

## ***INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW SOUTH WALES HANDBOOK AND CATALOGUE LISTING***

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Philatelists interested in the postal stationery of the Australian States have been handicapped by the lack of published handbooks and priced catalogue listings. For most States the only readily available source is the Higgins and Gage World Postal Stationery Catalogue first published in 1971 with a second printing with corrections and additions in 1978. A useful condensed edition limited to Australia, Commonwealth and States was published in 1984 (Higgins & Gage, 1984). The only comparable catalogue is by Ascher (1925), with the text in German. This lists material prior to the early 1920s and was reprinted in the 1980s together with a revised priced listing. At the time of their initial publication both catalogues provided an invaluable guide to the world's postal stationery. Such worldwide coverage limits the scope of information that can be presented and research in the period since their publication confirms the need for revision.

It is against this background that when the Postal Stationery Society of Australia (PSSA) was formed in 1995 a major aim was to provide priced catalogues of the postal stationery of the Australian States. Progress on the production of catalogue listings of Australian postal stationery has however been disappointingly slow. The exception is the catalogue by Pope (2002), published by the PSSA with assistance from Australia Post, an updated version of *Western Australia - the Postal Stationery to 1914* by Pope and Thomas (1982). Although not linked to the PSSA, *Victoria Postal Stationery, 1869-1917* by Carl Stieg was published in 2001. This comprehensive scholarly study combines a priced listing within the overall text. This study does not appear to have had the widespread use it deserves, perhaps because of its complexity.

The new handbook attempts to provide a detailed account of each class of postal stationery and a separate self-standing priced catalogue listing. The catalogue listings for each class include revised information on such topics as date of issue and some aspects of philately that are not included in Higgins and Gage or Ascher, an example is a listing of postal stationery items with 'specimen' overprints. The pricing attempts to combine information of printing numbers discussed in detail in the handbooks together with the experience of the authors on the availability of the postal stationery items.

The hope is that users will find both the handbooks sections and priced catalogue listing of use to further the study of their postal stationery collections.

### **THE HANDBOOK**

The aim is to publish for each of the classes of New South Wales postal stationery a comprehensive account in the handbook. This is based on a review of the literature and for many of the classes relies heavily on the research of the late John Bell much of which was published in Sydney Views. John appears to have been the first to have used the Government Printer's monthly printing records available in the NSW Archives for stamps and postal stationery which are complete for the period from the late 1870s to January 1896. This invaluable data enables precise figures to be given for the production of many of the of postal stationery items. The records also assist in unravelling the story of the production of specimen postal stationery which is totally absent from Higgins and

Gage and Ascher. The printing data also provides a check on the dates of issue which on occasion indicate likely errors in those previously published.

The Government Printer's records are essentially an auditing check on the monetary value of the stamp impressions added to the postal stationery items and do not always provide details of exactly which stamp was used or the actual style of specimen overprint employed. The handbooks all contain sections that discuss the production and likely use of the various forms of specimen overprint, a topic that is poorly described for Australian States postal stationery. This aspect is discussed in Smith (2016) in a general account of Australian States specimen overprints. The handbook accounts also give details of postage rates and their changes over time, a topic that is not included in the earlier catalogue listings but which are clearly of significance for postal stationery collectors.

### **THE CATALOGUE LISTINGS**

The catalogue listings for each class of stationery are presented in chronological order and each item is given a reference number. The catalogue numbers are used to cross reference items to the relevant handbook accounts. Initially there was discussion on retaining or cross referencing these numbers to the widely used Higgins and Gage numbers but this has proved to be an impossible task although for some classes of stationery notes are added to the provide a guide to convert the new catalogue numbers to those of Higgins and Gage.

The question of colour, both for the stamp impressions or the material on which they are printed, is complex. Earlier catalogues often recognise a range of shades but the approach taken by the current authors follow that of Bell in that many of the shades in earlier listings are thought to be due to ageing or minor variations during the printing process, i.e. not relevant to catalogue listings. Stieg (2001) for Victoria used a micrometer to measure the thickness of cards but in our listings are limited to distinguishing those that are clearly thicker or thinner than normal.

A recurring problem, especially for items printed on envelopes, is to distinguish those issued by the post office from those printed to private order (PTPO). This distinction is not always clear in the printing records, this problem was also recognised by Ascher and Higgins and Gage. Our approach is to list all items that are clearly post office issues available to the general public or marked for use by government departments. Comment and guidance are given on printed to private order (PTPO) items. This is thought to be a useful approach as in recent years there is a growing interest among collectors in such material. Many of the PTPO items, especially those with coloured illustrations, have attracted high prices in auctions. To provide full listings of PTPO postal stationery for New South Wales is a daunting task that others may wish to undertake. It is worthy of note that Stieg (2001) does undertake this task for Victoria PTPO material.

