NSW Government Punctures on Australian Postcards – Buyer Alert
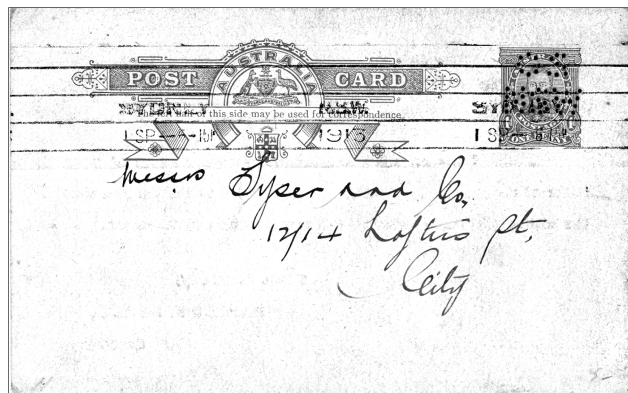
By John Sinfield, MAP

The following article is reprinted with permission of the author. It was originally intended to be published in the March 2005 *Bulletin,* but at the time he granted permission Mr. Sinfeld indicated that he had additional information to add to this article. Due to the importance of the warning in this article ('buyer beware'!) and the fact that six months has now passed, I will print this as received and should the newer information become available, will run it separately.

In May 2001 *PSC* (#25, pp24-25) [Ed: *Postal Stationery Collector*, publication of The Postal Stationery Society of Australia.] I originally submitted a summary of punctured OS/NSW postcards. However a recent article by Wayne Menuz in July-August 2004 UPSS magazine *'Postal Stationery'* (#337, pp115-117), entitled *'Australian Official Perfin Stationery'* has prompted me to make a further detailed examination of my reasonably substantial holdings of these punctured cards. My observations, and conclusions derived from Wayne's and my own combined studies have resulted in this paper.

Following the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901, the federal government assumed control over postal services of each of the six individual states. In New South Wales the practice commenced in 1902 to puncture stamps and later postal cards, intended for government use. This was a security

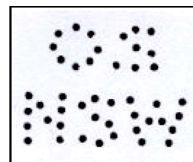PC3: 1 September 1913 correspondence acknowledgement advice by Sydney Harbour Trust

measure to deter staff pilferage. Tight accounting procedures were in place for stamp and postcard distribution to the various departments, and because punctures created a distinctly different appearance, it was assumed private purpose theft and/or usage would not occur (or at least be minimal!).

Prior to issue to the various State Government Departments, the NSW government arranged with the Government Printing Office to puncture stamp sheets and postcards with OS/NSW in two lines. This was carried out on a manually operated foot treadle machine which punctured Post Office stamp sheets one horizontal row at a time, with sheets moved forward by hand until all rows were punctured. Postcards (and some other forms of postal stationery) were individually inserted to ensure puncture holes would exactly coincide with the top right corner stamp impression.
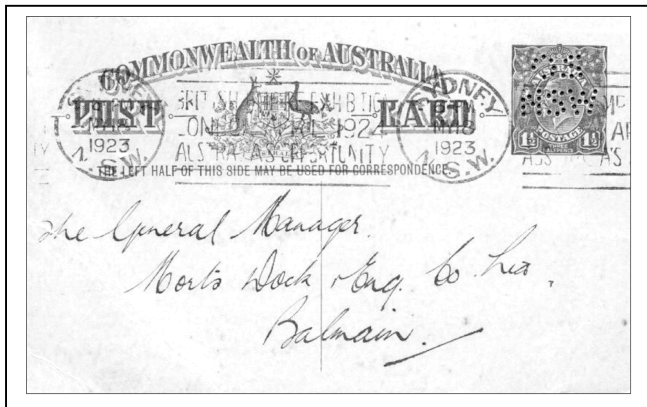
Postcard Pin Setting
(1909 to 1922)

Over the years several distinctive puncture variations occurred on stamps (which is beyond the scope of this paper – further reference can be made to pp30-31, *Stamp News*, August 1985). With postcards, only one puncture type is noted:

Lettering is 14mm high and 17mm wide. Individual letters approximate 6mm in height. Holes per letter are: O = 8, S = 8, N = 10, S = 8, W = 11. Total holes = 45. The base of the first S is distinctly flattened, appearing almost as a reversed "2".

