

AUSTRALIAN PUNCTURED OFFICIALS.

The punctured Officials of Australia are a class unto themselves, for although "Luxemburg" issued in 1899 stamps punctured with the word "Officiel" diagonally on them, Australia is the only country which has adopted the practice of using punctured initials for the purpose of restricting the use of certain stamps to Federal or State business.

It is scarcely necessary to say that there is much room for study in these stamps, although they may not be considered worthy of a place in the leading catalogues.

"Cerebus" has dealt with the punctured Officials of New South Wales in such an able manner in these pages (see July and August, 1908) that we do not intend referring to them any more than is necessary to make certain matters clear in regard to the other States.

We have had considerable trouble in acquiring the data necessary to arrive at conclusions. Hitherto only a few Australian collectors have devoted any attention to these stamps, and most of them have limited their operations to either New South Wales or South Australia, which, as will be seen, offer the largest fields for research.

Our first step was to apply to the Government Printers and Deputy Postmasters-General of the various States, some of whom intimated that they could not supply the required information. We then wrote to Mr. R. T. Scott, Secretary to the Postal Department, who replied as follows :—

Commonwealth of Australia, Postmaster-General's Department,
Melbourne, 4th December, 1908.

Gentlemen,—With reference to your communication of the 25th ult. I am respecting your desire to obtain from this department in the several States certain information regarding Australian stamps which have been punctured for official use since the establishment of the Commonwealth. I have the honor to inform you that there is no objection to the information desired being supplied to you, provided it can be done without expense to the department, and the Deputy Postmasters-General of the several States are being advised accordingly.—I have the honor to be, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

Signed) R. T. Scott, Secretary.

Fred. Hagen, Ltd., Postage Stamp Dealers, 182 Pitt Street, Sydney.

Before going further we desire to thank Mr. Scott for his courteous reply. Our letter to that gentleman was a lengthy one. In it we intimated that the information asked for would not be detrimental to the interests of the department, and that we considered the publication of it would be beneficial not only to philatelists, but the department as well, in so far that it might prevent fraud on the latter.

Accompanying the letter to the Secretary of the Postal Department was a list of questions, of which the following is a copy :—

1. When were punctured officials authorised ?
2. How many types have been used in the various States ?
3. How many stamps in a row are punctured at one operation ? If different methods have been employed, kindly explain each briefly.
4. How do you account for inverted or reversed letters or stamps having what we call double punctures, i.e., the same letters appearing twice on the one stamp ?
5. Can you favour us with dates when changes were made ?
6. Are those stamps which are punctured for Federal use prepared on a different principle to those for State use ? We understand that in some States those with the letters O.S. are for Federal and State use, while in others, stamps used for State purposes have different letters. Can you explain the reason of this want of uniformity ?
7. Are stamps punctured on direct requisition from the various departments, and is any record kept of those which have been submitted to the process of puncturation ?

8. Please say if all the denominations in the various States have been punctured O.S., if not, can you say those which have been?

9. We would like the same information re those which have been punctured with other letters for State use.

10. We understand that the letters O.S. are punctured on all stamps used in Victoria, Tasmania, and West Australia before they are sent out of the Melbourne Printing Office. Is this so?

11. We also understand that the stamps punctured "T" for use in Tasmania and W.A. for use in West Australia are punctured by the Government Printers of those States. Is this so?

12. Two types of O.S. have been used on the Queensland stamps, the first one being larger than the one now generally seen. We are anxious to know when the former was introduced, and when it was superseded by the latter.

13. Is the question of having stamps punctured for State official use a matter for the State Governments, or is it subject to your control?

14. How do you distinguish between the stamps used for Federal purposes and State purposes in Victoria and Queensland, seeing that both States only use the letters O.S.?

15. Is the practice of having the stamps for State use in West Australia punctured W.A. still in vogue, or have they been superseded by O.S. stamps for use same as in Victoria and Queensland?

Replies have come to hand from all the States, and it is our intention to deal with them in alphabetical order (leaving out New South Wales), but before doing so wish to say that the earliest date of authorisation is October, 1902. Victoria furnishes us with that date, while we learn from the article by "Cerebus," already referred to, that punctured Officials were issued by New South Wales in November, 1902. Further, the regulation or the practice as to the use of punctured Officials varies in the several States. New South Wales has O.S. for Federal use, and O.S. N.S.W. for State use. Queensland and Victoria only use O.S. for both Federal and State use. South Australia and Tasmania use O.S. for Federal, and their respective initials for State use; and, for a while West Australia used stamps punctured W.A. for State use, but these have been superseded, and since October, 1904, the West Australian Colonial Treasurer has supplied all State departments with stamps punctured O.S., those for Federal use being supplied from the Post Office direct.

