

THE 1897 1/- CHARITY STAMP OF NEW SOUTH WALES - A STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

In the Gazette of 1897 there appeared the following notice:

(11,859)

"Postal and Electric Telegraph Department,
"General Post Office,
"Sydney,
"26th June, 1897.

"ISSUE OF SPECIAL POSTAGE STAMPS,

"In accordance with the provision of the 16th section of the Postage Act, 31 Vic. No.4, His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to approve of the issue of two Postage Stamps of the respective value of One Penny and Two Pence Halfpenny, of special designs, and bearing, in addition to the inscriptions denoting the postal value, the values of One Shilling, and Two Shillings and Sixpence respectively.

"It is intended to sell these stamps at the higher rates, and to devote the amount realised in excess of the denoted postal values to the Fund of establishing an Hospital for Consumption in commemoration of Her Majesty's Record Reign.

"The period of sale of these special stamps will be limited to two months, and the number issued for sale will not exceed 40,000 of the 1s and 10,000 of the 2s 6d value."

The entry in the Gazette of 1897 goes on to describe the two Charity stamps and was signed by "Joseph Cook".

A.F. Bassett-Hull in his monumental work on the "The Postage Stamps, Envelopes, Wrappers, Post Cards, and Telegraph Stamps of New South Wales" published London 1913, records the following detail on page 422:

The "Hospital" Stamps

Two values 1s and 2s 6d, but of which the postage franking power was only 1d, and 2½d, respectively.

Chromolithographed in several colours on ordinary paper watermarked Crown "N.S.W.", Type II

(June 22, 1897) 1s blue-green, pale grey-green, brown and fawn
(June 26, 1897) 2s 6d rose, carmine, blue, olive grey, and gold
Perf. 12

The stamps were designed, drawn, and lithographed, and perforated at the Government Printing Office. The whole number mentioned of each value was sold".

The Stanley Gibbons "British Commonwealth Stamp Catalogue" 1974 Edition lists the two stamps as follows;

"Designed - Charles Taylor
Typographed - Government Printing Office, Sydney
Watermarked - Crown over N.S.W. Type 40
Design Size - 38 x 46mm
No.287c - 1s (green and brown) Perf. 12 x 11 - Issued 22.6.1897
No.287d - 2s 6d (gold, carmine, blue) perf 11 - Issued 28.6.1897"

The Scott catalogue lists both stamps as having been perforated 11 and printed on paper watermarked large Crown over N.S.W. Elsewhere the stamps have been listed as being perforated 12, 11½; and so there appears to be some conflict of opinion on the question of how the stamps were printed, perforated, and on what type of watermarked paper they were printed.

Recently, I had the good fortune to be able to study a quantity of the 1/- value, including two full sheets, a substantial part of a full sheet (5 complete rows), numerous blocks of 8, 6, 4 and many pairs and singles. The succeeding, quite detailed, study of the 1/- value will help, I feel sure, to establish the philatelic history of this issue.

THE 1/- STUDY

A quite cursory examination of the material available shows the 1/- to have been lithographed - not typographed - in a dark grey green, very pale grey-green, brown and fawn, the frame being printed in the first two colours, and the central vignette in the two latter colours. The registration of colours is surprisingly good for the period in which the stamps were printed.

The sheet of 30 stamps comprising six rows of five was laid down on ordinary ungummed paper watermarked Crown over N.S.W. As the surrounding unprinted margins show, the sheets of printed stamps were gummed before perforation starting from the bottom row of the sheet, where the margin is not fully gummed. A clear white gum was used and there was some spillage onto the printing surface in the case of the left margin.

As far as perforation is concerned, the 1/- stamps were line perforated 12 x 11½. In the material examined there is no evidence whatever of a compound perforation. FIG.1 shows a block of the 1/- "Hospital" Stamps.

THE WATERMARK LAYOUT:

The white paper used for the printing was the same as that used for the 1d Centennial issue of 1888-99. Both the right and left margins of the 1/- value have residues of the NEW SOUTH WALES POSTAGE watermark. The right margin carries the lower part of this watermark, whereas the left margin carries the upper part of it. This means that the Crown over N.S.W. watermark units are sideways on the printed sheet with the Crown pointing to the right. Two or more watermark units would therefore appear on each stamp.

The watermark paper is also provided with frame-lines to delineate originally the panes of the 1d Centennial stamp, and other values of that issue. In the case of this 1/- Charity stamp, because the watermark is sideways, these frame-lines pass horizontally across the sheet. The left-most wmk. frame-line runs across the top of the sheet; the right-most wmk. frame-line coincides with the bottom frames of the lower-most row of stamps; the uppermost wmk. frame coincides with the right frames of the stamps; and the lower wmk. frame usually cuts vertically across the first vertical row of stamps.

The two internal gutter watermark frame-lines pass across the sheet of 1/- stamps as follows. The left line lies within the bottom part of the 3rd horizontal row of stamps; and the right line lies within the top part of the 4th horizontal row of stamps.

Strangely, the watermark size across the extremities of the frame-lines varies from 244-250 x 244-250mm. This is a wide deviation and cannot be due to paper shrinkage, because all stamps carry the same size 47 x 38.5mm.

The wmk. registration cross "+" exists in the right margin, centrally placed in relation to the gutter wmk. frame-lines.

