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A Study of the Tasmania Lithographed Halfpenny Pictorial with OS Perfin

Original Research

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About 20 months ago, the Tasmanian Philatelic Society launched an online bulletin board (www.tps.org.au/bb/) for sharing information and collaborating on anything associated with Tasmanian stamps. One of the early topics was a discussion on the Commonwealth OS perfin variety with a missing pin. Figure 1 shows the two types of normal OS perfins and the OS missing pin variety. The primary discussion focused on understanding how many different issues had the perfin variety. My interest is plating the Tasmanian lithographed pictorials so I was curious about 1) how many different positions in a pane of stamps actually had the variety? and 2) what were the positions?

I chose to start with the lithographed halfpenny pictorial because there were only two printing plates and the stamps were printed in two panes of 60 (10 rows of 6 stamps). I also have (or have seen) the most OS perfins on this value compared to any of the other pictorial stamps. In addition, I believed if I could determine the plate positions of the missing pin variety on the halfpenny, that could help determine the plate positions on other pictorial values which have the variety – particularly the lithographed 2-penny pictorial which had 28 different plates and very few positioned stamps.



Fig. 1: “OS” Sideways, “OS” Upright, “OS” Upright with Missing Pin

My first step was to contact the SAS/O librarian and to get all available literature on the OS perfin. A review of the literature answered the first question on how many OS varieties existed – 6 per pane, and all 6 in one row for a total of 12 different positions across the two panes.¹

I didn't find any literature that reported the specific sheet positions, but that was easily determined by examining the stamps. All the lithographed halfpenny stamps can be positioned (or plated), and after examining the stamps with the missing pin variety, I found they were all from row 6 of the pane or positions 31 through 36. I was able to examine 17 copies of the OS variety and can confirm they

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SAS/O Library On Line

In a major move to make our library more accessible to our Members, our entire library catalog has been added to the “Union Catalog” of the American Philatelic Research Library. An added advantage is that the resources of several philatelic libraries, including the APRL, are provided with every search.

Take it for a test drive at the APS web site www.stamps.org.

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were all from positions 31 to 36. This also explains why the only multiples of the variety that have been seen are horizontal pairs. Figure 2 shows a diagram of the positions of a pane layout with the normal (N) and variety (V) stamps.

1 N	2 N	3 N	4 N	5 N	6 N
7 N	8 N	9 N	10 N	11 N	12 N
13 N	14 N	15 N	16 N	17 N	18 N
19 N	20 N	21 N	22 N	23 N	24 N
25 N	26 N	27 N	28 N	29 N	30 N
31 V	32 V	33 V	34 V	35 V	36 V
37 N	38 N	39 N	40 N	41 N	42 N
43 N	44 N	45 N	46 N	47 N	48 N
49 N	50 N	51 N	52 N	53 N	54 N
55 N	56 N	57 N	58 N	59 N	60 N

Fig. 2: Layout of a halfpenny pane showing the location of the normal (N) and missing pin variety (V) stamps.

I examined all the cancels of the OS perfin variety from row 6 on both panes thinking that I might be able to narrow the date for when the variety occurred. All the dates were between May 1905 and August 1907, and few later postmarked with undated Tasmanian machine cancels. Next I examined all the normal OS stamps from the same row 6 on both panes and discovered that they were all dated between December 1910 and January 1913 or were undated with strikes from Tasmanian machine cancels. Since the earliest known usage of the machine cancels is July 1908², I determined that the normal OS stamps from row 6 had a date range from at least 1908 and into the Commonwealth period. Obviously, with more dated stamps to examine, the date ranges can be better refined.

Interestingly, I did not find any normal OS stamps dated prior to the dates found on the OS missing pin variety stamps. The literature indicates that the missing pin was the result of a pin breaking. However, all the evidence I was able to examine indicated that the missing pin variety occurred first and the normal OS occurred second. It is absolutely possible that the pin broke very early and evidence to show that is gone or not yet discovered. However, if the missing pin didn't actually break and was the original state of the OS perforator, it could help explain another mystery with the halfpenny OS stamps.

That mystery involves the double OS perfin (Figure 3). The circumstances be-

hind their creation are unknown, but the predominant belief is that they are printer's waste and created during testing of the OS perforator. I postulate that a third or new perforator was created and used for a third production run of OS perfin stamps and the double OS perfins were the result of the testing of that perforator.

We already have the evidence that several perforators were used to produce OS perfins on the lithographed halfpenny pictorial. The first was used to perforate the OS sideways (in line with the short axis). To produce these stamps, the pins had to be spaced differently from the OS upright stamps in order to get the OS centered on the stamps, and the centering of the OS perfins was generally very good throughout the life of these stamps.

A second perforator produced the first upright OS perfins (in line with the long axis). This perforator had the missing pin, and it was a single vertical column of OS pins that was moved horizontally across the panes; hence the missing pin variety are all in one row³ (Figure 4, next page).

