

## The Quintessential Quetzal



# No.6 More Incidental Quetzals

## Some classic supporting roles

### Introduction

In philatelic terms, the Resplendent Quetzal is a bird that just keeps giving. Okay, more often than not it might just be an incidental walk on part, but what's wrong with that? There are loads of examples and handled correctly, they can add charm and interest to what can seemingly appear as quite ordinary stamps. Of course, they are actually far, far from ordinary, but that is quite another story.

Guatemala, despite its rich Mayan heritage, scenery and wildlife has historically been obsessed with its autocratic rulers and sometimes economic projects of dubious worth. Remember, this is the country where the term, "Banana Republic" was first coined. Its philatelic output has reflected much of this - dictators and building projects, architecture and the national seal - individuals and places that many have perhaps never heard of.

But whether flitting in and out or draped over ornamental frames, the Quetzal, as befits its status as the national bird has had an important supporting role. And they deserve more attention. Let's run through a handful of - I think - some quite worthy classic examples.

I'll take them in chronological order.

### The 1917 Cabrera Re-election issue

There is just the one stamp. Issued to mark the re-election of Estrada Cabrera as president of Guatemala. Given the nature of the event - and his ego - the size and positioning of his portrait is quite modest. The woman with branch and the vegetation behind receive at least equal but perhaps more prominent billing. The sepia helps to highlight them. Modest on this occasion, but wait until the 1918 issue comes along.

The Quetzal comes in above the right hand column, merging with the dull blue background. The date above the left hand column presents no competition. Overall, I think it is quite a handsome stamp. See figure 1 below.



Fig.1 - 1917 Cabrera Re-election issue (SG155)

Given the date, this is naturally another Waterlow, recess engraved in London and, as per the date on the stamp, issued on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1917. It was printed in sheets of 100 on white paper which, as with all Guatemalan issues was without watermark. Typically for Waterlows, there are variations of perforation to be found - with this issue, an average of 14.9 (coded B) and an average of 14.1 (coded D). Altogether a million were printed and the stamp can also be found as a perfin, punctured "OFICIAL."

### **1918 Regular Cabrera issue - the "Copyrighted" definitive**

Cabrera popped up again in October of the following year with another single issue, but this time elevated to 1.50 Pesos. There is a similar but different oval shaped portrait, only this time it is larger. Indeed, he now fills most of the stamp which is also in portrait format. Most of the stamp, but not quite all of it. A Quetzal curves over the right hand side of the portrait medallion and now plays a larger supporting role without a competing figure. Now truly resplendent. There is just a single colour, dark blue. See figure 2.



Fig.2 - 1918 Cabrera Issue (SG157)

This issue was also printed recess engraved, but not by Waterlows. On this occasion the printer is the American Bank Note Company of New York on white paper and perforated 12. Only the top and bottom sheet margins bear the printers name so you won't find it on single issues. Although strictly speaking that's untrue as the inscription "©A.B.N.CO" is almost hidden in the bottom right hand corner under "Centavos."

The stamp is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it is regarded as probably the only stamp ever issued that says its design is copyrighted - note the "©" in the inscription. And it's nonsensical of course, because the copyright lies with Guatemala as the issuing country and not the printer. Nevertheless, this stamp is sometimes referred to as the, "Copyrighted" definitive of 1918.

The second issue of interest is political. It concerns both this stamp and its 1917 predecessor. Cabrera was deposed as president in a coup in 1920. He had had a long run having been president for 22 years. And there is quite a history concerning his presidency, not all of it good, but that would be an article in itself.

Now, a million each of the 1917 and 1918 issues were printed. That's two million stamps. The new regime needed to erase Cabrera from the public. Many of the 1917 stamp were devalued after his overthrow and large quantities of the 1918 stamp were remaindered and then cancelled to order for dealer sales after withdrawal. Only a small quantity of the 1917 were withdrawn, but it's known that almost 80% of the 1918 issue were devalued.

