

Tasmanian Numerals on Pictorials

Are they the rarest postmarks of all? asks Hugh H Freeman

Tasmania was among the first of the British Colonies to introduce a definitive pictorial postage stamp and this, to a large extent, is deemed to have followed from the influence of the wife of the Governor at the time.



The nineteenth century was renowned for the great International Trade Exhibitions which were a natural flow-on from the industrial revolution taking place in Britain and Europe. Hobart held one in 1891–1892 and special pictorial postcards were produced locally, advertising this Exhibition. When, in the following year, the World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago, from 1 May to 30 October, a grand series of pictorial stamps depicting Columbus was issued, together with commemorative postcards in colour, sparking the introduction of pictorial cards worldwide.

Invitations from the Columbian Exposition to the Tasmanian Government to visit and/or participate caught the Governor's wife's eye, leading to the experimental issue of 306 each of 2d. and 2½d. special pictorial envelopes in 1898. The next year, 1899, witnessed the request by the Tasmanian Agent General in London to the stamp printers De La Rue & Co Ltd to tender for the design and printing of special stamps showing views of the colony.

Earliest dates known

Towards the end of 1899, an order was in place for the supply of 5,760,000 of the letter rate values, 1d. and 2d., and 480,000 each of ½d., 3d., 4d., 5d. and 6d. stamps, plus 3000 2d. lettercards with views. The earliest dates known of their usage is 13 December for the 1d. depicting Mount Wellington, and 15 December for the 2d. showing the View of Hobart. These were brought into circulation early, due to the shortage of the Queen Victoria head 1d.

and 2d. stamps. The ½d. Lake Marion, 5d. Mount Gould, Lake St Clair, and 6d. Dilston Falls were all released for sale on 31 March 1900. The remaining three values of the series: the 2½d. Tasman's Arch, 3d. Spring River, Port Davey and 4d. Russell Falls, are thought to have been issued some time between 29 May and 5 June. The first recorded use of the barred numeral on a pictorial is of number 74 of Sandy Bay on a 15 January 1900 postal card.

Seven of the eight stamps were designed from photographs of scenes taken by the famous local photographer, Mr J Beattie. The last, the 6d. value, from a view taken by Steve Spurling and, according to local legend, when the falls were in flood. Of course, these were splendid stamps of which Tasmanians had every right to be proud. However, when usage started in the country and outlying post offices, the public soon noticed that the numeral obliterations were spoiling, or hiding, the views on the stamps. This rather defeated the purpose of the exercise which was to promote the beauty of the island.

Numeral cancels

In and from 1861, all country post offices and mail receiving houses were issued with a numeral canceller to ensure that the postage stamp could not be re-used. This series of numerals is known, to collectors as the 'Second Allocation'. This is to differentiate them from the 'First Allocation' made to post offices, which then included Hobart and Launceston, open in 1853, for the introduction of the Van Diemens Land

postal labels (as they were then known). By the end of 1899 and the introduction of the Pictorials, the number on the cancellers had reached '376' which was issued to Palooona for its opening on 1 December. Both the major post offices, Hobart and Launceston, were using date stamps or duplexes with no numeral postmarks in existence. One official in Launceston did still use a manuscript numeral '52' on postage due items. Old habits died hard, it seems.

As the supply of the old Queen's head stamps dried up and the new pictorials from the country towns became noticed, letters began appearing in the local newspapers decrying this abuse of the new scenes, just as today's collectors condemn modern post office cancellations. So it was not long before the postal authorities called upon post offices to discontinue the use of the numeral obliterations, and ordered them to use their date stamps instead. There is, unfortunately, no record nor precise information of such an instruction. However, one is thought to have been issued in October 1900, as the latest recorded use of a numeral is of '366' on piece tied with the Staverton date stamp of 8 November 1900.

Right up until the end, new post offices continued to be issued with a numeral canceller. In fact, as late as 30 July 1900, the *Gazette* notice declared the opening of the Mount Hicks Road office, to which was allocated the numeral '361', from the Pieman Bridge office which had closed on 30 March.

