The Structure of the OS Type F Device

By Jerry Austen, Arthur Tilby, Brian Pope, Richard Breckon, Malcolm Brown and David Coath,

Introduction

Jerry Austen has been working diligently to build a database of the States Official Perfins of Australia. To build this he has been working with the State Study groups in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania as well as many noted specialists in this area such as PCNZA member Ken Moore, as well as Geoff Kellow and John Pearson, amongst others.

See his Article on the South Australian OS Type E device in SPPB #121 of April 2018.

Most recently Jerry has shifted his focus to the OS Type F and its use on the stamps of Western Australia and for this he has been working with Members of the WA Study Group including Brian Pope, Arthur Tilby and PCNZA Member Malcolm Brown.

The OS Type F Background

In "Australian Official Perfins" (AOP) Edition 1 of May 1987 by David Andersen, the OS Type F (Melbourne OS) is stated to be a 12 die device in a vertical array and to have been used on Victorian issues as well as those of other States as follows: (see AOP Page 9)

"This same puncturing head was used by the Victorian Government Printer on the issues of Papua, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia for use by the relevant authorities in these places. The puncturing head was retained to at least 1929 and was used on three commemorative issues 1927-29 punctured for official usage."

This issue was raised in an Article in SPPB # 64 of January 2004 (No author named) as it was considered unlikely that a single device could puncture all of these different stamp formats, in particular the Tasmanian Pictorials.

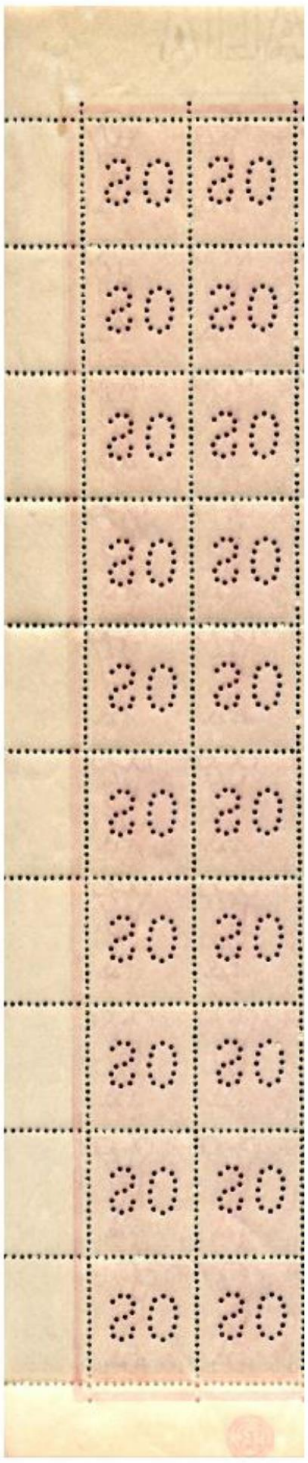
Ken Scudder (PCNZA Member and Queensland Specialist) responded to this question in SPPB # 66 of July 2004 with an excellent and insightful article based around details from "The Postage Stamps (etc) of Queensland" by A F Basset Hull, as well as his own research in preparation for his book "The Stamps of Queensland 1879 – 1912" which was published in 2013. Ken advanced our knowledge as follows:

1. The OS Type F (Melbourne OS) had 10 dies in a vertical array not 12
2. The OS Type F device used on the Queensland issues was a different layout being of 12 dies in a vertical array.
3. He showed how the 1/2d small format was punctured with 2 passes of the OS Type F (Melbourne OS), the method suggested in the SPPB # 64 article.
4. He offered a description of a method of puncturing the larger format Qld Chalon issues with the OS Type F Queensland device.
5. Ken suggested a way that the OS Type F (Melbourne OS) could have been used to puncture the Tasmanian Pictorials, but more on that in a future Bulletin
6. Most importantly for the matter of our study of the Western Australian issues he explained that the OS Type F (Melbourne OS) was suitable to puncture these as long as they were done sideways and this is consistent with what is reported.
7. But most interestingly he touched on an issue that would impact the ability of the OS Type F to be used effectively on some issues of Tasmania and Western Australia, specifically those printed from the De La Rue Plates, as these were in a different format and the stamps were smaller. Ken said that "a row of 10 being shorter by some 17mm." would not suit the separation of the OS's in the OS Type F (Melbourne OS). More on this later.