Neither of the issues is expensive. Both of them fine used can be realised for as little as 20 pence. Mint, the 1917 can be found for around 40 pence or so and the 1918 for about £1.

### 1933 Day of the Race Issues

We jump forward fifteen years for the next set of issues where the Quetzal plays a supporting role. And it's really quite a small role too, because you would be forgiven for barely noticing it.

I have heard it referred to as the, "Columbus set," but that doesn't capture its purpose. Without digressing too much the set arose from a Uruguayan initiative with the overarching intention of establishing greater unity amongst Spanish speaking countries in south and central America. The 3rd August was the anniversary for Christopher Columbus setting out in 1492 for the Americas and to mark the event, it was known as, "The Day of the Race." In fact, the anniversary - the 441<sup>st</sup> - was not the overly important aspect; Spanish unity was the main thing.

Which is where it became weird. As well as Guatemala and Uruguay, only Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Paraguay agreed to issue stamps - that's hardly a ringing endorsement from the principal South American countries. Weirder still, Portuguese speaking Brazil agreed to join in!

Nowadays, the Day of the Race is celebrated in the Spanish speaking Americas but after this initial issue - although I have not fully checked - I don't believe that there have been many subsequent ones. There were issues from several countries in the 1980's and 90's to commemorate the discovery of America and the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary certainly attracted more attention.

Using a landscape format and printed litho by Byron Zadik & Co in Guatemala - their name appears at the base of the design - the main image is the flag of the race with the crosses representing the three sailing vessels and the dates 1492-1933. Columbus stands on a globe to the left hand side of the flag, while on the right is a Quiche (Mayan) Indian, Tecum Uman. The Quetzal takes central stage and sits on top of the values in front of the flag which rather dwarfs the bird. The Quetzal also becomes a little lost in the colours chosen. I think only the 2c blue helps to bring the bird out. Have a look at the effect in figures 3-7 below.



Figs.3-7 - 1933 Day of the Race full set (SG274-278)

The perforation was standardised at 12.5, however the 3c red violet (it looks greyish to me) and the 5c rose (which I think looks like a red brown) can be found imperforate. The colours can be found in shades and I understand that this is particularly the case with the 2c blue.

Altogether the quantity printed ran to 350,000 with the half cent and three cent taking 100,000 each. Despite the size of the printing, the stamps were only supposed to be issued and valid until mid-October, in other words for just a month. So what happened to all those stamps? I have not sought them out seriously, but I don't think I have ever seen a complete set for sale but instead only oddments. I have four out of the five - two mint and two used - and they were all acquired piecemeal, one at a time. It's not as if they are expensive either. I have never seen them on cover and I believe that they are quite scarce in that format. So good hunting!

### 1935 The Barrios Commemoratives

This is a large set with nine regular postage stamps and three airmails, so twelve issues altogether. They were printed abroad by Johan Enschede in the Netherlands. Produced in photogravure on white wove paper with a white gum and a standard perforation of 12.6 they make for a very attractive set that I believe is quite typical of the mid-1930's. Enschede's were to undertake the printing of some very fine issues during this period, including the later airmails.

Designed in Guatemala by Carlos Marckwordt, the stamps bear both his name as well as the printers at the foot of each issues, with "C.MARCKWORDT" on the left and, "JOHEZ" on the right side.

History time. The issues were to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of former president and General Justo Rufino Barrios, a national hero and regarded as probably the greatest Guatemalan individual following its independence from Spain. His portrait is of course prominent in many of these issues, but the then current incumbent, Jorge Ubico, was also determined to get a look in. Barrios, a liberal reformer, was killed at the battle of Chalchuapa in 1885. Ubico on the other hand was a dictator and has been described as, "one of the most oppressive tyrants Guatemala has ever known." A nasty piece of work, he was overthrown in a popular uprising in 1944. I'll say more about Ubico later as he naturally features in some subsequent issues.

