

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 1986 ROYAL WEDDING TETE-BECHES

## TETE BECHE

The Tete Beche that were in the Format Archive are most interesting. They dealt with a British Royalty event and they were available in a regulation large sheet, which produced 5 different Tete Beche pairs. They came in a large sheet of 80 stamps arranged in Tete Beche formation and meant to be assembled in small booklets in blocks of four containing 2 or 3 panes, so this means the large sheet of 80 stamps had to be broken up into 5 units to make up five booklets. The arrangement on the large sheet was as follows (all 5 units would be the same):

From left to right, there would be a margin, then a block of four, a wide gutter, another block of four same design, one more block of four same design, another wide gutter, a block of four and final margin, repeated 4 more times.

There were also a number of sheets of 40 stamps representing the central part of the big sheet. The sheet of 40 stamps was arranged as follows:

Margin, one pair, then comes a block of four made up of two pairs Tete Beche, final pair and ending in a margin, repeated 4 more times.

I do not understand what sort of a booklet could be produced with the sheet of 40 stamps because while there is 5 rows of blocks down the center of the sheet of 40 there is no way to produce a booklet similar to the one in the finished booklet. All one can produce is one Tete Beche lot of four plus two pairs with the margin left and right and no booklet can be made that way. I have a selection of Tete Beche from the large sheet properly separated to show either a single Tete Beche with two stamps or a block of four Tete Beche. All this for one value.

Each British Commonwealth with Tete Beche has two values. One value is available in a pair or a block of four. The same value comes in two blocks of four each having the gutter. On one block of four there are two Tete Beche pairs. The other block of four, same value, has two pairs both stamps facing the same way. They are not Tete Beche. The second value comes the same way. The total is 5 different Tete Beche to the set. From the small sheet I can send a unit of 8 stamps margins left and right and with the center two pairs in a block of four Tete Beche.

I did get all that was left in the Archive of these Tete Beche sheets, but there were other Tete Beche sheets that had been sold to the public at various times, as well as in several auctions held by Christie's. Robson Lowe had the option of selling the stamps either by private sale or by public auction. Other dealers picked up some sheets. I have been trying to locate anyone who bought some of them and did purchase a few. However, I have been unable to find any dealer offering the Tete Beche pairs in any advertisement in the past 15 years. Probably because no one has any quantity, enough to advertise.

Kasimir Bileski

(1)

TETE BECHE PAIRS

Would you know why these exist? It all has to do with assembly of booklet panes to put up into booklets. There are two types of booklets possible; those that open up either at left and right and the far commoner in use, the left hand booklet.

A typical left and right booklet would be printed from a plate that has four to twelve wide units and usually 10 down. This sheet is imperforate between every two stamps horizontally and imperforate at the center vertically. Cutting it down reduces it to a number of left-handed and right-handed panes which are then assembled into booklets.

This is a cumbersome way to assemble booklets and it is used most rarely.

Far easier to handle is the tete-beche method. It is the same situation as above except in the sheet destined for booklets the right-hand row of panes is inverted. On cutting apart the tete-beche vanishes and the result is a neat left handed booklet.

What if such a sheet showing the tete beche varieties comes on the market? What have we then?

Usually a small or large fortune, whether it's just a pair tete beche or a complete two pane tete beche unit from the sheet.

TAKE CANADA FOR EXAMPLE

First one ever was #77ii - a pair is valued at \$3,500.00, complete booklet at \$15,000.00

#90bi - same as above

Admirals #105bi, #107ci, #109ai - these three in pairs come to over \$10,000.00

Now that's big bucks!

So, go to the 1928 set with its 1¢, 2¢, 5¢ booklet panes. Here the tete beche pairs with premium for NH can be bought for \$1,500.00 the lot of three.

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That is more like it. \$500.00 per tete beche pair is within reasonable reach of most pocketbooks.

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Now what if I was to offer you not one but two tete beche pairs, AND THAT THESE PAIRS ARE SCARCER THAN THE CANADA \$500.00 PAIRS, for only:

\$100.00 FOR THE TWO!!