Queensland.

The State postal authorities have no information as to the date when punctured Officials were authorised, and we are unable to say when they were first issued. It would appear, however, that for a very short time a large type of O.S. was used. The O. has twelve holes, and the S. thirteen; the O. measures $11\frac{1}{2}$ millimetres vertically, and 8 horizontally. The reason we say the large type of O.S. was in use a very short time is that we have seen very few, and none of our friends who have studied these stamps have seen many. Unfortunately here again we are blocked, for the Queensland authorities say: "The dates when changes were made cannot be furnished, as there is no recorded information regarding O.S. stamps." Evidently the matter was considered of little or no importance.

Subsequently a change was made to the present type of O.S., the O. having 12 holes and the S. 12, the O. measuring 10 mm. x $6\frac{1}{2}$ mm. This type is the only one now current. Of the values 3d to 2s., five sheets are punctured at one operation, in rows of twelve. Of the 2s. 6d. to £1 large stamps, one sheet is folded and one puncture O.S. is made at one operation. We are told that inverted or reversed letters, especially in the large stamps, are accounted for by the fact that the sheets are

"folded before perforation," two stamps being punctured at one operation. Normal, inverted, and reversed letters on the large stamps should therefore be equally plentiful.

Officials are punctured in the same manner for Federal and State use. The work is done by the Government Printer on direct requisition from the Post Office. (In New South Wales the plain stamps are obtained by the various Federal and State departments, and sent by them to the Government Printing Office to be punctured.)

We are informed officially that all denominations except the 2½d. have been punctured, but no mention is made of the two types. Mr. Barnard, however, writes that he has the 2½d. small O.S. in his collection.

It was Mr. Barnard who first drew our attention to the large type of O.S., and we have since discovered in our stock the 1d., 2d., and 3d. Mr. Barnard has in addition the 4d. and 6d., as well as the 2d. with O.S. reversed.

The list of obsolete stamps appended hereto is compiled from stamps either taken out of our own stock, mentioned in Mr. Horwood's article in the "Australian Philatelist," October, 1907, or in Mr. Barnard's collection. Current stamps on Crown and A. paper are based on the particulars supplied by the Postal officials.

Reference List.

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| <p>O.S., 13 Holes. Type I.
 O. measures 11½ mm. by 8 mm.
 Wmk. Q. and Cr., Perf. 13.
 1d. vermilion
 2d. blue
 3d. pale brown
 4d. orange-yellow
 6d. pale green.</p> <p>O.S. Reversed.
 2d. blue</p> <p>O.S., 12 Holes. Type II.
 O. measures 10 mm. by 6½ mm.
 Wmk. Q. and Cr., Perf. 13.
 1d. vermilion
 2d. blue
 2d. „ new die.
 2½d. brown-purple on blue
 3d. pale brown
 4d. orange-yellow
 5d. purple-brown
 6d. pale green
 1/ pale mauve
 1/ mauve
 1/ deep mauve
 2/ greenish blue</p> <p>Wmk. Q. and Cr., Perf. 12.
 ½d. green, value at foot</p> <p>Wmk. V. and Cr., Perf. 12½.
 9d. large "Queensland"
 9d. small</p> <p>Wmk. Q. and Cr. (twice sideways).</p> | <p>2/6 vermilion, thin paper, perf. 13
 5/ rose, thick paper, perf. 12
 5/ „ lithographed, perf 12
 10/ brown, thin paper, perf 12
 10/ „ thick „ „</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Varieties.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">O.S. Reversed.
 Wmk. Q. and Cr.
 2/6 thin paper, perf 13
 5/ thick „ „ 12
 3d. pale brown, O.S. twice</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wmk. Cr. and A., Perf. 12½-13.
 ½d. green
 1d. vermilion
 2d. blue—new die
 3d. pale brown
 4d. yellow
 6d. pale green
 2/ turquoise-blue
 2/6 vermilion
 5/ rose
 10/ black-brown
 £1 grey-green</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wmk. Cr. and A.
 (Victorian type).
 9d. brown and blue, perf. 12½
 No varieties on Cr. and A. are included, as we have not yet seen any, but the large stamps may be looked for with reversed or inverted punctures, or both on the same stamp.</p> |
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(To be continued.)