Despite the size of the set, only two stamps have Quetzals. These are examples of the national seal again, although this time very much as a complimentary element rather than the main focus of attention. The two to note are the 3 cent carmine rose and greenish blue and the 25 cent vermilion and black. The 3c has the national emblem in an oval medallion on the left hand side and this is mirrored by a train on the right hand side with the birthdate in between. Barrios introduced both the telegraph and railways to the country.

The 25c has portraits of Barrios and Ubico on either side of the national emblem which is now placed centrally. This is perhaps more of a starring role? The names of each individual appear underneath their portraits and, as throughout the whole series, the dates are repeated. For images, see figures 8 and 9 below.



Figs.8-9 - 3c Carmine rose & greenish blue with the 25c vermilion & black (SG285 & 290)

Despite the commemorative significance, the quantity printed (both regular and airmail issues) ran to just 372,500, including 50,000 for the 3c and just 10,000 of the 25c. I have never been fortunate enough to see a complete set and I am therefore uncertain of current market values, but it is my feeling that you would be looking at well over £40 mint or used for a complete set - Quetzal and non-Quetzal. Singly, the 3c and 25c are very affordable, but still likely to be valued in Pounds and not pennies, whether mint or used. I think they are all lovely stamps and attractively designed. My only regret is that the Quetzal didn't feature in all of them.

### 1937 The Ubico Commemoratives

I suppose being a dictator, it would have been unlikely that Jorge Ubico would allow the most famous Guatemalan to have a set of stamps to himself, even if he did manage a brief appearance in that one. And then beginning his second "term" in office in 1937, what better excuse was there?

The outcome though is a large, quite beautiful but slightly odd set or rather, sub-series of sets. I really struggle to regard this as one set. There is a domestic regular series of twelve; then an internal airmail set (distinctively marked "INTERIOR") of ten stamps, followed by a final series of twelve for international airmail (this time marked "EXTERIOR"). That's thirty four stamps altogether. Wow!

The airmails, both internal and external, are all tied by scenic views, buildings and monuments with an aircraft - sadly not a Quetzal this time - overprinted mainly in the top right hand corner. They are all long landscapes in layout, are very attractive and highly collectable but they needn't concern us further here. The regular issues seem to echo the airmails in design except for two features. Four of them - the half, one, five and ten cent - all have elongated portrait layouts. The 1Q and 1.50Q are completely different stamps. They are in a large rectangular format and show Ubico on a horse or posing with a sword, both in full military uniform. They seem as if they have been taken from a completely different series.

But there are two pluses with the regular mail series. The lowest value, the half cent depicts a Quetzal on a coffee tree branch - less in a supporting role this time as the branch is doing that job! The Quetzal is the star billing and main image. The two Ubico portraits have the national symbol quite prominently placed in the top left corner. See figures 10-12 below.



Figs. 10-12 - 1937 Ubico Commemoratives (Regular/internal postage)  
(SG333, 343 & 344)

As with the Barrios commemoratives all the issues in the sub-series were again printed photogravure by Enschede's on white unwatermarked paper and perforated 12.6. The frames were again designed by Carlou Marckwordt - the style is very distinctive - and his

name and the printers appear at the base. Although, of course, there are no frames to speak of for the two Ubico portraits, both names still receive a credit. The half cent is in two colours, slate blue and rose red. The 1Q is violet and black and the 1.50Q red brown and black. The two high values are frankly not very endearing stamps, they were taken from publicity photographs and it seems fitting that the Quetzal is looking the other way! For these two, it might just be a walk-on part, but the bird has said it wants little to do with the pompous guy in uniform.

There was a print-run of 200,000 for the half cent, 5,000 for the 1Q and 3,000 for the 1.50Q. The large portraits are therefore somewhat scarcer. Indeed, over 1,700 of the 1Q that were remaindered were destroyed after Ubico was ousted in 1944.

The half cent is quite common and very cheap to purchase. I have seen copies of the high values, but both relatively expensive and both mint. Used issues and copies on cover are very difficult to find.