Research is rarely completed

There have been two handbooks published on the subject of the *Postal History and Postal Markings of Tasmania*, the last in 1975. These show the last recorded numeral to be '390' allocated to Guildford Junction. So it came as a surprise to the author, to find, on a trip to England in the early 80s, a '392' on 2d. pictorial also cancelled Wilmot Lower—the office there was opened on 1 September 1900. This must mean that a '391' will have been used, and opens the possibility of the existence, albeit remote, of both '393' and '394'. In fact, while this issue of *GSM* was being compiled, an internal Tasmanian post office form dating from 1920 came to light, which demonstrates how research in this area is rarely completed. Previously, because the c.d.s. on the unique '392' on 2d. piece was 'Wilmot' it had been deduced that this number was in use at Wilmot Lower. However, the 1920 form, originating at Wilmot Lower post office and carrying impressions of all handstamps held by that office at the time, included a really fine strike of the numeral



The unique '392' on 2d., originally allocated to Wilmot, is now tentatively allocated to Liena

387!—this strike had never been seen before and, indeed, may never have been used. The next most likely allocation for 392 is Liena, since it is in close proximity in line of route. I have therefore amended the list accordingly and tentatively allocated 391 to Low Head.

In 1986, Mr Keith Lancaster of Launceston had his book, *The Pictorial Stamps of Tasmania 1899–1912*, published by The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria. In it is a chapter devoted to cancellations, recording a total of 200 different numeral postmarks on these issues. At the time of the demise of the numerals, there were 376 post offices open. Not all were using their numerals, some had already taken the liberty of utilising the date stamps to cancel the pictorials.

The issuance of numeral obliterators to new offices was not straightforward. For reasons of economy, numerals from offices which had closed were re-issued to the new offices. Lack of official records regarding allocation of numerals, possibly due to a fire at the Hobart GPO, means that information on this aspect has had to come from ties on covers and been gleaned from official gazettes and newspapers. A long, slow process. The most recent assessment, for which we are indebted to the Launceston postal historian, Mr Randall Askeland, of numeral placement as at November 1900 is as shown in the table.

A most attractive break

It can now be noted (refer to the symbols) that some 300 are recorded on Pictorial issues. For the most part these are to be found used on the 1d. and 2d. values, thus providing a potentially attractive combination of a complete barred numeral in black on two large stamps of intense bright red and deep violet colours. The numerals are known infrequently on the green ½d. Lake Marion, a most attractive break to the predominance of the colours of the 1d. and 2d. A few numbers occur on the 6d. with even less on the 3d., 4d. and 5d. values. When these latter are found it is usually with the more common BN299. There are no numerals recorded to date on the dark blue 2½d. Tasman's Arch. Common is not a term to be used when referring to the BNs to be seen on the Pictorials, they are rare in any language with more than 20 that are known only as single recorded strikes. Those that are more readily to hand include numbers:

2, 4, 10, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 37, 39, 45, 53, 56, 59, 62, 63, 65, 76, 77, 91, 94, 95, 115, 123, 126, 152, 169, 179, 189, 221, 299, 345 and 362 [36].

No 361 could possibly be included, as it was one of the two (the other was BN 45) used after all other barred numerals ceased to be used. As stated earlier, it was

