

# THE POSTAL HISTORY OF NEW SOUTH WALES 1801 - 1849

## HISTORICAL ASPECTS

The continent of Australia was first settled in 1788 at Sydney Cove. New South Wales jurisdiction originally extended over the eastern half of the continent up to longitude 129°, the current border of Western Australia. This exhibit traces the development of postal services in the colony of New South Wales from first settlement, through the establishment of the first official Post Office in 1810 up until the 1849 Postal Act heralded the issue of the colony's first postage stamps (the "Sydney Views") in 1850. Isaac Nichols, acting as Assistant Naval Officer, had been appointed to take charge of mail arriving in the Colony on 25 April 1809. This date is regarded as the genesis of the Post Office in Australia.

There was little or no regulated postal service outside Sydney until the Post Office Department was established in 1828. Prior to this, postal markings are only known for Sydney (1813-1819) and for the towns of Van Diemen's Land. The Postal Act of 1825 established the country post offices and introduced handstamps for them, but as the population was only 36,000 in 1828, reaching 189,000 by 1846, country mail is relatively rare.

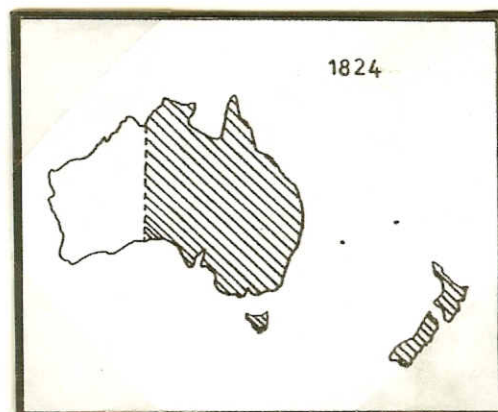
## OBJECTIVE

This exhibit studies mail representing all the major postal history events. It includes items from the major districts which later became separate colonies, these being Van Diemen's Land (1825), New Zealand (1841), the Port Phillip District (1851) and the Moreton Bay District (1859). The exhibit is basically arranged chronologically illustrating the history of the Post Office prior to the Act of 1825, and subsequently under the Acts of 1825 and 1835. Within this framework the development of postal rates and services is demonstrated, commencing with internal rates and then followed by overseas rates. Significant marcophily and other markings relative to postal history are identified.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Highlights in this exhibit include the earliest known postal letter still in private hands, letters from the first Post Office organised overseas mails in 1810 from Sydney and 1815 from Van Diemen's Land, and the earliest recorded example of Isaac Nichols' Sydney handstamp. As well, there are autograph letters written by Lachlan Macquarie, Sir Thomas Mitchell and First Fleet settlers. The condition is generally the finest available, and many items are rare with often less than five examples known, and several are unique. Areas of personal investigation include the shipping and route information of most items. This exhibit also represents the most comprehensive study of the Inland Rates component of both internal and external mail ever attempted, with numerous "proving" covers for individual towns.

NSW Territories before separation.  
(Shaded area).



## ORGANISATION

Section 1:	pages 2-3	- First Settlement.
Section 1:	pages 4-14	- The First Post Office in NSW and VDL.
Section 2:	pages 15-26	- The Postal Act of 1825.
Section 3:	pages 27-43	- The Postal Act of 1835 - Inland Rates.
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Section 5:	pages 49-68	- The Postal Act of 1835 - Ship Letter Mail.
Section 6:	pages 67-69	- The Postal Acts of 1838 & 1841.
Section 7:	pages 70-80	- Packet Mail, Foreign Destinations & Mail via India.
Section 8:	pages 81-93	- Franking Privileges.
Section 9:	pages 94-96	- The Gazette of 1838 & Intracolony Ship Letter Mail.
Section 10:	pages 97-112	- New Zealand, Moreton Bay District & Port Phillip District.
Section 11:	pages 113-128	- Instructional & other Markings.

References to marking type numbers in the exhibit are taken from White.

All items for which an Expert Certificate is supplied (on the reverse of the page) are indicated by the symbol e.

## REFERENCES

The Postal History of New South Wales 1788-1901, White, J., 1988, Philatelic Association of New South Wales, pp1 - 481.  
The Postal History of the Port Phillip District 1835-1851, Purves, J.R.W., 1950.  
Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney, Victorian and Tasmanian Ports, Roebuck Society, various dates.



## FIRST SETTLEMENT

### Mail prior to the setting up of the Post Office

Prior to the setting up of the Post Office under Isaac Nichols mail was despatched by the sender taking it aboard an appropriate vessel. Official mail was normally carried by naval or other government ships.

