

**POSTAL STATIONERY SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES
PART 1: ENVELOPES AND POSTCARDS**

Ian McMahon

These snippets provide information from files in the Australian Archives in Canberra that relate to postal stationery, specifically from correspondence files from the Treasury. They contain correspondence between Treasury and the Commonwealth Stamp Printer (J.B.Cooke) and the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printer (T.S.Harrison) and between Treasury and the Postmaster-General's Department of which Justinian Oxenham was the Secretary for most of the period covered. Part 1 relates to envelopes and postcards.

ENVELOPES

Embossing machine at the Hobart GPO

In 1913 the Postmaster-General's Department decided to dispose of the embossing machine and dies at the GPO Hobart used for embossing envelopes. On 3 November 1913 the Department wrote to the Treasury regarding their disposal. Cooke replied on 13 November 1913 suggesting that the dies be destroyed but that the embossing machine be examined to see if it could be of use to the Stamp Printing Branch. Oxenham replied on 29 April 1914 that the Government Printer in Tasmania had examined the machine and classed it as a fairly old type of cameo colour embossing machine with a value of ten pounds. The letter also enclosed the 1/2d, 1d and 2d envelope dies used in Hobart for destruction by the Stamp Printer. The machine was transferred to the Commonwealth Stamp Printer.

Minimum order for printed to private order stationery

In 1914 Cooke requested advice from the Postmaster-General's Department on whether the minimum number of private envelopes acceptable for impressing with stamps at the one time should be changed. The Department undertook a survey of the orders received in each state. Hobart reported that envelopes were embossed for a few firms only, Perth had in 12 years only received 5 or 6 applications for over 500 envelopes, Adelaide suggested that the minimum order be lowered from 500 to 100 and the charge set at 3d per 100 envelopes while Brisbane and Melbourne suggested that it be left at 500. Cooke recommended on 21 September 1914 that the minimum number of envelopes accepted for embossing be set at 500 at a charge of 1/-.

Cost of embossed envelopes

On 20 January 1922 J.Mason (Acting Secretary of the Postmaster-General's Department) queried the Stamp Printer about the high cost to the Department of stamped envelopes which were sold to the public at three for 6 1/2d. These envelopes cost the Department 12/6 per thousand. Harrison replied that the high cost of the envelopes was due to large stocks of expensive wartime paper and reduced the charge to the Postmaster-General's Department to 11/6 per thousand. Oxenham noted in his reply of 2 June 1922 that if the charge to the public for embossing was 2/3 per thousand envelopes then the cost of the envelopes was 9/3 per thousand. However he observed that similar envelopes could be purchased for 6/- per thousand.

Cost of embossing stamps on registered envelopes for the States

On 29 June 1910, Oxenham asked about the costs of stamping 4,250 registered envelopes similar to the sample provided which had been supplied by the Government Printer in Melbourne at £2/15/0. Cooke responded on 18 July 1910 that the cost of

embossing the envelopes was 30/-. He also quoted that in future the cost of registered envelopes would be 17/- per thousand for envelopes 4 inches by 2.5 inches, 20/- for 5 inches by 3 inches, 22/- for 5.75 inches by 3.5 inches, 32/- for 8.75 inches by 4 inches, and 33/- for 9 inches by 4 inches. These charges included the cost of the envelope, printing and the embossing of the stamp.

POSTCARDS

New design for postcards

On 20 July 1918 Harrison wrote, through the Secretary of the Treasury, to the Postmaster-General's Department regarding a new design for postcards. He stated that the present block was in a very worn state and that it was necessary to prepare new electros and plates. He proposed that a new design be adopted and enclosed a sample of the proposed design which he said was more effective and modern than the present design (presumably H&G 8) from blocks made in England. The sample was of the 1d George V sideface with a heading similar to South Australian postcards and with the heading 'An additional 1/2d stamp must be added if this card is addressed to any place outside Australia to which the rate for postcards is 1 1/2d'. He stated that the coat of arms on the sample would be replaced by the authorised coat of arms. He also commented on the difficulties he had in procuring postcard paper.

Oxenham replied on 24 July 1918 approving the postcard submitted provided that a vertical line was added on the address face to separate the address from the correspondence. He asked that Harrison forward the specimens of postcards in the new design (presumably H&G 9) on board manufactured by the Australian Paper Mills Co. He commented that the quality was not as good as desired but that the paper was good enough for the purpose and was of Australian manufacture.