Barred	Numeral and PO Name	Barred	Numeral and PO Name	Barred	Numeral and PO Name	Barred	Numeral and PO Name
1*	Woodbury	2*	Avoca	3*	Bicheno	4*	Bishopsbourne
5*	Black Brush	6*	Bothwell	7*	Breadalbane	8*	Bream Creek#
9*	Bridgewater Junction	10*	Pontville	11*	Elderslie	12*	Broadmarsh#
13*	Kingston	14*	Catamaran	15*	Cambridge	{16}	Campbell Town
17	Carlton	18*	Carrick	19*	Chudleigh	20*	Stanley
21*	Rokeyby	22*	Cleveland#	23*	Cressy	24*	St Mary's#
25*	Deloraine	26*	Don	27*	Frankford	28*	Elizabeth Town
{29}	Burnie	30*	Evandale	31*	Exton	32*	Falmouth
33*	Glenora	34*	Fingal	35*	Forcett	36	
37*	George Town	38*	Glenorchy	39*	Kempton	40*	Hadspen
41*	Hagley	42*	Hamilton	43*	Franklin	44	
45*	Jericho	46*	Colebrook	47*	Woodlands	48*	Bellerive#
49*	Kelly's Point	50*	Invermay	{51}	Latrobe	{52}	Launceston
53*	Ulverstone	54*	Longford	55*	Lymington North	56*	Macquarie Plains#
57*	Alberton#	58*	Melton Mowbray	59*	Gormanston#	60	
61*	Sandford	62*	New Town	63*	New Norfolk	{64}	Oatlands
65*	Ouse#	66		67*	Woodbridge	68*	Perth#
69		70*	Lovett	71*	Dover	72*	not known
73*	Buckland	74*	Sandy Bay#	75	Ramsgate	76*	Richmond
77*	Ross	78		79		{80}	not in use
81*	Sorell	82*	South Arm	83*	Hythe#	{84}	Triabunna
85*	Spring Hill	86*	Flowerdale	87*	Wynyard	88*	Dilston
89	Gordon	90*	not known	91*	Devonport East	92*	Tunbridge
93*	Huonville	94*	Swansea	95*	Westbury	96*	White Hills#
97*	Constitution Hill	98*	Middleton	99		{100}	Conara
{101}	Sheffield	102*	Deddington	103*	Llewellyn	104*	Little Swanport
105*	Harford	106*	Moriarty Rd	107*	Risdon	108	Seymour
109*	Lisdillon	110*	Somersset, River Cam	111*	Piper's	112*	North Dundas Road
113*	Nugent	114		115*	Scottsdale	116*	Mangana
117*	Old Beach	118*	Margate	119*	Leipzig	120*	North Down
{121}	Tunnack	122*	Spalford	123*	Penguin	124*	Kettering
125*	Plenty	126*	St Helen's	127*	Myrtle Bank	128*	Paterersonia
129	Honeywood	130	Longley	131	Cranbrook	132*	Goshen#
133	Winkleigh	134*	not known	135*	Fern Tree	136	Augusta Rd
137*	Boobyalla	138*	Lefroy	139*	Steppes	140*	Orford
141	Dunalley	142*	Evandale Junction	143*	Snug River	144	Gould's Country
145*	Exeter	146	not known	147*	Sidmouth	148*	St Leonards
149*	Bracknell#	150*	Glenore	151*	Sassafras	152*	Devonport West#
153	Antill Ponds Railway Station	154	Sprent	155	Campania	156*	Montagu River
157*	Smithton	158*	Detention River	159*	Rhyndaston	160*	Lady's Bay
161*	Karoola	162*	Kellevie	163	Rosevale	164*	Westwood
165*	Hobart South	167*	Holwell#	167*	Holwell#	168*	South Bridgewater
169*	Ringarooma	170	Bridgenorth	171*	Railton	172*	Hastings
173*	Black River	174	Beulah	175*	Back Creek	176*	Cradoc
177*	Newnham	178*	Geeves' Town	179*	Weldborough	180*	Branxholm
181*	Moorina	182*	Springfield	183*	Spreyton	{184}	Mount Seymour
185		186	Garden Island Creek	187*	Merseylea	188	Stonehenge
189*	Beaconsfield#	190	The Nook	191*	Sisters' Creek	192	Brighton Junction
{193}	West Strahan	194*	Royenrine#	195*	Epping Forest	196	Wattle Hill
197	Boat Harbour	198	Lagunta	199	Ellerslie	200*	Bagdad
201*	Tea Tree	202*	Glengarry	203*	Saltwater River	204*	Gladstone
205*	South Mount Cameron	206*	Lisle	207*	Parattah	208*	Woodstock
209*	North Motton	210		211*	Castle Forbes Bay	212*	Ellendale
213	not known	214*	Wesley Vale	215		216*	
217*		218*	Carnarvon	219	Bismarck	220*	Bridport
221*	Derby	222*	Stowport	223*	Mangalore	224	Scottsdale West
225*	Kimberley	226	Black Sugar Loaf	227*	Selbourne	228*	Premaydena
229*	Taranna	230*	Pillinger	231*	Woodsdale	232*	Mole Creek
233*	not known	234	Blackwood Creek	235*	Dee Bridge	236	Young Town
237*	Caveside	238	Blessington	239*	Koonya	240*	Berridale
241*	Underwood	242*	Parkham	243	Fentonbury	244*	Sandy Bay Lower
245*	Moonah	246*	Long Island	247*	Austin's Ferry	248*	Jetsonville

