



# THE YOUNG COLLECTOR

by Joseph Perrone | josephperrone@rpsc.org

## THE MAN WHO UNEXPECTEDLY BECAME KING

It is enjoyable to follow the biography of famous people with stamps. Here is my favorite example.



Great grandmother, Queen Victoria (Canada Scott 42).

Albert Frederick Arthur George Windsor was born on December 14, 1895 to Prince George, Duke of York, and his wife Mary, the Duchess, during the reign of his great-grandmother, Queen Victoria.

As he was fourth in line to the throne after his grandfather, Edward VII, his father, George V, and then his older brother Edward, it was highly unlikely that he would become king.

Little Albert, or Bertie as he was called by his family, was a rather sickly child. He suffered from chronic stomach problems and was constantly in pain from the corrective braces required for his knock-knees. Along with those problems, Bertie stammered terribly, which made him very shy.



Grand parents, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (Canada Scott 98).

In 1909, he attended the Royal Naval College in Osborne, coming last in his class. In his early training, he spent time on board the HMS Cumberland off the coast of Eastern Canada.

When World War I broke out, he saw very little action due to his poor health; however,



Parents, King George V and Queen Mary (Canada Scott 213).

he did participate in the Battle of Jutland and even received the honour of being mentioned in despatches, which occurs when a superior officer gives their soldier a good mention in an official report because of some gallant action in the face of the enemy.

In February of 1918, he was appointed to the Royal Naval Air Service, which soon became the RAF, becoming the British royal family's first fully-qualified pilot.

After the war, Albert did not stay in the military for long. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge where he studied history, civics, and economics.

In 1920, his father made him Duke of York, Earl of Inverness, and Baron Killarney, after which he began taking on

his official royal duties. He famously toured coal mines, railways, and factories, earning himself the nickname "The Industrial Prince."



Duke of York (Canada Scott 212).

In 1934, Canada issued King George V's Silver Jubilee commemoratives. The two cent denomination features Bertie as the Duke of York. This was the first Canadian stamp bearing his likeness.

It was highly unusual that Albert had so much freedom in choosing his wife. At that time, it was common practice for royalty to marry royalty, whether they loved each other or not.

In 1920, Albert met his future wife, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, who refused his proposals twice, as she was hesitant to make the sacrifice of becoming a member of the royal family. However, Albert persisted and they were married on April 26, 1923.

The happy couple had two children, Elizabeth, now Queen Elizabeth II, and Margaret.

On October 31, 1925, Albert closed the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley with a speech, an ordeal for both him and his listeners due to his stuttering.

To overcome his speech impediment, he hired Lionel Logue, an Australian speech and language therapist, who helped Albert so much that he was able to speak in a much more relaxed manner with minimal stammering.

A fact that I had never heard about Albert before was that he was offered the position of Governor General of Canada in 1931 by our Prime Minister R. B. Bennett. He rejected this offer, but it is interesting to think that Canada almost had a king as her former Governor General.

Before he died on January 20, 1936, George V said about his eldest son Edward, "After I am dead, the boy will ruin himself in twelve months" and also, "I pray God that my eldest son will never marry and that nothing will come between Bertie and Lilibet (the Royal family's nickname for Elizabeth) and the throne."

It turns out that the wise king's forewarning proved to be true. Edward VIII, not being a man of morals, abdicated the throne to marry his twice-divorced mistress Wallis Simpson before the first anniversary of his father's death.



Edward VIII essay.

There were never any stamps bearing the image of Edward VIII as king issued in Canada. Although there were essays of such a stamp, these were never put into production due to his abdication.

As Edward had no children, Albert was next in line to the throne and was crowned on May 12th, 1937 in Westminster Abbey.

Albert officially took George, his fourth name, as his Coronation name not only to honour his father, but also to symbolize the strong and undiminishing continuation of the monarchy after Edward's scandalous abdication.



Coronation, King George VI & Queen Elizabeth (Canada Scott 237).

Canada issued a stamp featuring George and his wife in honour of their coronation.

Unfortunately for King George, the likelihood of yet another great European war dominated his early reign. Even more unfortunate was the fact that, constitutionally, George was forced to support the English Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Adolf Hitler.

The new king and queen toured Canada and the United States during May and June of 1939, even with the uncertainty of war. Although George had been to Canada beforehand in his military days, this was the first time the reigning British monarchs had visited North America.



1939 Royal Visit (Canada Scott 246-247).

Despite his brother's disgrace, they were enthusiastically greeted by the people.

Canada issued a set of three stamps for the royal visit. The one cent featured a picture of George's daughters Elizabeth and Margaret, the two cent, the National Memorial in Ottawa, and the three cent, the portraits of the royal highnesses.

Shortly after they returned home, the United Kingdom, with the exception of Ireland, declared war on Nazi Germany.

Despite the civilian bombing raids which Germany carried out, the King and Queen stayed in London, bravely showing support for their people. The royal family furthermore accepted rationing restrictions imposed on their subjects in solidarity.

On September 7th, 1940 the Blitz of London began, resulting in the death of about 1,000 civilians, mostly in the East End of London.

On the 13th, the king and queen themselves narrowly escaped death when bombs fell in the courtyard of Buckingham Palace while they were in residence.

In defiance, the queen said, "I am glad we have been bombed. It makes me feel we can look the East End in the face."

Throughout the war, George became a figure of national resistance, giving "morale-boosting" visits to the troops as well as factories and bombed sites.

The lower value stamps of the Canadian War Issue consisted of images of the king wearing a navy uniform (one cent and five cent), an army uniform (two cent and four cent), and an air force uniform (both three cent values).



King George VI in different uniforms (Navy, Army, Air Force) (Canada Scott 249-251).

When the war was over, the British people called for George, cheering, "We want the king!" and he made a balcony appearance along with his family and Winston Churchill.

The last Canadian stamp of the beloved monarch was issued on November 27, 1951.



King George VI died in his sleep on February 6, 1952, and the world mourned the loss of a good man who never imagined that he would one day be king. ☒

## PHILATELIC WORD MIX-UP

Solution to puzzle found on page 283.

My wife and I had a great time coming up with the words and final puzzle, from which we made a composite image based on images found from "Jumble®" and *Scott Stamp Monthly*.

NEVTIR  
I N V E R T

AGOTSEP  
P O S T A G E

EHTES  
S H E E T

CFAIOIFL  
O F F I C I A L



Re-arranging the circled letters in the four words above gives the solution, as suggested by the above cartoon.

H I S

C O V E R S