A third, or new, perforator was used to produce more OS upright perfins. I have not determined whether this perforator was actually the same as the second perforator but with the broken pin repaired/replaced that eliminated

the variety, or this was a new perforator. In the literature, there are speculations of different perforators being used to produce OS perfins on the pictorials. One theory was a multiple (3 or 4) set vertical perforator.⁴ Another was a row or column of at least 3 different OS clichés.⁵

The 2d has a Parallel Story

There is also some analogous evidence with the 2-penny lithographed pictorial to support the three production runs of OS perfins on the halfpenny lithographs. There is a similar history and timeline. On the 2-penny stamps, the first OS perfins were sideways, and they were produced in late 1904. The second OS perfins were upright, and they were produced in late 1904/early 1905. The missing pin variety perfins are found on these stamps. A third OS production run was done in 1907. The missing pin variety perfins are not found on these stamps. It is easier to constrain the timeline for these stamps because there were many more 2-penny printing plates – 28 in total, and each with its identifiable characteristics and period of use.

The 2-penny stamps were shipped from Melbourne as they were printed, so it's likely that the OS perfins were produced from current stock. My research in



Fig. 3: "OS" Doubled



plating the 2-penny stamps has shown that all the 2-penny OS sideways perfins are from Plate 15 (and possibly Plate 16 since it was its pair; but I have only identified stamps from Plate 15). The earliest known usage of stamps from Plate 15 is August 1904.⁶

The first 2-penny OS upright perfins are found only on Plates 17 and 18, and the earliest known usage of stamps from these plates is October 1904.⁷ This pair of plates was replaced by the Plate 19 and 20 in April 1905 indicating that the production run was executed between October 1904 and April 1905. The third production run of OS perfins on the 2-penny lithographs are found only on Plates 27 and 28. The earliest known usage of stamps from these plates is February 1907.⁸ This pair of plates was replaced by a new set of typographed printing plates with the earliest known usage in August 1907⁹, indicating that the last group of 2-penny lithographed OS perfins was produced between February and August 1907. The history of the 2-penny lithographs parallels the halfpenny history quite closely.

Conclusions

In summary, here is my history for the lithographed halfpenny OS “story”:

1. The first halfpenny OS production run has the OS sideways reading bottom to top. The sideways OS perfins are scarcer than the upright OS perfins. The earliest date I’ve seen is February 1905. The missing pin variety and double OS variety do not exist on the OS sideways perfins.
2. The second production run has the OS upright. The earliest date I’ve seen is May 1905. The missing pin variety is from this production run.
3. The third production run also has the OS upright. The earliest date I have seen is December 1910, but potentially could be as early as 1907/8 based on the presence of machine cancellations on the stamps. I believe the double OS stamps were created at the beginning of this production run as a test of a new or repaired perforator.



Fig. 4: Pair from Row 6 showing “missing pin” on both

I would be very interested hearing from any collectors that have additional information that they would like to share. I want to thank Geoff Dane (Australia), David McNamee (California), and contributors on the Tasmanian

Philatelic Society’s online bulletin board for sharing material that was used in this study. Any theories and errors are my own.

References

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- ⁵Tinsley, W.E., *Stamps and Postal History of Tasmania*, London: The Royal Philatelic Society, 1986, p. 124.
- ⁶Lancaster, K.E., *The Pictorial Stamps Of Tasmania 1899-1912*, Melbourne: The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, 1986, p. 25.
- ⁷*Idem.*
- ⁸*Idem.*
- ⁹*Ibid.*, p. 96.

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Western Australia Early Flights

The *Black Swan*, journal of the Western Australia Study Group, in its December 2010 issue (Vol. 13, No. 8) carries a list of “Early Flights and Airmails in Western Australia, 1911-1938” on page 96. This listing of early flights, dates, places, and pilots will be a big boon to collectors trying to organize their WA air mail collections. The listing also includes the dates of airmail rate changes. For a copy, send a note to *The Informer* Editor at dmcnamee@aol.com.

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Commonwealth of Australia Postage Dues: Help!

Stuart Wattison (teresaw@senet.com.au) is researching a possible anomaly in the plate setting of the Australian Postage Dues 1/- value 13th Series (New Design). He has an article/query on this in the *Bulletin of the ACC of NSW* December 2010 issue (p. 104). SAS/O Members Paul Fletcher and Geoff Kellow have also been consulted.

Whilst researching the 1/- value, he found that references to the flaws in Alvin Felix’ article in *The Informer* (Vol. 31, No. 9) were the reverse of the template in Hyeronimus’ book. Apparently Felix’ collection with the suspect sheet of 1/- was recently offered in the UK, and Stuart would like anyone knowing its whereabouts to contact him at the email address above.

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