This was a major step forward and David Andersen incorporated this into his "Australian Official Perfins" Edition 2 of 2007. This catalogue remains the standard reference for all Australian Government perfins and is available from the Club at a Members Price of just $25, which is a bargain for the huge amount of great information that it contains.

For further reading, the matter of the strikes on the larger format Qld Chalon issues with the OS Type F Queensland device, was covered in an article in SPPB # 103 of October 2013 by Donald Adams, Dave Elsmore, David Coath, Dan Ryan and Jerry Austen (pages 7 -12), which also detailed the differences between the OS Type F Queensland and Melbourne dies.

The structure of the OS Type F device



The images on the left are taken from a complete sheet of the OS Type F as used on Victorian issues.

The device punctured in a column of 10 dies and I have left the top and bottom selvedge in place, so you can see that the device had only 10 dies.

Note that the distances between the vertical dies is very consistent.

Note also that the relationship to the horizontal dies is different. This is best illustrated in the reverse image, note that the right hand dies are slightly higher than the ones on the left. Further this is consistent up the 2 columns of dies showing that the 10 dies are all fixed into the punch head.

For the record, the separation on the remaining 16 rows of the sheet is consistent with these.

This was also the case with strikes of the OS Type F when applied to most WA issues, note the consistent spacing in the column of dies in the image below, but this is not always the case.

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* Image of WA 1d Red courtesy of Abacus Auctions

Finding an Asymmetrical OS Type F (Melbourne OS) used on WA Issues

Now as indicated by Ken Scudder in his 2004 article there were going to be problems with the puncturing of the De La Rue issues (see Point #7 on page 15) and he added that "The few examples I have, do show some high and low variation in the position of the OS."

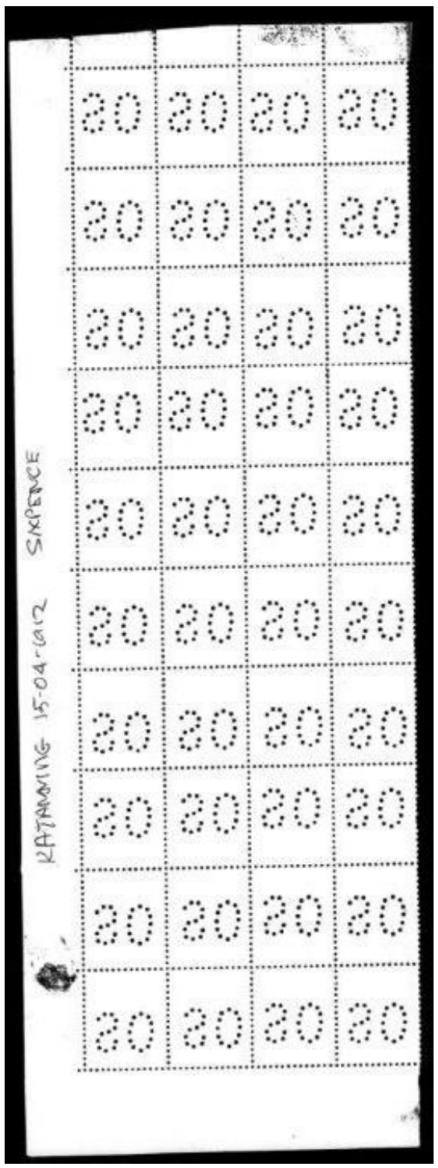
Looking at the stamps below from Jerry Austen's collection, you will note that the De La Rue printing is visibly shorter (actually narrower), but for the purposes of striking it with the vertical Type F device in position 2 it is better to consider it as an issue of height.

De La Rue Normal

Notably this is not the case with all of the De La Rue plates as Brusden White states that the 2d Yellow (1902-12) was "spaced wider on the printing plate to fit the (V over Crown) paper.

Arthur Tilby, a WA Expert, states that:

"The stamps printed in Melbourne from DLR plates had to be line perforated because the Melbourne combs would not fit. It wasn't until JB Cooke brought over the Nash and Southcott comb perforators from SA in 1909 that they had a comb that would fit the small size DLR. The only issue from WA to use this was the 1912 6d and 1/-. All the rest of the WA DLR were line perforated."