Interested?

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The two pairs are from a British Commonwealth West Indian country. The stamps are part of an issued set, they are astonishingly handsome and sensationally interesting (and here I refer only to the issued set). Booklets were to be issued but none did come out, for whatever reason, unknown to me at present.

Only the tete beche pairs remain, and I do guarantee they are scarcer than our 1928 Canadian tete beche and this is backed by a statement as to number existing by a foremost English and world philatelic expert.

Until I got my supply only Queen Elizabeth had these in her collection!

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All this should be enough to get you to send \$100.00 my way, but in addition to the two pairs you will also receive \$100.00 worth net of good Canadian or foreign or both, worth every cent of \$100.00. These will be my choice.

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Price is in U.S.A. funds. (Canadian price is \$120.00. I'll pay the GST).

Orders with remittances have preference, but you are welcome to have this group on approval. Pay or return after receipt. In either case allow plenty of time for attention - up to eight weeks - as coming up are the usual yearly vacations for the staff. All remittances will be held intact until stamps are mailed out by registered mail.

Kasimir Bileski

Orders or requests to:

K. BILESKI LTD.,  
STATION B,  
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA,  
CANADA R2W 3R4

or

K. BILESKI LTD.,  
P.O. BOX 500,  
PEMBINA, ND.  
U.S.A. 58271

This one is in reference to the Tuvalu side also.

ANDREW and SARAH

Unlucky in love perhaps but still both will be remembered philatelically forever for they are permanently recorded in a remarkable set of stamps that celebrated their wedding.

Four designs were used for various commemoratives featuring the life and times of both. Fittingly enough the stamps on the sheet of 10 X 10, total 100, came in se-tenant pairs.

Then the printers began to print a new order. They re-arranged the plate format. Robson Lowe describes this sheet in The Philatelist. The sequence was: a pair - gutter- a strip of 4 tete beche - gutter - a pair; eight stamps across and 10 down for a total of 80 stamps to a sheet.

Was this something to get more money from collectors? Hardly. In the West Indies, and in most other countries, booklets of stamps containing one or more little panes are the best way to carry stamps. All this is the time honored way of preparing booklets and the tete-beche is absolutely necessary if one is going to produce lefthanded booklets.

There is another way of manufacturing booklets but result is lefthanded and righthanded booklet panes, which is rather awkward. Canada has two examples of left and righthanded booklets; the Christmas panes for 1968 and 1969. In the tete beche process the tete beche of course vanishes unless a part sheet or sheets get out - which they sometimes do. Then the collector knows what a sting a tete beche may have at times. Again Canada as an example: there are some imperf tete beche panes that cost a small fortune. It all depends on the number available.

Format printers put away 10 sets of the two sheets needed for booklet panes. After all it was a first for them and the extra sheets might be useful as samples to interest other nations. Only 50 units exist as enclosed and everything as enclosed is scarce, even the pairs, as such with wide margins do not exist on regular sheets. Value of this lot is at least \$500.00.

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SARAH and DIANA

A collection of stamps featuring both will always be of interest as both are smart intelligent women compared to their former lack-lustre husbands.

Kasimir Bileski

Mr. Bileski is referencing the Tuvalu side here.  
More sets were available on the St. Vincent side

THE ONLY TETE BECHE IN THE FORMAT ARCHIVES

These came from uncut sheets of 80 stamps. A very clever arrangement of Tete Beche pairs plus space plus cutting would produce 20 booklets of two panes or 10 booklets with four panes, all correctly lined up. In the process all Tete Beche vanish.

Switzerland used this method and I understand complete sheets destined for booklet panes can be purchased from their philatelic department. Canada used such a printing method for the Admiral and 1928 panes and other requiring left-hand booklets. Only for the 1928 booklet panes is there evidence that something else is required for this process: namely gutters.

So in the sheet of 80 there are two types of Tete Beche:

1. Normal Tete Beche pair, stamps side by side, one stamp inverted in relation to the other.
2. Gutter Tete Beche pair, a gutter separating the Tete Beche stamps. The gutter gives the stamps on each side the necessary selvedge needed for a pane in its booklet.