249*	Lower Barrington	250*	Lebrina	251*	Bradshaw's Creek	252*	Pyengana
253	West Kentish South	254*	Whitefoord Hills	255*	Dunorlan#	256*	Kindred
257*	Launceston	258*	Kangaroo Valley	259*	Melrose	260*	Copping
261		262*	The Needles	163*	Golconda#	264*	East Meander
265*	Lowe's Bridge	266*	Nubeena	267*	Forest	268*	Hollow Tree
269*	Lower Turner's Marsh	270		271*	?Golden Valley	272	?Cluan
273*	?Quamby Brook	274*	?Uxbridge	275*	?Liffey	276*	Mount Nicholas
277*	Rosevears	278	Whitefoord	279*	Shipwrights' Point	280	Sandfly
281	Leprena	282*	Ormley	283*	Andover	284*	Interlaken
285	not known	286*	Dromedary	287*	Zeehan	288*	Ranelagh Junction
289	not known	290*	Ridgeway	291*	Lachlan	292	Rumney Huts/Baden
293*	Abbotsham	294		295	Dulverton	296*	Wattle Grove
297*	Mathinna	298*	The Oaks	299*	Waratah	300*	Lilydale
301*	?South Franklin	302*	Snake Plains	303*	Lisle Road Railway Station	304*	?Bangor
305*	Surges Bay	306*	Upper Tea Tree	{307}	Sulphur Creek	308*	Poimena
309*	Tunnel	310*	Upper Castra	311*	Turner's Marsh Railway Station	312*	Cullenswood
313*	not known	314*	Gardner's Bay	315*	Leith#	316*	Apsley#
317	not known	318*	Lymington South	319*	Adventure Bay	320	Dundas
321*	Riversdale	{322}	Strahan	323*	Irish Town	324	Deep Bay
325*	not known	326*	Daniel's Bay	327	Warrentinna	328*	Lottah
329*	Chudleigh Junction	330*	Pine Road	331*	Highthorpe	332*	Pelham
333*	York Plains	334*	Osterley	335*	Oyster Cove	336	
337*	Oakwood	338	Beltana#	339*	North Franklin	340*	West Pine Road
341		342	Macquarie Plains Railway Station	343*	Runnymede	344*	King's Island
345*	Forth	346*	New Norfolk Railway Station	347*	Mount Direction	348	Newstead
349*	Tyenna	350*	Piper's Brook	351*	Strathblane	352*	Claremont
353	not known	{354}	Queenstown	355	Cairns Bay	356*	Rosebery
357*	Montezuma	358	Preston	(359)	Mount Read	360*	Scamander
361*	Mount Hicks Road#	362*	North Mount Lyell	363*	Paradise	364*	Elliott
365*	Hayes	366	Staverton#	367		368*	Wyena
369*	Riana	370*	Stirling	371	Glazier's Bay	372*	Thirstane
373*	Lynchford#	374*	Hillend	375	Zeehan East	376*	Paloona
377*	Osterly South	378*	Linda	379*	Stonor	380*	Macquarie Heads
381*	Darwin	382*	Regatta Point	383	?Mt Farrell	384*	Gunn's Plains
385*	?Ida Bay	386*	?Glen Fern	387	Wilmot Lower	388*	?Kingston Beach
389	?Wattlegrove Lower	390*	Guildford Junction	391	?Low Head	392*	?Liena

Explanation of Symbols: *BN in author's collection; {} BN not in use; # known tied on cover/piece.

reallocated from Pieman Bridge to Mount Hicks Road in July 1900, where it was still in use almost two years later. As the office of Pieman Bridge is known to have used the previous issues of the 2d. green Side-face as late as 20 February 1900, the question of how long the Pictorials were on issue there arises. So the rarity is the '361' on the original De La Rue Pictorial printing.

Evocative names

Note will possibly have been made of the evocative names of some of the small offices; Black Sugar Loaf, The Nook, Oyster Cove and Boat Harbour are, of course, of instant appeal to collectors of the date stamp postmarks on Pictorials. These names are well documented elsewhere, with rarity ratings applied to those found in the 1900–1912 period. In many of the rarer names, as few as six to 12 are in collectors' hands, and in some instances even less than six have come to light.

Collecting the numerals is made even harder with the absence of some confirmation of ties to particular offices, and an

answer to this is to collect a town name postmark with the year 1900 on it. This will fill a gap for a numeral absent from the collection. However, once one proceeds down that track it soon becomes obvious that even the 1900 dates are hard to find.

As an ignominious end to this short delve into one aspect of Tasmanian postal history of 100 years ago, there exist two proof sheets made in 1954 of the remaining barred numerals in postal authority possession at that time. From them it is clear that the barred numerals varied in type and style, basically dependent on new handstamps being made when old ones were lost or worn, but one aspect which is most interesting is that two: '50' and '58' are from the First Allocation. All the original obliterators were withdrawn from service in 1861, and presumably these two would have been re-issued as they were still in good condition at a later date. For the last 45 years, however, instead of being on display in a postal museum, these obliterators lie all together in a sack at the bottom of the River Derwent.



A selection of numeral cancellations

