in the 3c sheets without the "Flying Saucer" Issue 2, appear to be the same colour, but the outer bar is paler in sheets printed by Cylinder 722, State 4.



3c and 10c both printed by Cylinder 722, State 4.

Question 7: If Cylinder 722, State 4 prints the sheets with the GREEN marginal bars (Issue 2), why is the outer bar not paler in colour?

Answer: In Issue 2 (the sheets without the "Flying Saucer" flaw) the green marginal bars are the result of the superimposition of two colours, blue printed by cylinder 720 and ochre printed by cylinder 722. The enlargement below of the item on page 11 of the exhibit clearly shows that the outer ochre marginal bar is paler than the inner, confirming that State 4 was used to produce these sheets. When the alignment is perfect the resulting dense green colour masks the paler ochre bar. This delayed the recognition that State 4 produced the sheets without the "Flying Saucer" flaw.