Postcard paper

On 24 January 1910 Cooke wrote to Treasury stating that he had 47 1/2 reams of unused Victoria postcard paper in stock, an extract from the letter is reproduced below. This paper was 30 years old but of excellent quality. It was a different shade to the existing paper but of superior quality and 'as philatelists do not collect postcards' he recommended that he be authorised to use the paper and forwarded samples together with those currently in use. Permission to use the paper was granted.

The paper is of excellent quality, costing, I should say, quite 35/- per ream, but is not precisely the same shade of color as the cards in issue at the present time in any of the States, but seeing that the card is of superior quality to that in issue, and that the philatelists do not collect post cards, I recommend that I be authorised to use the cards when printing again

POSTAL STATIONERY SNIPPETS FROM THE ARCHIVES: PART 2

Ian McMahon

Impressing Stamps on Private Lettercards: On 22 January 1917 the Commonwealth Stamp Printer, J Cooke, wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury stating that there was no provision for charging for impressing stamps on private lettercards and suggesting that a charge of 2/- per thousand be made as was the case for impressing private envelopes. The Secretary of the Postmaster-General's (PMG's) Department, Justinian Oxenham, replied on 8 February 1917 agreeing to the suggestion.

Lettercard Paper: On 15 September 1911 Cooke wrote to the Treasury saying that since the introduction of the Postal Act on 1 May 1911 he had issued 1 412 086 lettercards and had experienced difficulty in securing sufficient quantities of suitable lettercard paper. He asked to be allowed to use some of the surplus postcard boards to produce lettercards. He commented that lettercards seemed to be taking the place of postcards and that consequently the demand for postcards had diminished and would practically cease altogether when lettercards became more widely known. Approval from Treasury was granted on 22 September 1911.

Lettercards with views: In 1911, Cooke printed more than 100 000 lettercards each week with a George V full face stamp and views printed on the reverse. They were printed twelve to a sheet with views of 2 beauty spots from each State to a sheet. By 27 November 1911 he had printed 3 million lettercards from the plate presently in use. This plate had become worn and he proposed contacting the Commonwealth photographer to obtain twelve new views for a new plate.

Views of Portland: On 23 November 1911 Cooke was asked by the Town Clerk of Portland whether pictures of Portland supplied by the Council could be used on the backs of lettercards. As he was in the process of contacting the Commonwealth photographer to obtain twelve new views, Cooke replied that he would be pleased to receive suitable views but reserved the right to decide whether or not they were suitable from the point of view of public importance for reproduction on lettercards. He said that there had been similar requests from other states and that the photos should be silver plates, 9 inches x 4 inches. Oxenham, Secretary of the PMG's Department, replied on 26 June 1912 enclosing six photos from the Mayor of Portland and asked Cooke to advise the Mayor which photos were regarded as suitable. Cooke responded on 1 July 1912 saying that he could use the photograph showing Portland from the south and asking for a good silver print, 8 inches by 6 inches in size. G Allen, Secretary to the Treasury wrote to the PMG's Department on 12 July 1912 returning the other photographs, and asking for the new silver print. Oxenham wrote on 9 September 1912 providing the required photograph. Cooke on 14 September 1912 noted that the photograph referred to had been withdrawn but gave no reason.

The Supply of Lettercard paper: Towards the end of the First World War the stock of lettercard paper held by the Commonwealth Stamp Printer had declined to a precarious level. Before the war the Printer had a contract with the British firm Richard Herring and Co of Bunhill Row, London but this contract expired in 1916 and