In the majority of cases punctured postcards were pre-printed or pre-roneoed on reverse prior to forwarding to respective departments. Their message was usually a mere acknowledgement receipt for inward correspondence received, or for

advice of goods being forwarded. Very few unprinted/blank message cards exist. From about 1909 the NSW state 1d 'Jubilee' design (shield and crown) postcards were punctured OS/NSW, and the first Australian card noted is the 1911 KGV 'Fullface' design with July 1911 revised heading (PC3: numbers refer to *Seven Seas Australasian Stamp Catalogue, ed. 23*). This is a particularly rare puncture (only a couple of used copies have survived, these all being correspondence acknowledgement for Sydney Harbour Trust).

PC14: 1½d red-brown (footnote removed) used 18 May 1923, for Sydney Harbour Trust. The O pin is missing and N evidences state (b) with blind pin impression.

The reason for PC3's rarity is that although the Commonwealth introduced this card in 1911, New South Wales opted not to accept 1d Australian cards but preferred to continue producing their own state printed 'Jubilee' design cards. (This may have also been a rebellious aftermath of locating the Commonwealth Stamp Printer in Melbourne, despite the Sydney Government Printing Office being markedly better equipped to handle the job!) Although patriotically obligated to accept the June 1911 KGV coronation commemorative cards (a minimal order of just 49,462 such cards was forwarded to Sydney, but none were allocated to NSW government departments), it was not until the 1913 issue of the 1d 'Kangaroo & Map' design card that the federal government actually forced NSW to cease local Sydney printing of state postcards. The definitive 'Fullface' card was never sold in NSW post offices (nor Queensland, for that matter), and instances of OS/NSW punctured cards arise solely from 1913 residual federal distribution of
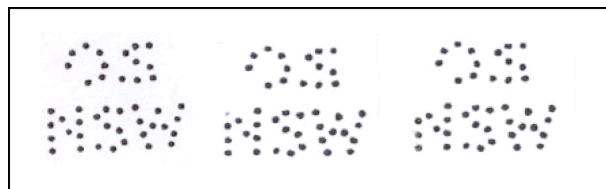
superseded 1911 'Fullface' stock in conjunction with the newly issued 'Kangaroo' design cards.

The practice of puncturing government postcards with undamaged holes continued until mid-1922. Only cards available over the Post Office counter were so treated. Printed to private order cards were never punctured. On rare occasions a commonwealth 'OS' die was utilized, but more usually a standard stamp electro without OS was used and the cards were merely preprinted with the heading OHMS or On His Majesty's Service. The Sydney Collector of Customs (a federal government instrumentality) and the NSW Registrar General's Department are two such examples. Set out in next column is my listing of OS/NSW punctured postcards during this period. This list may well not be exhaustive, since it is quite likely other cards of which I am unaware, may also have been punctured:

o **PC3** 1d red KGV fullface on white enamel stock: *'The left half of this side…'*
o **PC6** 1d red Kangaroo on white enamel stock: Die II (catalogue incorrectly states Die I).
o **PC6a** Ditto, but on cream to buff stock: Die I (catalogue states Die II – both dies exist, but only Die I has been noted with puncture).
o **PC7** 1d red KGV sideface on white enamel stock: Die I [Die II may also exist, but no report of its existence has so far been recorded].
o **PC8** Ditto, but on buff stock with two-line inscription.
o **PC12** THREE HALFPENCE revaluation of **PC10** 1d red KGV with dividing line on front. [The original PC10 probably does not exist, and I certainly have never seen a copy].
o **PC13** 1½d russet brown KGV with footnote.
o **PC14** 1½d red-brown KGV, footnote removed.

First Damaged State of Postcard Pin Setting (1923 to 1936)

The thickness of postcard board placed considerable strain on pins in the puncturing head, causing some individual pins to become blunt or alternatively to completely snap from the head. There is evidence of

both types of damage late in 1922 or early 1923. This correlates with Menuz's observations in his UPSS article.

Letter O: one lower left pin (8 o'clock) in O has now completely snapped. The lower right pin (at 5 o'clock) has been moved or pushed to top right and now appears closer to the extreme right pin (at 3 o'clock).

Letter N: Stages of progressive damage occurred with the top left pin of N which in conjunction with the missing O pin is found either (from left to right):

(a) normal.
(b) blunted, producing an indentation (blind impression) rather than a satisfactory hole;
(c) omitted: gradually the top N pin either blunted further, or totally broke away from the puncturing head. Top left hole is completely missing.