### The earliest entire letter from Australia still in private hands.



16 August 1801

Entire headed "*E. Cornwallis, Sydney Cove, Port Jackson N.S.W.*", written by Robert Scott, 5th mate on the convict ship *Earl Cornwallis*.

#### Rate

On arrival rated "1/-" (deleted) and then re-rated "1/4" due, denoting 4d inwards ship letter rate plus 1/- mileage from Deal to Glasgow via London (over 400 miles).

#### Route

Carried per the South Sea whaler "*Albion*", sailing on 26.8.1801 for England and arriving off Deal on 23.3.1802.

#### Markings

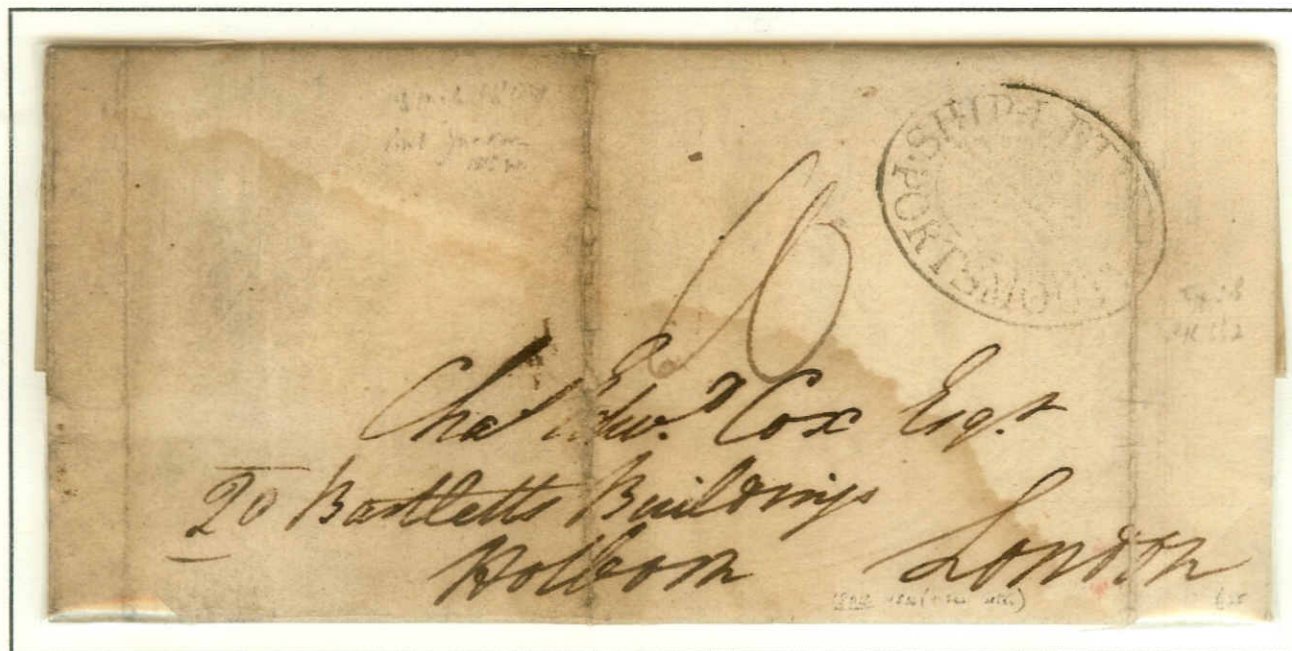
"Ship Letter / DEAL" in black.

On reverse: - London date-stamp (23.3.1802).

## FIRST SETTLEMENT

Mail prior to the setting up of the Post Office

Second earliest letter from Australia in private hands.



15 March 1804

Entire headed "Port Jackson", written by Lt. Charles Menzies who had commanded the detachment of marines which helped quell the Vinegar Hill convict rebellion on 5 March 1804. Governor King appointed Menzies as Lt. Governor of the new settlement at Coal River (later Newcastle) on 15 March 1804, where many of the Irish convicts involved in the uprising were transported.

**Rate:** On arrival in the UK rated "10" due, consisting of 4d inward ship letter and 6d mileage from Portsmouth to London.

**Route:** Per H.M.S. "Calcutta", sailing on 16.3.1804 for England and arriving off Portsmouth on 23.7.1804.

**Markings:** "SHIP LETTER / PORTSMOUTH" in black. On reverse: - London date-stamp (25.7.1804).

The third earliest recorded letter from Van Diemen's Land, with mention of Governor Bligh's arrival.



18 October 1806

Entire headed "Hobart Town, Derwent, Van Diemen's Land", written by Matthew Bowden.

