# NSW EMBOSSED STATIONERY 1838-1850 

The aim of this exhibit is to show a varied selection of NSW embossed stationery for the Sydney Local Post, showing a variety of usages and postal markings. Later reprints of the embossed stationery are also shown.

## Background

In 1837, Rowland Hill, in his pamphlet on Post Office reform, proposed that pre-paid postage be used to replace the cumbersome system of postmen collecting postage costs from the receiver. Pre-payment was to be denoted by an adhesive or impressed stamp.

On 1 November 1838, on the initiative of Postmaster-General James Raymond, New South Wales became the first country to adopt these suggestions, with the provision of lettersheets with an albino embossing, which were valid for posting in the Sydney Local area, at that time a town of 29,000 people.

Members of the public could also submit sheets, pamphlets and envelopes for embossing to order. The lettersheets were not initially popular. In 18447820 were sold, rising to 15225 in 1848.

Usage ceased on 1 May 1852, after the introduction of adhesive stamps. The lettersheets were largely forgotten until their "rediscovery by E.L.Pemberton and Sir Daniel Cooper in 1869 (see Sheet 14).


NSW Government Gazette notice dated 1 November, 1838, announcing the lettersheets

## The Exhibit

The latest census of used Sydney Local Post embossed items (Peace and Browne, 2019) lists 54 used items including six envelopes. Sixteen of these (including three of the earliest four entires ) are shown in this exhibit.

Mint examples from the 1840 's are rather scarcer than used. Two are shown, along with an essay for a lettersheet bearing an oval seal. The different types of postal markings are shown on sheets 4 and 5 , and examples of all types are shown within the exhibit. The first lettersheet shown to the philatelic world in 1869 is shown.

Reprints from 1870 and 1898 are shown and their distinguishing features discussed.

## Main references

Peace, Brian "The First Postage Stamp: The New South Wales Embossed Lettersheet" London Philatelist 128 pp 154 1702019
Peace, Brian and Browne, Stephen "Census of Used Lettersheets and Envelopes Bearing the Embossed Stamp"
Sydney Views 144 August 2019
Bassett-Hull, A.F. "The Postage Stamps, Envelopes.....of New South Wales" pp 344-352 London 1913
Houison, Andrew "History of the Post Office....in New South Wales" NSW Govt 1890
White, J.S. The Postal History of NSW 1788-1901 Philas 1988
Contemporary newspapers and NSW Government Gazettes

## EMBOSSED WITH CIRCULAR SEAL, 1838

Lettersheets were embossed with a colourless circular seal 29 mm in diameter, with the wording "General Post Office Sydney New South Wales" around the rim, anachronistically showing the arms of William IV rather than the arms of Victoria. Lettersheets were made available at $1 / 3$ per dozen (later reduced to $1 /-$ per dozen or $8 /-$ per 100 ), and remained in use until the 1 st of May, 1851. Additionally, the public could submit their own lettersheets, and envelopes for embossing at a charge of $1 / 8$ per 25 impressions. Most used examples appear to be "embossed to order"

Initial printings (as shown by the example below) were made on grey-blue laid paper with watermark. Later post office embossings are known on wove unwatermarked paper. Since the public submitted a wide variety of materials for embossing, there is no particular size or paper type associated with the embossed items.


Embossed with single impression of circular seal on grey-blue laid batonne paper, with an off-white interior. Large watermark featuring a crown over a medallion containing a lion, surrounded by parallel lines 26 mm apart. Overall size $330 \mathrm{~mm} \times 210 \mathrm{~mm}$. Inscribed in pencil on the reverse "Guaranteed the only true original kind. Received from Sir Daniel Cooper (signed) Edward Pemberton." In his book "The Stamp Collectors Handbook" (1878), Pemberton remarked "of those on grey-blue paper, not half a dozen are known."

## EMBOSSED WITH OVAL SEAL, 1838 (?)

In 1961, two examples of lettersheets embossed with an oval seal were discovered. The oval seal contains the same design elements as the round seal, save for the omission of the words "New South Wales". No used examples are known. Robson Lowe suggested that they might have been used as newspaper wrappers. Alternatively, they may have been essays, rejected in favour of the circular seal design. Similarities of colouring, markings and the width of the paper for this example and that on the previous page suggests that they were produced at the same time.


Circular Seal


Oval Seal


Embossed with single impression of oval seal on blue-grey laid baton paper with an off-white interior. Watermark parallel lines 26 mm apart. Overall size $83 \mathrm{~mm} \times 210 \mathrm{~mm}$.

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER LETTERSHEET 1840

All postally used lettersheets and envelopes had a Free marking applied to indicate that the receiver had nothing to pay. Free markings were also applied to official letters etc. The types used on lettersheets are shown below, along with dates of use.

| Type 1 | Type 2 | Type 3 | Type 4 | FREE <br> Type 5 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Oval, low crown | Circular, tall crown No line under date | Circular, tall crown Line under date | Circular, low crown | Rectangular, no date |
| 22/1/39-1/10/42 | 6/1/43-1/5/48 | 6/3/44-11/11/45 | 25/9/48-27/10/49 | 1833-1849 |



Early usage - Four page pamphlet embossed through all sheets. Size $320 \times 198 \mathrm{~mm}$ on unwatermarked wove paper. Type 1 Free marking. Used from the Commercial bank to W. R. Scott Esq on 20 October, 1840.