### **The Revolution Anniversary issues**

In October 1944 Ubico was overthrown and to some extent stamp design took a different turn, although it would be unfair to describe the philatelic changes as radical as the political ones.

In 1945, to mark the first anniversary of the revolution, a small set of recess engraved stamps were issued alongside an unperforated souvenir sheet. The stamps were engraved internally and the printing undertaken by the Guatemalan Bureau of Engraving. They depict the “torch of liberty” brightly illuminating the revolutionary date of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1944. There is a scroll above the torch proclaiming, “ANIVERSARIO DE LA REVOLUCION,” and above that a small tablet with the figure “1.” The whole image is flanked by two Quetzals facing each other. So, two supporting acts for the price of one and the symmetry works well here.

Issued on 19<sup>th</sup> October, there are just two values, a 3c deep blue for ordinary post and a 5c lilac rose for airmail. They are perforated 10.8 on white wove paper without watermark. See figures 13 and 14 below for images.



Figs.13 & 14 - 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of Revolution Issues  
(SG442 & 443)

The souvenir sheet is quite small and measures just 90 x 70.5mm. It shows an imperforate pair of the 5c lilac rose issue and has the wording, “PRIMER ANIVERSARIO DE LA REVOLUCION” with the country name and date in black. The Quetzal has now become a foursome. See figure 15 below.



Fig.15 - 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Revolution souvenir sheet (SG MS4441)

Whilst commemoratives, a million of the 3c were printed and 125,000 of the 5c airmail. The souvenir sheet realised a much smaller printing of 20,000 and there are some errors to be found - with the black applied diagonally, with it shifted upwards and the first line missing, or with the whole inscription completely absent. Examples with slight shifts of position are also known.

This wasn't the end of this design. In 1947, to commemorate the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the revolution a further set was issued. And yes, they were a little late as the stamps were not placed on sale until February of that year.

The design, printing, paper and perforation details remained completely unchanged, except the "1" at the top between the Quetzals has been changed to, "II." Additionally four values were now issued. The new set included a 1c green, 2c carmine rose, 3c violet and 5c blue. The change of colours for the last two values meant they couldn't be immediately confused with the 1945 issues. The 1c, 2c and 3c exist without perforations but they are rare. The quantities printed were upped too as per table 1 below:-

Table. 1 - Details of 1947 set - 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Revolution issues

Value	Colour	Print-run
1c	Green	204,000
2c	Carmine rose	200,050
3c	Violet	200,050
5c	Blue	500,050

**Total Print-run: 1,104,150**

The quantities per value look a little strange, but I have not seen an explanation of why they are what they are. Images of the full set are reproduced below in figures 16-19 below:-



Figs.16-19 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Revolutions issues 1947 (SG458 - 461)

### The Montufar Issues

Jose Batres y Montufar (1809 - 1844) was a soldier, engineer and poet and is regarded as one of the finest writers that Central America has produced. He was actually born in neighbouring El Salvador, but when the whole area was still a Spanish colony. He died in independent Guatemala.

A set of perhaps three stamps were issued in phases during March and May 1946. I'll say a little more about the "perhaps" later. They were designed by Arnoldo Chavarry and then engraved by Froilan Ceballos. As with the revolutionary issues, printing was undertaken by Grabados en Acero, the bureau of engraving.

The results are quite classical and really quite charming. I am very fond of these issues. Montufar is shown in profile looking left within a large shield and there is a small tablet with his name beneath it. The Quetzal acts almost as a crest to this heraldic arrangement and sits atop the shield with its long tail draped around the edge. Montufar is - quite rightly - main stage, but the bird is playing a strong supporting role. Have a look at figures 20 to 22 below to see what I mean.



Figs.20-22 - 1946 Montufar Regular Issues  
(SG447 - 449)

Now, let's say something about that "perhaps." There are three values and certainly Stanley Gibbons gives them three catalogue numbers, but it is really much more complicated than that. The half cent is a grey brown and can be found with a perforation of 10.8. However, there is another version with a perforation of 12.6, another of 11.8 and there is even one with a perforation of 11.8 on the left hand side and then 12.4 on the other three sides! To add to the fun, it can be found imperforate as well. I make that five versions.