**Rate**

On arrival rated "1/10" due, denoting double 4d inwards ship letter rate plus 7d mileage from Portsmouth to London (over 70 miles).

**Route**

Carried per the whaler "King George", sailing on 19.10.1806 for Sydney, where she arrived on 2.12.1806. The letter was forwarded from Sydney per "H.M.S. Buffalo", sailing on 10.2.1807 via Rio de Janeiro, and arriving at Portsmouth on 8.11.1807.

**Markings**

"SHIP LETTER / PORTSMOUTH" in black.

On reverse: - London date-stamp (11.11.1807).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

Government and General Order – 23 June 1810

The Governor, Lachlan Macquarie, deemed it expedient to establish a regular Post Office in the town of Sydney, effective from 25 June 1810, and appointed Mr. Isaac Nichols as Post Master. Nichols duties included the handling of the mail arriving in the Colony, but there appears to have been no arrangements for mail leaving the Colony at this time.

Nichols, as Assistant Naval Officer, had been officially appointed to take charge of the handling of mail arriving in the Colony on 25 April 1809. He regularly advertised letters "for delivery at my Office" in the *Sydney Gazette*, and charged 1/- for letters and 2/6 for parcels. However, it appears that Nichols was no longer acting in this capacity by 17 March 1810. Governor Macquarie had reappointed Robert Campbell Jun. as Assistant Naval Officer, and letters were advertised for delivery free of expense.

Entire headed "Sydney Cove, New South Wales" written by Lieut. Col. O'Connell, 73rd Regiment.



30 July 1810

### Rate

No NSW rate marking. On arrival in the UK rated "1/10" and "2/10" (both deleted), and finally "3/-" due, consisting of 4d ship letter and 2/8 inland letter.

### Route

Per Brig "*Concord*", sailing on 31 July 1810 for Rio de Janeiro via Cape of Good Hope, and then on to Deal.

### Markings

"Ship Letter / DEAL" and Edinburgh date-stamp (21.1.1811).

On reverse: London date-stamp (18.1.1811).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### First Outwards Mail organised by the Post Office

Outwards ship letters were organised for the first time when Nichols announced in the *Sydney Gazette* on 20 October 1810, under the heading "POST OFFICE", that "Letters for England will be forwarded by the *Atalanta*, to sail in a few days, if left at the Post Office in time".



17 October 1810

Entire headed "Sydney Cove, New South Wales", written by Lieut. Col. O'Connell, Commanding Officer, 73rd Regiment.

#### Rate

Charged 3d by Nichols.  
Ms "2/2" in black UK inwards rate due (originally rated "1/1" but deleted), consisting of 4d ship letter and 1/10 inland rate.

#### Route

Endorsed "Per Brig *Atalanta*", sailing from Sydney on 28.10.1810 bound for London. Overland to Scotland by mail coach.

#### Markings

Edinburgh date-stamp (23.4.1811).  
On reverse: - London date-stamp (20.4.1811).

Only recorded letter from this voyage.

### Autograph Letter written by Governor Lachlan Macquarie sent via Macquarie Island

Entire headed "Sydney, N.S. Wales", written by Macquarie regarding the 73rd Regiment.

#### Rate

Charged 3d by Nichols.  
On arrival in the UK rated "1/3" and "1/7" (both deleted), and finally "1/8" due, consisting of 4d ship letter and 1/4 inland letter.

#### Route

Per Brig "*Concord*", sailing on 12.11.1811 for England via Macquarie Island, having previously left a sealing gang there.  
London to Scotland by mail coach.

#### Markings

London "SHIP / LETTER", and Edinburgh date-stamp (16.5.1812).  
On reverse: - London date-stamp (13.5.1812).



28 October 1811



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### Isaac Nichols First Sydney Handstamp 1813-1819

Isaac Nichols considered it desirable to mark all outgoing overseas mail to indicate its place of origin, and obtained a handstamp for this purpose. It is known to have been used between 1813 and 1819.

**Only six recorded examples in private hands.**

**One of the most important items of all Australian philately.**

**It bears the earliest recorded strike - by three years - of Australia's first postal marking.**



**10 February 1813**

**Entire letter headed "Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land", written by Ann McCarty.**

There was no official Postmaster at Hobart until 16 October 1813 when James Mitchell was appointed by Isaac Nichols as his Deputy.

This letter was probably handled by James Beaumont, unofficial Postmaster from late 1812 until Mitchell took over.

#### **Rate**

No NSW rate marking, however charged 3d by Nichols. On arrival in the UK rated "1/-" inwards postage due, consisting of 4d ship letter and 8d inland letter.