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER LETTERSHEET 1842

From 1842, most used embossed stationery also received a time stamp, indicating the time of postage. For example, a 1 o'clock time stamp indicated that the item had been posted too late for the 1 o'clock delivery, but should be delivered in the 6 o'clock delivery. The four different time stamps used on embossed stationery are shown below.

| Type 1 | Type 2 | Type 3 | $\begin{array}{llll} \hline & 6 & O \\ 0 & C L & O & K \end{array}$ <br> Type 4 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 6/6/39-8/11/43 | 20/8/40-1/12/43 | 12/1/40-3/12/49 | 31/1/44-14/11/54 |



Early usage - Four page pamphlet embossed through all sheets. Size $320 \times 198 \mathrm{~mm}$ on unwatermarked wove paper. Type 1 Free marking. Type 2 time stamp. Used to Lyall Scott \&6 Co. on 23 June, 1842.

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER LETTERSHEETS 1842

A further example of early usage is shown by the cover below.


Early usage - Single sheet with single embossing. Size $253 \times 203 \mathrm{~mm}$. Type 1 Free marking. Type 1 time stamp. Used to Thomas Horton on 1 Otober 1842

Unused lettersheets from the 1840's are considerably scarcer than used examples. This example can be distinguished from the later reprints because the embossing appears only once on the sheet, whereas reprints always show multiple impressions.


Unused lettersheet - Single sheet of unwatermarked wove paper with a single embossing. Size $265 \times 210 \mathrm{~mm}$.

## AUSTRALIAN ASSURANCE LETTERSHEETS

Over twenty of the recorded lettersheets came from the Australian Assurance Office. These all had the address of the company printed on the inside of the lettersheet, presumably to facilitate the return of insurance forms etc. All were printed on thin. off-white wove paper without watermark, of size $270-280 \times 220-225 \mathrm{~mm}$


## Australian Assurance

Type 3 Free marking Type 4 time stamp

Used to Dr. Bennett on 4 March, 1845

## Australian Assurance

Type 3 Free marking Type 3 time stamp

Used to Alfred Stephen Esq on 3 March, 1845


## AUSTRALIAN ASSURANCE LETTERSHEET, TWICE USED 1846

The firm's address on the reverse of the lettersheets effectively made them "reply paid lettersheets". If they were sent through the post, the sender would pay nothing, but the recipient would be charged 2 d on receipt. Three lettersheets are recorded that have been re-used in this manner. The other returned covers were presumably hand delivered and did not pass through the post.

Reverse of lettersheet, with " 2 " marking indicating $2 d$ to be paid by the recipient.
(75\% actual size)



Double usage - Sheet $240 \times 190 \mathrm{~mm}$ unfolded. On thin unwatermarked wove paper. Type 2
Free marking, Type 4 time stamp. Used from Australian Assurance to G. McCrae Esq., on 26 February 1846, then re-posted to Australian Assurance

## AUSTRALIAN ASSURANCE LETTERSHEET, 1845

A further example of a genuine Australian Assurance cover used on 11 November, 1845. Unusually, this has been embellished on the reverse with forged date and time stamps along with a boxed "post paid" cancel. Despite the crudity of the forgeries, and their incorrect nature, a prominent Melbourne auction house in 1976 described this item as "a rare example of stationery being used twice."

Reverse of lettersheet, with forged postal markings. Note that the time stamp is in red rather than black.
(75\% actual size)


Genuine usage - Sheet $240 \times 190 \mathrm{~mm}$ unfolded. On thin unwatermarked wove paper. Type 3 Free marking, Type 3 time stamp. Used from Australian Assurance to A. B. Sparks Esq., on 11 November, 1845

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER ENVELOPES 1845-1847

There are six recorded examples of used examples of the embossing on envelopes. In all cases the embossing was applied to made envelopes and appears twice, on the front and on the flap. Two examples are shown below.


Envelope - Size $134 \times 75 \mathrm{~mm}$ on unwatermarked wove paper. Type 2 Free marking, Type 4 time marking. Used from Governor Fitzroy to James Cooper on 29 July, 1845


Envelope - Size $133 \times 80 \mathrm{~mm}$ on unwatermarked wove paper. Type 2 Free marking, Type 4 time marking. Used to King Barton Esq. on 15 January, 1847

## EMBOSSED LETTERSHEETS 1846, 1848

The time stamp markings have sometimes been described as being used to obliterate the embossing, although this evidently does not apply to either of these examples.

This example is possibly a post office issue, as the paper is similar to the examples shown on Sheets 2 and 3. Oddly, although it is addressed to Charles Lowe in July 1846, there is a letter from Charles Lowe dated May 1846 on the reverse of the sheet.


Mid-term usage - Single sheet embossed once, of grey-blue laid paper with watermark parallel lines 26 mm apart. Size $227 \times 187 \mathrm{~mm}$. Type 2 Free marking. Type 3 time stamp. Used on 30 July 1846 to Charles Lowe Esq.