had not been renewed due to the war. On 19 November 1917 Cooke wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury to say that he had enough lettercard paper to last only 36 weeks and requested permission to order more stocks. At that time his weekly consumption of lettercard paper was 12 reams and he had 248 reams of lettercard paper in stock and 184 reams of printed lettercards. He repeated his request on 23 November 1918 when he had only 6 months supply of boards left suggesting that Richard Herring and Co be approached to supply a quote for supplying 1000 reams of lettercard paper. Richard Herring and Co provided a quote on 6 February 1918 for 200 reams at 135/- per ream as the Company was uncertain of being able to obtain materials due to war time shortages. On 13 February 1918 James Spicer and Sons of Upper Thames St London quoted 140/- per ream for 250 reams of boards, 30 1/2" x 38" in size with each ream weighing 145 lbs and comprising 480 sheets at a total cost of 1750 pounds. Both quotes were accepted on the condition that the shipments had to pass inspection by W G Wightman of HMSO before shipment and the High Commissioner was advised to proceed with the orders on 21 February 1918. 92 reams of lettercard paper from Richard Herring & Co were shipped on the *Parrattah* on 11 October 1918 while 109 1/2 reams of paper from Spicer arrived in Australia on the *Anstralrange*. Further offers to supply lettercard paper from Spicer (500 reams of card for 146/6 per ream) and Richard Herring (1000 reams at 162/-) were declined. After these orders had been placed, Harrison, the Commonwealth Note Printer, decided to seek future supplies of lettercard paper from Australian manufacturers. Despite trying a number of manufacturers including Cumberland Paper Board Mills and CW Board Mills Ltd, Australian Paper Mills (APM) was the only company in a position to provide suitable paper. On 16 May 1918 John McGregor from APM provided a quote for 500 reams of lettercard paper (25 inches x 24 inches, 70 lbs per ream of 500 sheets) at 46/8 per ream. This quote was accepted by Treasury on 19 June 1918 and in addition Harrison obtained permission to tender for an additional 1000 reams. Although the Australian manufactured board was felt to be of inferior quality to English manufactured board, it was cheaper and it was felt important to buy the Australian made product. The board supplied by APM was half the size of the English board but taking this into account was significantly cheaper. An additional 17 reams of paper was obtained from APM at a cost of 47 pounds 4/4 in November 1918.

Cost of producing lettercards: The high cost of the paper purchased from England led Treasury to enquire if there needed to be an increase in the price of lettercards charged to the PMG's Department. On 25 February 1918 Cooke wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury concerning the need for increased charges to the PMG's Department for lettercards. The cost of the boards had risen from 14/11 per ream in January 1912, to 15/3 in May 1916, 37/10 in July 1916 and now to 135/- and 140/- per ream although the sheets being obtained from the United Kingdom were now twice the size. The net profit of the branch in 1917 was 1 982 pounds notwithstanding the increased costs in materials. This had been achieved by labour savings and Cooke felt that there was no need for an increase in the costs of lettercards. The present charge of 12/1 per 1000 cards had been arrived at when the cost of boards had been 37/10 per single size ream. This cost included 6/3 3/4d per 1000 cards for the paper and printing costs of 5/9 1/4d per thousand cards. However by 8 June 1918 Treasury had decided that an increase in the charge was necessary and wrote to the Postmaster-General's Department suggesting a charge of 16/8 per thousand lettercards as the average new cost was 11/ 0 1/4d per 1000 cards for the paper and 5/7 3/4d per thousand cards for

printing. The PMG's Department replied on 15 June 1918 agreeing to the increase in charge but stated that the new charge should only come into effect after the existing board had been used up in three months time. On 19 June 1918 Oxenham inquired as to the date from which the new price would apply. Harrison replied on 26 June 1918 that the present stock of lettercard paper would run out at the end of August and that the new price should take effect from 1 September 1918. He promised to submit samples of views printed on the new supply of paper when it arrived. Oxenham replied on 4 July 1918 that as the price of lettercards to the public had increased from 1 1/2d each to 2d from 1 July 1918, the demand for lettercards was expected to decrease and that therefore the current supply of lettercard paper might last longer than 1 September. He asked that the Treasury reconsider the date of effect of the proposed increased charge for lettercards. On 18 September 1918 Harrison advised that as he was now using the new supply of boards the new price of 16/8 per thousand cards would apply.

Quality of Lettercard Paper: The poorer quality Australian made paper was regarded by Harrison as being unsuitable for printing from the half-tone blocks used to print the views on the reverse of the lettercards and he suggested in a letter of 7 June 1918 to the Postmaster-General's Department that the views be discontinued:

regarding the quality of the locally manufactured board I have to say that the sample submitted has not an ideal printing surface for giving good results from a half tone block and I recommend that the printings of views on the backs of lettercards be discontinued. Even from the imported paper the pictures to my mind are far from nice.