OS/NSW postcard punctures continued in this damaged state for the ensuing fourteen years, and it was not until the May 1936 issue of KGV 1½d red-brown card on flimsy lettercard stock (PC29a) that repairs to the postcard puncturing pin head were effected. Cards evidencing the initial damaged state of Pin Setting are:

o **PC14** 1½d red-brown KGV, footnote removed.
o **PC22** 1d violet KGV [PC15 1½d emerald may exist with OS/NSW puncture, but I have not come across a copy. It is very doubtful if the

o PC25: 1d green (Die 1- simplified heading without address dividing line) used 30 May 1927 provisionally revalued cards (PC18 to PC21) were punctured. PC22, 2d scarlet was certainly never punctured].
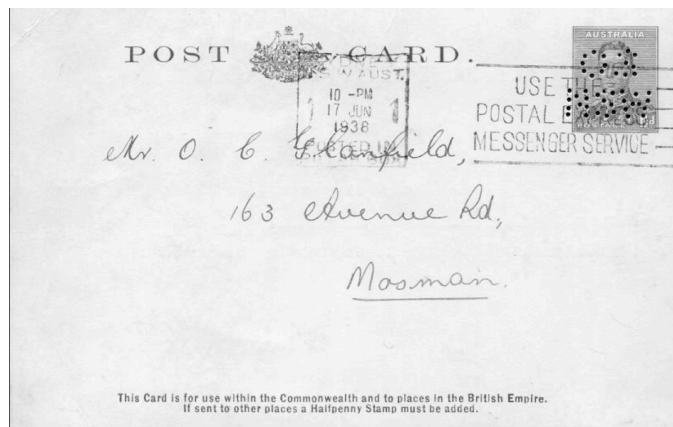
scarce PC16, or any of the ONE PENNY by State Government Printer. This shows missing pins in both letters O and N (state (c) above)

o **PC23** 1d green KGV on buff stock. Die I.
o **PC24** 1d green KGV on white stock. Die III.
o **PC25** Simplified heading 1d green KGV without central dividing line. Die I.
o **PC26** Ditto, but Die III.
o **PC29** 1½d red-brown KGV on ivory stock. Both 83mm & 88mm footnote types were punctured.

Repair of Damaged Postcard Pins
(1936 to 1941)

Late in KGV's reign (early 1936), the NSW Government Printer repaired all damage to the postcard puncturing pinhead. The broken O and N pins were replaced, although it seems the minor bent 5 o'clock pin in O went unnoticed, and still remains:

o **PC29a** 1½d red-brown KGV, but on temporary very flimsy lettercard stock (issued May 1936).
o **PC31** 1½d red-brown KGVI on ivory stock. [Concurrent PC30 1d green Queen mother card was printed matter rate only and was not supplied to government departments].
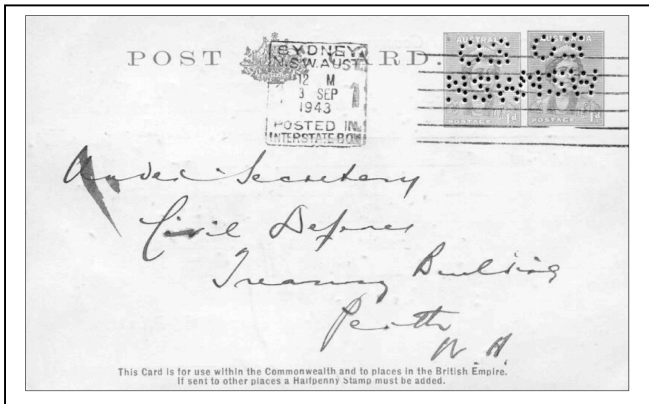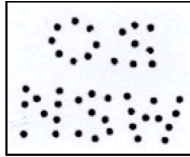

PC31: 17 June 1938 correspondence acknowledgement card for Maritime Services Board of NSW. On the final KGV postcards all missing pins were reinserted, but 5 o'clock O pin remains bent upward.

Second State of Damage to Postcard Pins
(1941 to 1946)

1936 pin repairs were quickly negated by a second form of pin damage. This again affected the left leg

of N in that the third (second bottom) pin now broke, resulting in a gap reappearing. Initial card to evidence the damage was the January 1942 provisional upgrade 2d card, being 1d + 1d green double impression of the Queen Elizabeth (Queen mother) postcard. This scarce card is interesting in that both stamp impressions were punctured, which was no doubt a labour intensive task to complete! One wonders what benefits were gained from the no doubt inordinate time consumed in its completion.

PC32: 1d+1d Queen Elizabeth double impression card, which following 1941 war tax, uprated PC30 from printed matter rate. Both stamp impressions were punctured. New (different) break in N pin.

Two different punctured cards bear this second form of damage:
o **PC32** 1d green + 1d green double impression Queen Mother.
o **PC33a** 2d violet KGVI on off-white stock (1946 reprint). [PC33 (1943 2d printing on ivory stock) may also have been punctured, however I have never seen such a copy].
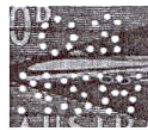
Further Repair to Postcard Pins, or merely a Perfin Fake?