It was decided, except for a few exceptional cases, not to list or price proof material although where known such items are described in the accompanying handbooks.

Pricing is always a vexed question and the values for mint and used material given are for good clean copies preferably with used examples bearing a decipherable dated postmark. In preparing the catalogue listings it became apparent that it is surprisingly difficult to find good used copies for many classes of postal stationery for dates prior to about the mid-1870s. The printing data for

many of these are presented in the handbook account but for many of these only a handful are known used. An extreme example is that in the early years of issue a million of so newspaper wrappers were produced annually but good used copies appear to be almost unknown. As general rule mint copies, often in good condition, of these earlier issues are much easier to acquire likely a result of early collecting interest which appears to have been dominantly for mint copies. The interest for mint postal stationery by German collectors seems to have been particularly keen. The message is that the printing data given in the handbook sections are not necessarily a good guide to rarity of existing copies.

It is our intention that for all the classes of New South Wales postal stationery that specimen overprints are listed, a feature lacking in early catalogues. The listing of these has been enhanced as the archival records give numbers for the printings of 'specimens' although they do not specify the type of specimen handstamps. The printing data do however enable the relative rarity of some of the specimens to be distinguished.

Major differences in the dies of the impressed stamps are described and illustrated but minor variations in the stamps, the OS overprints and in the printed text are not. There is scope for further study of such varieties.

The intention is to initially publish the various sections of the New South Wales Postal Stationery Handbook on the Society's web site. The first two sections are concerned with Wrappers and Registered Envelopes, brief introductions to these are given below. This form of publication permits the use of abundant colour illustrations. Perhaps more importantly it offers the opportunity to easily update future changes and additions to the material presented, for example the revision of prices. It is the hope of the author and the editor of the Postal Stationery Collector that those using

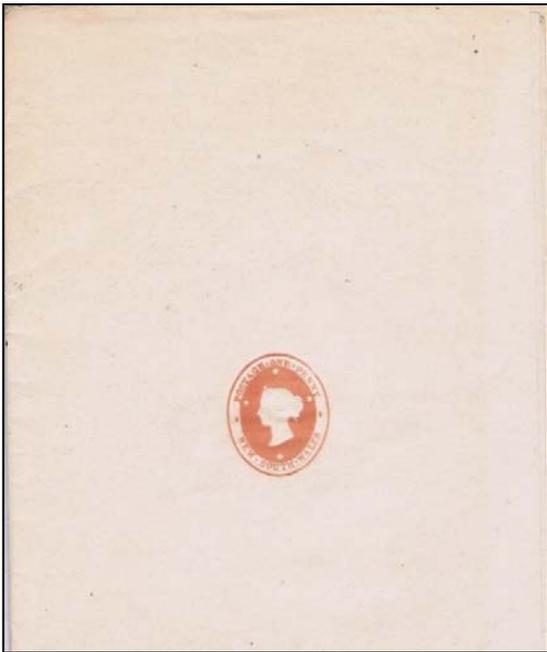
the handbook will respond by sending in updates and modifications. It is intended that additional sections

describing the other classes of New South Wales postal stationery will be added to Society's web site in the next year or two, several are already in draft form.

It is our hope that the handbook and catalogue listing now on the PSSA web site will be a useful aid to collectors of New South Wales postal stationery and help to raise the philatelic interest in these items.

## NEW SOUTH WALES NEWSPAPER WRAPPERS – AN INTRODUCTION

Newspaper wrappers are one of the most neglected classes of postal stationery but those for New South Wales are of historic importance and the watermarks provide a fascinating field of study. The wrappers were first issued in 1864 and New South Wales is thought to be only the second postal authority to provide such a service, the USA was the first. The 1d embossed stamps (see figure below: *Embossed Queen's Head Die 2*) were initially produced in 1855 for an unissued series of postal stationery envelopes. The paper used was supplied by the London-based firm of De La Rue and early examples are known on both wove and laid paper. From an early date the paper supplied by De La Rue was in books of 500 sheets with each sheet designed to produce eight wrappers (4 x 2). The binding edge has a continuous scroll watermark so that top four wrappers are watermarked and the lower four unwatermarked. The stamp was initially positioned in the centre of the sheet. This was because the original means of cancellation was planned to be by the sender writing across the stamp in order to save time for the Post Office staff. This never eventuated but the stamps remained in a central position until the early 1870s.