On 17 December 1918 Harrison provided proofs of the views on the new English boards and Oxenham agreed that the views should be retained but that the question should be raised again when the supply of English boards ran out. On 11 November 1919 Harrison wrote that due to decreased demand for lettercards he still had enough English paper to print 3 100 000 lettercards and that he would submit proofs of the views on Australian paper when the supplies of English manufactured boards were exhausted. On 11 March 1921 Cooke wrote that the supply of English lettercard board was now exhausted and he submitted proofs of the views on locally manufactured paper. He commented that the quality of the result was not as good but suggested that views should be retained. The PMG's Department agreed.

Advertisements on the reverse of lettercards: A proposal for the printing of advertisements on the back of lettercards is mentioned by Harrison in a letter to the PMG's Department dated 17 December 1918. He commented that the Australian made paper although of poor quality would be 'good enough' for the printing of advertisements provided they were not of a very ornate nature. Oxenham replied that the proposal had not been approved.

Demand for Lettercards: On 11 November 1919 Harrison wrote that the demand for lettercards was falling off given the increasing cost of the cards to the public. In the quarter ending June 1918 1 670 400 cards had been sold at 1d each, in the quarter ending September 1918 694 060 had been sold at 1 1/2d each while in the period 1 November 1918 to 31 January 1919 325 440 cards had been sold at 2d each.

Postal Notes: Postal notes were first supplied to Papua by the Commonwealth Stamp Printer, J Cooke, on 10 September 1917. 1000 postal notes were supplied in each denomination stapled in books of ten. The following denominations were issued: 6d, 1/-, 1/6, 2/-, 2/6, 3/-, 4/-, 4/6, 5/-, 10/-, 10/6, 15/- and 20/-. The notes were similar in design to the Australian notes except that 'Papua' replaced the name of the state of issue and that the text was modified where appropriate, for example, 'Postmaster-General' was replaced by 'Chief Postmaster'. Postal notes were provided for Papua after discussions between the Treasurer of Papua, R W Kendrick, and the Treasury. Cooke forwarded proofs to the Postmaster-General's Department on 18 July 1917. These were approved on 2 August 1917 by Oxenham, subject to 'Papua' being printed at the top of the notes. The extension of the postal note service to Papua resulted in the text of the Australian notes being amended to indicate that they were now payable in Papua. Postal Notes were not printed for New Guinea until 1932 after ten years of discussions between the Territory's Administration and the PMG's Department. While the Administration wanted to follow the example of Papua and issue postal notes to facilitate the exchange of money between the Territory and Australia, Oxenham considered that the small potential sales did not justify the extension of the postal note service to the Territory. On 28 September 1931, D S Wanliss, Acting Administrator of New Guinea, wrote to Oxenham requesting the printing of postal notes similar to the Australian notes but with the name of the Territory replacing the name of the state on the front of the note. He suggested that overprinting be used if the production of a new plate was too expensive. He ordered 1 000 notes in denominations of 1/-, 1/6 and 2/-; 1 500 notes in denominations of 2/6, 3/-, 3/6, 4/-, and 4/6; 2 000 notes in denominations of 5/-, 5/6, 6/-, and 7/6; and 2 500 notes in denominations of 10/-, 11/-, 15/- and 20/-. Finally on 24 June 1932 29 500 notes were forwarded to the Territory. Despite persistent efforts commencing in 1921, Nauru was unable to persuade the PMG's Department to extend the postal note service to the island up until the beginning of the Second World War.

In September 1912 the PMG's Department suggested that provision be made for adding postage stamps to Australian postal notes to increase the value of the notes by amounts up to 5d. It was decided not to increase the size of notes as this would increase their cost of manufacture but to provide an area on the notes where adhesives could be added. Cooke provided a number of proofs with the area for the stamps defined by a black rectangle and with various styles of text in different positions and a second series using various types of stars in the area defined for the addition of stamps. None of these proved satisfactory as Oxenham wrote to Cooke on 24 June 1913 saying that he had wanted the space for stamps defined by stars and the text 'postage stamps to the value of five pence may be affixed herein'. A revised proof was approved by the PMG's Department on 23 September 1913. The regulation allowing the use of stamps to increase the value of postage notes was subject to abuse and was to be repealed from 1 January 1917. Cooke was asked to provide future supplies of the notes without provision for the addition of adhesives. He successfully argued for a delay in the changes to the regulations to 1 April 1918 to enable old stocks of notes to be used up.

Sources: Australian Archives files *Series A571* Nos: 14/9559, 14/18098, 18/31618, 17/4168, 11/13940, 12/13767, 21/10640, 22/24264