

A Note on Victoria Perfins Postmarked in Tasmania

John Mathews (Kambah, Australia)

On page 152 (Perfins Bulletin October 2003), Bob Schwerdt wrote of Victoria State stamps with perfins having Tasmanian postmarks and asked questions about how this came about.

Firstly, "how much interstate use of perfined stamps was permitted or accidentally accomplished?" Governments and bureaucracies are never swift in their actions, it seems, for the open design competition for an Australian stamp following Federation of the States on January 1, 1901, did not result in a stamp issue for "Australia" until 1913! Thus State stamps were the only valid postage stamps for those 12 years.

As stocks began to dwindle, and States did not want to print more so close to them becoming redundant, the Federal Government allowed stamps of any State to be used in any other State. This resulted in the interstate use of stamps for such purposes as the provision of "reply-paid" envelopes, and the sending of small cash amounts as stamps. The former of these two uses would have been done quite a lot between suppliers of goods in Melbourne and their customers in Tasmania when eliciting orders, or used by travelling salesmen of the company forwarding orders back to head office. This is supported by the observation that most of the companies involved did not have an office in Tasmania. Of Bob's examples, the Australian Widows' Fund Life Assurance Society did have an office in Tasmania, and Tasmanian stamps are known with their perfin. Under very close

inspection, the "A.W.F." patterns (AWF.2) used by the Victorian and Tasmanian offices are marginally different.

Examples of the use as a means of sending "cash" is seen with perfin "TS/F". This perfin belonged to Thomas Shaw Fitchett, who was publisher of a journal in Melbourne. But this perfin is known on stamps of every State! Subscribers obviously found it convenient to send unused stamps (of their State) as payment, and Thomas must have duly perforated every stamp he received.

In addition, it is likely that some mail was hand-delivered to captains of ships berthed quite close to the business district of Melbourne, and that this mail was franked on arrival in Tasmania. The northern ports of Launceston, Devonport and Burnie appear often on such postmarks. There should not have been any difference in the postal rates in each State at that stage, so it would have been done purely as a convenience if a ship was just about to sail.

"Is there a checklist of such usage?" I do not know of one, although some members of the Perfin Club of New Zealand and Australia may keep their own records of such use. I started to note such usage, and these annotations may be seen in places in the catalog. However, as it did not have any significance in identifying the perfin user, and so many patterns had such examples, I discontinued recording them myself.