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Later the positioning showed greater variation before moving to the right and corner of the wrapper. Uncut sheets of the early wrappers are not uncommon and it is possible that the sheets may have been sold uncut for the first few years of use.

De La Rue continued to supply the paper until 1903 and throughout that period the scroll watermark on the top binding edge remained in use. About 1869 a 'One Penny' watermark was added so that it appeared on each of the eight sheets. De La Rue continued to supply the 'One Penny' watermark paper until 1903, the same 1d watermark was also for the ½d wrappers introduced in 1891. The watermarks can be confusing as little care was taken with how the sheets were fed into the printing press and many examples are known with the watermark reverse and/or inverted. In about 1870 it appears that there was a delay in the shipment of watermarked paper from De La Rue and locally produced paper was employed with what must be most delightful watermark ever used in Australia. It shows a kangaroo and emu facing each other under the letters APCo, for Australian Paper Company. None of these APCo watermark wrappers are known mint or used although 1504 were overprinted 'specimen'

In the nineteenth century newspapers were the dominant form for distributing news and prior to the introduction of the 1d wrappers postage was free within the colony. In 1855 80% of the total weight of all postage comprised newspapers, many sent from Sydney to subscribers throughout the colony, with the Post Office paying the freight! With the introduction of the wrappers, on average over a million wrappers were printed annually, newspapers could also be sent without the 1d wrappers but used with postage stamps but examples of these have not been seen. The costs of distributing newspapers was a fierce political issue. The Newspaper Postage Abolition Act which

came into force on 1 January 1873 withdrew all charges for newspapers posted within the Colony within seven days of publication. The printing of wrappers dropped dramatically with only 64,000 printed in the period 1874-1888. Slowly newspaper charges returned and with Federation standard rates were used throughout the new Commonwealth. The ½d wrappers were not produced for use with newspapers but were applied to various of forms of commercial mail.

The postage rates are described in detail in the handbook and provide an opportunity to try and illustrate the ups and downs of charges over the years. This is a challenge as the datestamps on wrappers are usually difficult to decipher. Also, the survival rate of wrappers is extremely small, indeed for the 1d embossed wrappers it is difficult to find a single used example with a decipherable date stamp.

In contrast to some forms of postal stationery official wrappers overprinted 'O.S.' are extremely scarce either mint or used. There are examples of PTPO wrappers but again in comparison to postal stationery envelopes copies mint or used are limited.

## NEW SOUTH WALES REGISTERED ENVELOPES – AN INTRODUCTION

In 1880 the NSW General Post Office decided to issue specially manufactured fabric or linen-lined envelopes for registered letters, with the fee impressed on the flap. Thereafter, 34 readily identifiable NSW registered envelopes were issued until the Commonwealth of Australia issued its own on 17 February 1913.



A detailed description of the registered envelopes of New South Wales is now available in the Society's website. This describes the registration fees applicable, envelope shapes and sizes used, envelope seams, registration labels, printing numbers (Appendices B and C) and issue history including specimens. This information provides a basis for a

listing of the 34 types with detailed information to enable identification. Information on Registered and Stamp Box sizes is added in Appendices A1 and A2 as a further aid to precise identification. Estimated values for each type are provided at Appendix D.

Information from John Bell's research has enabled a re-ordering of the Higgins and Gage listing to recognise new information on issue dates. This re-ordering is shown in tabular form (Table 1).

A catalogue listing of all general and specimen issues with estimated values is also provided (Appendix D) as a precursor to a more detailed catalogue to be separately produced at a later date. As an encouragement to read the Handbook and build a collection of NSW registered envelopes the following themes emerge from the NSW registered envelope story:

- a. From 1880 until the last issue in 1911 the registration fee only changed once: from 4d to 3d as a result of UPU membership.
- b. The official contractor for most NSW registered envelope stock supplies was McCorquodale except for the last issue of 1911 when the contract was won by De La Rue.
- c. Local emergency supplies from unknown sources were produced on three occasions as a result of the unavailability of official contractor supplies.
- d. All NSW official contractor supplies and two of the three local emergency supplies were of three of the eight standard registered envelope sizes relied upon by Britain and its colonies i.e. Size F, G or H2.
- e. Only one example of an official issue from the general series is known to date.

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