THE SHEET LAYOUT

A detailed dimensional check on the sheet of 30 stamps (6 rows x 5) is given below:

Overall size of guillotined sheet - 266 x 267mm

Overall size of stamp design - 243 x 244mm

Design size - 47 x 38.5mm

Size across perforations - 49 x 41mm

Margins between horizontal rows of stamps - all 2.5mm, except 3rd to 4th rows, which is 2.25mm

Margins between vertical rows of stamps - all 2.00mm, except between 1st and 2nd rows, which is 2.25mm

FIG.2 illustrates the relationship of the sheet of 30 1/- "Hospital" stamps with the sideways watermark. The 1/- "Hospital" stamps appear only as design-sized frames.

LITHOGRAPHIC VARIETIES

As already indicated, the 1/- Charity stamp is a lithographic printing, and shows certain periodically recurring varieties, indicating just how the lithographic 'plate' was built up. As is now well known, for lithographic stamp printing, the same variety may occur on two or more separate stamp units on the same sheet. In the foregoing list of varieties, the recurring ones are marked with an asterisk (*), and occur in each case on the 15th stamp counting on. Thus if the flaw is on No.1, it will occur again on No.16, and so on. These are referred to here as "Master flaws".

Each stamp will also carry individual non-repetitive lithographic flaws, which are a characteristic of the individual stamp units themselves. Some of these are quite marked.

In the following list, the stamps have been recorded numerically No.1 to 30 inclusive:

CONCLUSIONS

The recurring "Master Flaws" occur 15 stamp units apart, indicating that each group of 15 units (3 rows x 5 units) has a common origin. These recurring "Master Flaws" are shown with an asterisk (*).

A further interesting feature lies in the fact that the 1st and 2nd rows show perfect alignment one with the other, but the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th rows are all slightly skewed in relation to rows 1 and 2, and the upper left corners all tend to project to the left beyond the row above, whereas the upper right corners in each case lie to the left of the row above. The variations are small but distinct, and do indicate that the 3rd to 6th rows inclusive must have been lithographically transferred from the original, one row at the time. All the evidence certainly indicates that the transfers come from a 15 unit original. There is no evidence in this study just how the initial 15 units were lithographically laid down.

One thing is certain, however, that the 15 unit original was developed from original artwork - separate artwork for each of the four colours involved in the lithographic printing. Judging by the accuracy of the repetitive design, and knowing the fairly advanced photographic technique of the period, it would be safe to assume that the original 15 units were made as a photographic negative, from which the further 15 units could have been prepared.

Bearing in mind that the first vertical margin is wider in each case (2.25mm) than the others (2.00mm), it is also possible that a row of 5 units was built up first as photographic negative, and all the other rows were developed from it. If this were so, one would have thought that a flaw should exist somewhere, which occurs on every 5th stamp counting forward from the unit on which it appeared initially. The evidence is however that flaws occur on every 15th unit counting forward, which would lend credence to the suggestion that a 15 unit original formed the basic foundation for development of the so-called printing plate.

There is no concrete evidence as to what type of printing plate was used. Sensitized zinc was in vogue at the time (1897), and is quite possible this constituted the plate. On the other hand, the transfers could have been made to stone (limestone), because the N.S.W. Government Printer of the day had just such equipment for printing maps. We know this, because the "stones" were sold only within the last decade to an artist.

Because the printed sheets of 30 stamps have all been trimmed below the size used for the 1d Centennial value, there is no visible evidence as to how registration was effected for the two separate colour plates used for the frame, and for the two separate colour plates used for printing the brown vignette. The practice of the day was to use a marginal hole or holes, in much the same way as that for the perforation guide. Perhaps this was the method used.

One last point needs some explanation. It was customary to print the 1d Centennial 240-on, that is in 2 post office sheets of 120-on, each comprising 2 panes of 60. None of the 1/- Charity issue here examined indicates the existence of more than a single 30-on plate (corresponding to the 120-on plate), so for the present I must accept this as the basic printing plate.

Another interesting point concerns the complete absence of printer's markings in the margins, as for the typographed Centennial issue. It would be understandable for such a small lithographic printing to avoid making up marginal artwork for this purpose.

Summarizing, the 1/- Charity issue was printed lithographically using four separate 30-on plates - 2 for the frames and 2 for the vignette. The printed sheets were perforated 12 x 11½, and then gummed. The 30-on plate was built up in two 15 units (3 rows x 5).

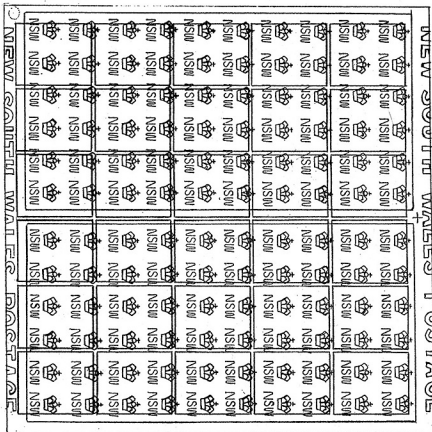


FIG.2: RELATIONSHIP OF SIDEWAYS

**WATERMARK TO STAMP DESIGN ON SHEET
OF 30 STAMPS.**

Sheet size - 266x267mm

Size of sheet of 30 stamps - 243x244mm

Stamp design size - 47x38.5mm

Size perforated stamp - 49x41mm