Arthur goes onto measure the variation of the De La Rue over the height of the OS Type F head and states:

"I have calculated out that across ten stamps, the DLR is 238mm compared to the Melbourne 257mm. (I will get the exact measurement, but this is very close). The ten unit OS device from the top of the first unit to the bottom of the tenth, I calculate out as 243mm. Which means it would overhang."

Arthur qualifies his measurement as "very close" and it is also almost the same as Ken Scudder's estimate of 17 mm difference.

Looking at the huge multiple on the left that Brian Pope secured as a scan of from the WA Museum collection, it is a 10 x 4, 6d OS used at Katanning on 15 April 1912. It was with a similar 10 x 2, 3d also used at Katanning on the same day and were presumably payment for a 25/- fee for some service that was payable at the Post Office.

The Image is not to scale, but that does not matter, as the story is in the separation of the vertical dies and this is something that Arthur, Brian, Jerry, Malcolm and I, discussed at length, but is best summarised by Arthur when he states:

"From the blocks of DLR the 3-4 and 7-8 gaps are much narrower than the rest. To get reasonable spacing for the DLR, it looks like they broke the bar in two places, removing a piece at each place."

Arthur is close here as he has rightly seen that the column of dies has been altered to suit the De La Rue size. As he says, if you count up the column of 10 Dies from the base you find that dies 1-3 have the standard spacing but it is closer between Dies 3 and 4. Then dies 3 - 7 have standard spacing but again they are closer between Dies 7 and 8. Then Dies 8 to 10 again have the standard spacing.

Arthur is correct, and the column of Dies has been changed, but let us look at the same multiple and see if it can tell us anything about the structure of the new Head of Dies.

To make it easier I have numbered the rows and the columns in red, and also, I have indicated the break points in the device at 3 – 4 and 7 – 8 that Arthur had identified.

Arthur has stated that "it looks like they broke the bar in two places, removing a piece at each place." This is the case and was confirmed in another large De La Rue multiples that Brian Pope secured images of from the WA Museum, Bromfield Collection.

But was the new rebuilt Head made up of 10 Dies as it appears to be?

Consider Column 3 and the sets of Dies 1 – 3, 4 – 7 and 8 – 10, which we will call Sections, 1, 2 and 3, and as they are as a Vertical strike and relate them to the other strikes of columns of dies.

In Section 1 the Dies in Column 3 are slightly higher that the Dies in Columns 1, 2 and 4.

In Section 2 the dies in Column 3 are about the same height, if anything the Column 3 Dies are slightly higher.

In Section 3 the Dies in Column 3 are set marginally lower on the stamp than the corresponding Dies in Columns 1, 2 and 4.

If the 10 Die Head had been reconstructed as a single vertical Head of Dies then the relationships of the 3 Sections up the Head would be consistent in each Column.

Conclusion

For this inconsistent arrangement of the vertical Dies to be possible, the strikes must have been made in 3 actions as follows:

Section 1 (bottom 3 dies) struck with a 3 Die Head,

Section 2 struck with a 4 Die Head,

Section 3 struck with another strike of the 3 Die Head.

Implications and Uncertainties

Now the use of these smaller and separate sets of OS Type F Dies has implications for other State issues perforated OS and not only De La Rue issues, such as those in Tasmania, but also for other Tasmanian issues, such as the larger format Pictorials. This deserves investigation and will form an article in a future Bulletin.

Richard Brecken, from the Australia Post Philatelic Archives, has provided some multiples of the Tasmanian De La Rue issues and these seem to confirm the use of a similar layout of dies, but he was unable to supply any large multiples of the Pictorials that would be able to allow us to confirm that these were also punctured with the smaller sets of OS Type F Dies.

We know that the Western Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian issues were all punctured OS Type F in Melbourne, (see AOP, WA page 34, Victoria page 30, and Tasmania page 27), and that the puncturing of the various sized stamps, (Standard issues, De La Rue and Pictorials) occurred over the period 1904 – 1912. It may be that there were more than one set of OS Type F dies, or alternately the one set of Dies was able to be modified (broken down) at short notice, to puncture varies stamp formats. We may never know but if you have any thoughts or images of large multiples of OS Type F patterns then please share them with me at jausten@ozemail.com.au , Jerry.