It was my understanding that this 2d KGVI violet card (PC33a) was the final postcard to be punctured OS/NSW for government use. In a philatelic auction earlier this year I noted OS/NSW punctured copies of PC33a plus surprisingly, a punctured OS/NSW copy of PC38: 1957 QEII issue of 4d on 3d green Die II revalued card - both examples unused and both without prior pre-printing on reverse (i.e.

message sides were blank). Although I acquired this pristine mint example of the hitherto unknown OS/NSW PC38, I was wary of the use of the identical puncture on PC33a.

On both these cards, the letter N perforation is now whole, and it would appear the missing left leg pin is restored. The bent 5 o'clock pin in O is also straightened. Was the postcard puncturing head now fully restored, repaired or replaced? It would be expected that my genuine example of PC33a, which was postally used 5 February 1948 by NSW State Government Printer, should have identical puncture characteristics to all genuinely punctured PC33a examples. But this is not so!

Checking out further, I noted from other auction illustrations that punctured OS/NSW examples of both PC31 (KGVI 1½d red-brown) and the very scarce P32 (QE 1d+1d double impression) were also offered in pristine mint condition (and without reverse pre-printed message). Additionally, these both bore identical puncture hole placement in which the missing pin of N was restored and the bent O pin was corrected to its original 5 o'clock position. Neither of these repairs was ever carried out by the NSW Government Printing Office. **Punctures on all these four cards are undoubtedly faked!**

 In support of non-repair of the stationery pin-puncture head (the Printing Office only owned one), the illustration at left A9, the April 1959 10d aerogramme, used 17 May 1960 by Australian Museum, Sydney. The OS/NSW puncture is genuine, and clearly shows that, as late as 1959 the pin perforator still retained a broken left leg of N and bent 5 o'clock pin of O.

There was only ever one pin puncture head for stationery held at the NSW Government Printing Office. It is not possible for this to be missing the N pin during 1942 to 1946, have it repaired between 1946 and 1957, only to have the exact same pin disappear again by 1959! I can only conclude that, in each instance, all the above four unused examples of PC31, PC32, PC33a and PC38, have never been anywhere near the State Printing Office, and that their respective OS/NSW puncture has been faked.

But are these the only postal stationery faked punctures in the marketplace? Periodically an extremely minimal offering of punctured OS/NSW stationery is offered for sale. Over the past twelve months (since September 2003), one Australian auction house has offered an abnormally high number of punctured stationery items – indeed, over 30 items in 27 different lots. Not only have they offered OS/NSW postcards, but also supposedly 'rare' envelopes and aerogrammes. No doubt many of their items have genuine punctures, but in my opinion several are highly questionable.

Wayne Menuz comments on two punctured NSW Education Department envelopes he acquired last year, commenting they look *"strange"*, but they are the first he has seen. He raises the question *"why would there be need to spend the time and money to perfin an envelope that, because of the printing on it, is already restricted in use"?* Indeed, why? Subsequently similarly punctured envelopes have also turned up for Sydney Board of Water and a perfin "T" for the Hobart Savings Bank. These stamped to private order envelopes would have been dealt with directly between the individual state government instrumentality concerned and the Commonwealth Stamp Printer in Melbourne. The NSW items would never have entered into the NSW Government Printing Office (where OS/NSW punctures were created). What obvious conclusion can there be? The status of the puncture must surely be suspicious. In their September 2004 auction, the auction house's description is even carefully worded *"perfin rather doubtful…"*. To my mind, several rather nice pieces of desirable stationery have now been totally ruined!!!

It is extremely easy for any would-be forger to simply place a genuine punctured card (or a template made from a genuine card) over another stationery item, then carefully drill through each hole to produce an identical OS/NSW puncture pattern. A dentist's drill of appropriate diameter would be an ideal tool. No expert committee would be prepared to provide a certificate for such perfins. My concluding warning is there appears to be faked stationery punctures being recently offered, and it becomes a case of being alert to whether the puncture is genuine! Punctured Australian stationery is a very nice addition to any collection, but the intending purchaser should give some thought to whether the item has actually passed through the office of the State Government Printer. With postcards, preference should be given to used examples printed on reverse with specific government department names and/or messages

PC38: Mint and genuine 4d on 3d revalued QE2 postcard (issued 12 June 1957). However, for reasons explained, the OS/NSW puncture on this unused card is <u>faked.</u>