And now there is a difference. The gutter pairs have both stamps the same instead of different. If one wants the two different stamps in a pair then a block of four stamps total plus gutter is necessary.

The Archives had 10 sets uncut of the two sheets that handled the four varieties.

If made into booklets - result all tete beche, all gutter pairs vanish.

If assembled as I did, 50 sets as enclosed are all that exist.

First time such tete beche available for the British Commonwealth since 1840.

I must be the first dealer ever to handle anything like this for any country in the British Commonwealth. Once I did have the 1928 Canada booklet panes Tete Beche regular and with gutter, but these were the rare imperfs, not the finished stamps as enclosed.

Kasimir Bileski

Here Mr. Bileski is referencing the missing Tuvalu \$1 and Nanumea 60c values. I have found more than 50 sets from the "West Indies" were made so this part was wrong.

### TUVALU: THE NINE ISLANDS

Formerly known as the Ellice Islands. There are a total of nine. Likely the smallest British Commonwealth group but as most they have an independent Government.

The old official name was the Ellice Islands. However this was dropped and the populations reverted back to the old ancestral names for every one of the nine islands, plus the overall name as Tuvalu. Note the similarity between these names and the typical Hawaiian. Could it be they were the colonizers of the Hawaiian Islands? Otherwise, it was very appropriate to choose the nine islands in the Pacific Ocean for the purpose of issuing nine sets of presentation booklets to honor the 1986 Royal Wedding. This matches the nine British Commonwealth islands in the West Indies, for the same purpose.

Result was the total of 18 Tete Beche sets due to the unfinished uncut Tete Beche sheets.

The largest and only ever known such group in the history of philately.

I did not know that these existed until rather late. Previously Robson Lowe had sold various groups to other dealers, also usually ten sheets at a time were sold by Christie's in various auctions. In one of these auctions I bought all that were listed.

Actually, what was sold to other dealers were not only in small quantities, they usually were incomplete, so that no one else bothered to advertise them and thus this one grand lot of Tete Beche varieties has remained unknown to collectors.

Ever so often I have been picking up what sheets remained in other hands so that as of August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001, I do have 50 complete sets of the West Indies group. Of the Pacific Tuvalu lot I only lack two Tete Beche for completion, and minus these two, there are only 40 sets of the Pacific group instead of 50 as for the West Indies. However, I hope to pick up more.

Kasimir Bileski

The list before Mr. Bileski found the missing values.

TUVALU	60¢	does not exist
	\$1	does not exist
FUNAFUTI	60¢	10 sheets
	\$1	10 sheets
NANUMAGA	60¢	10 sheets
	\$1	10 sheets
NANUMEA	60¢	does not exist
	\$1	10 sheets
NIUTAO	60¢	10 sheets
	\$1	12 sheets
NUI	60¢	does not exist
	\$1	does not exist
NUKUFETAU	60¢	does not exist
	\$1	does not exist
NUKULAEAE	60¢	does not exist
	\$1	10 sheets
VAITUPU	60¢	10 sheets
	\$1	10 sheets

# Robson Lowe inventory from the archive.

207. 1986 Royal Wedding of the Duke of York  
 Sheets of eighty stamps 8 x 10, the central strip of four h

## TWO STAMPS TETE-BECHE

	No. of stamps	Tête-bêche strips
British Virgin Is. 35c., \$1	4158	260 + 260
Montserrat 70c., \$2	4076	260 + 250
Nevis 60c., \$2	4638	260 + 320
St. Lucia 80c., \$2	4158	260 + 260
St. Vincent 60c., \$2	4158	260 + 260
Bequia 60c., \$2	4152	260 + 260
Grenadines 60c., \$2	4080	250 + 260
Mustique 60c., \$2	960	60 + 60
Union Is. 60c., \$2	4156	260 + 260

Total no. of stamps 30456  
 Total no. of strips of four, two tête-bêche 4000  
 Total face value \$44101.3

US = \$22,000

400-8 pairs  
 Break up  
 according  
 to sheet.