

Coil Version of Union Flag Smilers Stamp

Royal Mail produced a special coin cover, available from 16 January 2007, to mark the 300th anniversary of the union of the English and Scottish Parliaments in 1707. The date is the anniversary of the ratification in Scotland, which became effective on 1 May 1707.



This cover contains a special £2 coin, and bears six Union Flag greetings stamps (definitive size) and was priced at £15.50. This stamp originally appeared in 2005, in self adhesive booklets, at which time it was also made available in Smiler sheets.

Coil strips of these stamps appeared on eBay during late March and early April, were printed by Walsall Security Printers, who also produced the booklets, so that the stamps could be affixed to the special covers by Royal Mail machinery. The coils were also made available to Royal Mail's contracted dealers for use on covers only and under the contract terms dealers were not permitted to sell them to collectors as mint strips or singles.



Interestingly the stamps were not in a continuous strip on the backing paper. Probably to facilitate machine fixing there is a wider space after every 6th stamp, as shown above (one has been cut from the strip at the right).



Although the stamps are printed by the same printer, the two printings were over year apart and not surprisingly there are some differences, as shown here.

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The Queen's head in both cases is grey, rather than silver, but seems less solid on the coil. Comparison of the flag is made difficult by inaccurate colour registration on both stamps, with the booklet stamp having magenta high, and the coil stamp having the cyan to the right (or possibly magenta to the left), but I think the obvious shading differences on the fluttering flag would be apparent even with perfect registration.

The perforation is the same on both stamps, with no interrupted perfs, but the phosphor bands are quite different on the stamps seen. The phosphor bands on the coil are similar to those on the Smilers stamps, which were printed by Cartor of France, a WSP subsidiary.

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