There are then two three cent issues. Why two, is a minor mystery. One is described as deep blue and the other as indigo, although I have seen it listed as "green" in the SG Simplified. Green? I don't think so. Not remotely.

But wait a minute, deep blue and indigo are very close colours. Indeed, on the SG Colour key they sit right next to each other. Not that this swatch is the most useful device in the philatelic toolbox. The ISGC helpfully advise that one of the three cents is slate blue to deep blue, but more critically there are perforation differences. The slate/deep blue has a perf of 10.8 while the indigo comes in at 12.6 according to Gruson and Jickling. Oh, and the former can be found imperforate as well.

There is one other remarkable matter concerning this issue. They were printed in huge quantities. The print-run request for the half cent was originally two million stamps but this was then increased to a further two million. Three million of the three cents were issued in March 1946, but a further five million were requested and issued in October of that year. In

total that gives thirteen million stamps! I am struggling to believe that all these stamps were intended for regular postal use and no wonder the catalogue values are still so low.

In September 1946 an airmail Montufar was issued, a 10c grey green. There was the same designer, engraver and printer but now the format was landscape instead of portrait. Montufar is now set within a medallion on the right while the Quetzal flies over a steaming volcano on the left hand side whilst still managing to drape a good deal of its tail over the top of the medallion. See figure 23 below.



Fig.23 - 1946 Montufar 10c Airmail (SG450)

One value, but again in reality two separate issues. One is perforated 10.8 and the other 12.6. Imperforate examples also exist. On this occasion the print-run was more modest with a total of one million, irrespective of the perforation. The 12.6 perf can be scarcer to find mint but less so used. Generally the issue is inexpensive, although I would ideally seek out both perforations. Of course.

#### 1946 Postage Stamp Centennial

And now we have one last supporting act. Well, not really as there are loads of others I could talk about, but this will have to do for now. And this issue, being a celebration of the postage stamp somehow seems an appropriate closing act.

Every philatelist knows - of course - that the first postage stamp, the Penny Black, was issued in 1840 and not 1846. So this small set seems to be a little late. There are three altogether and they each bear the correct dates for a centenary - "1840 - 1940." So why did Guatemala issue it in 1946?

The answer is unusual and lies with the choice of printer. The series are in photogravure again, which means Johan Enschede were commissioned to produce them. In 1940. And yes, that's a key date. As the Netherlands were invaded in that year during WWII, their delivery was prevented and the stock was stored and hidden during the remainder of the war. Afterwards Enschede's contacted the Guatemalan government and enquired whether they still wanted the issues. After some initial humming and haring the eventual response was positive, but each value still bore the original dates.

It was quite a lot of stamps too. In total, to be precise, 1,249,800. The odd amount is a mystery. The set consists of a one cent and five cent, but the only one that interests us here is the airmail value of 15 cents. This was produced in carmine, ultramarine and green with a quarter of a million printed for this value alone.

The whole set is very attractive, although the images for each value seem disparate. It's only the design of the frames that provides consistency and holds the set together. The 15c consists of two hemispheres with the Americas on one and the rest of the world on the other. Naturally. It's an airmail issue so there has to be a Quetzal which is flying serenely

over both globes. It seems to be almost pointing forward. I like to think it is suggesting that it is boldly going on to another act. See figure 24 underneath.



Fig.24 - 15c Postage Stamp Centennial Airmail  
(SG453)

All the values are perforated 14.2 by 13.1. The 5c - a portrait of Rowland Hill and without a Quetzal - was overprinted "AEREO" in black, although it can sometimes be found with the overprint absent. I don't like to collect sets that are broken up, so birds or no birds, I would strongly recommend going for all three. These stamps are too nice. Even without the incidental Quetzal, they deserve to be kept together.