Unusually for examples post-1842 lettersheets, the item below has no time stamp.


Late usage - Single sheet embossed once, on unwatermarked wove paper. Size 248 x 203 mm . Type 2 Free stamp. No time stamp.

## UNUSUAL USAGES 1843, 1848

The two lettersheets shown below show unusual usages. The upper example appears to have been posted outside of the Sydney Local area (the only recorded example used in this way). The lower example bears no postal markings and was presumably hand delivered.


Incorrect usage -Sheet size $327 \times 198 \mathrm{~mm}$ unfolded on watermarked laid batonne paper.
Type 5 Free marking. Used to Sir Thomas Mitchel (sic), backstamped 23 January 1843
The Type 5 "Free" marking on this lettersheet is of a type only issued to country post offices, and does not appear on any of the other lettersheets. This suggests the lettersheet may have been posted outside of the Sydney local area, contrary to regulations, and was accepted for free postage.


## Hand Delivered

$257 \times 197 \mathrm{~mm}$
Unwatermarked wove paper

No postal markings
Used in December 1848 (from message on reverse)

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER LETTERSHEET, 1849



Late usage - Four page pamphlet $332 \times 208 \mathrm{~mm}$ on unwatermarked blue wove paper. Type 4 Free marking. Type 4 time stamp. Used from St James College to H. G. Douglass on 18 March 1849. The embossing was applied to the folded document and thus appears eight times.

## OFFICIAL USAGE, 1849

Four lettersheets have been recorded used for official purposes, and endorsed "OHMS". At least three of these came from the Colonial Secretary's Office, which purchased several batches of lettersheets in the 1840's.


Official and Late usage - Sheet $328 \times 208 \mathrm{~mm}$ of unwatermarked wove paper. Type 4 Free marking.
Type 4 time stamp. Used from the Colonial Secretary's Office to Thomas Collins on 5 April, 1848

## EMBOSSED TO ORDER LETTERSHEET, 1849

As well as an example of late usage, the item below is of particular philatelic sighificance.
As mentioned previously, the lettersheets were largely forgotten after NSW introduced adhesive stamps in 1851. In 1869, at the behest of E, L. Pemberton, Sir Daniel Cooper, a former member of the NSW parliament, obtained this used example of a lettersheet, which was presented to a meeting of The Philatelic Society, London (now RPSL) on 29 May, 1869. This was the first occasion philatelists were made aware of the lettersheet's existence. Sir Daniel's presentation was published in The Stamp Collector's Magazine of 1 August, 1869.
The staup here alhuled to whe io frank
Jetters delizered twice a day within the
limits of the city of Sydney. It was an
arcoboared, eabonsed stamp; the design
being the rogsl arms, eueireled by the words,
GEvarat rogi-drycte, new zeurn wales; and
under the arias, syuxes. Tibe impression
wes zatade on wrappers or envelopas of half
sbeets of foolseap papes.
1 had forgotten the existemce of this
sthmp, but on reccipt of Mir. Pemberton's
inquiry, I wrote to ray friends at Sydney,
and fortonately procured a used specimen.
This cover, sfter having passed tbrough the
post-office, had been used to write an order
for goods upon, fited as a voucher, and
thas preserved ; and by this mems is
anthenificated by the bandwritings written
on the inside thereof. The date of the post-
mark on this envelope is October 5, 1849.


Late usage - Reduced sheet on unwatermarked wove paper Type 4 Free marking Type 3 time stamp. Used to Mr. W. Walker, on 5 October, 1849. Message dated 23 October 1849 written on reverse by the addressee.

## 1870 REPRINT

In 1870, undoubtedly in response to the "rediscovery' of the lettersheets in 1869, the die was found and a batch of reprints were produced. The reprints were made on unwatermarked wove off-white paper, prone to foxing. Unfolded size $285-290 \times 225-230 \mathrm{~mm}$. The sheets were folded before embossing, such that the embossing appears more than once on all reprints.

## 1870 Reprint

Unwatermarked wove paper
$225 \times 285 \mathrm{~mm}$
Showing two impressions (with four more partial embossings on the side and bottom flaps)

BPA Certificate 74989

## 1870 Reprint

"Envelope" fabricated from a reprinted lettersheet.

Note the embossing on the flap as well as the "envelope" front

## 1898 REPRINT

It was thought that the die had been destroyed, but it was re-discovered in 1898. It had been used for sealing mail bags in the intervening years. The die was cleaned up and another batch of reprints was produced, on yellowish wove paper without watermark. Most known examples are on paper of size $283 \times 217 \mathrm{~mm}$, folded before embossing so that the embossing appears more than once. The die was destroyed shortly after these last reprints were made.


1870 Die


1898 Die

The reprints of 1870 and 1898 show clear differences. The Die suffered considerable wear through sealing mail bags, particularly in the upper left quadrant, as shown above. The frame lines in this area have almost vanished in the 1898 reprints.

1898 Reprint Embossed twice on sheet. Size $282 \times 217 \mathrm{~mm}$.
Unwatermarked yellowish wove paper