#### **Route**

Per private vessel to Sydney, arriving late March or early April 1813, thence by ship to England.

#### **Markings**

"SYDNEY.NEW.SOUTH.WALES" (type S1).

In arrival: London "SHIP / LETTER" and, on reverse, a London date-stamp (28.2.1814).

**This is the only example, in private hands, of the undated handstamp of Sydney being used as a transit marking.**

# THE FIRST POST OFFICE

## Isaac Nichols First Sydney Handstamp 1813-1819



**19 May 1818**

**Rate:** Charged 3d by Nichols. On arrival rated "1/4" due, consisting of 8d inwards ship letter and 8d inland mileage.

**Route:** Per Ship "David Shaw", sailing from Sydney on 21.5.1818 bound for London.

**Markings:** "SYDNEY.NEW.SOUTH.WALES" (type S1). On arrival: "SHIP LETTER / DOVER" and London date-stamp (17.11.1818).



**17 March 1819**

**Rate:** Charged 3d by Nichols. On arrival rated "1/4" due, consisting of 8d inwards ship letter and 8d inland mileage.

**Route:** Per "Shipley", sailing on 1 April 1819 for London via Cape Horn.

**Markings:** "SYDNEY.NEW.SOUTH.WALES" (type S1). On arrival: "PORTSMOUTH / SHIP LETTER" and London date-stamp (9.12.1819).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### Inland Mail carried by Private Hand

The carriage of letters "by private hand" was the normal practice prior to the establishment of the Inland Post in 1828.



13 August 1813

Entire written by Elizabeth Emily Arndell (1793-1868), daughter of First Fleet surgeon Dr. Thomas Arndell.

#### Rate

No rate or other postal markings as carried privately.

#### Route

Carried by hand by Mr. Mitcham from Cattai, Hawkesbury River, to the Military Barracks, Parramatta.

### Earliest Recorded Inwards Letter to Van Diemen's Land, written by a First Fleeter.

#### Rate

None as carried privately. James Gordon was Naval Officer at Hobart Town from April 1814 until August 1815, and would have personally received the mail off arriving vessels.

#### Route

Carried by river boat from Cattai, Hawkesbury River, to Sydney, and then per H.M. Armed Brig "Kangaroo" which departed Sydney on 19.8.1814 bound for Hobart Town.

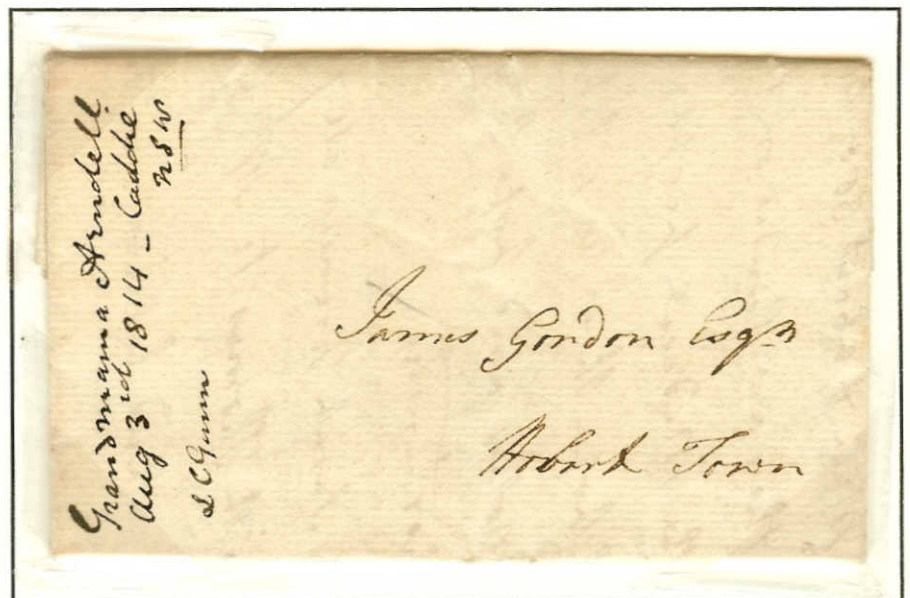
#### Historical

Elizabeth Arndell (nee Dalton, alias Burley or Burleigh, 1767-1843) was a First Fleeter, a convict on the "Lady Penrhyn", having been convicted of stealing handkerchiefs worth 14/- and sentenced to 7 years at Botany Bay.

She writes that "Two ships are arrived from England with Prisoners one has a malignant fever on board. The Capt., 1st Mate & about 30 or 40 people have died of it.

They are landed on the North Shore none but the Medical people are suffered to go to them".

This refers to two ships that arrived on 27.7.1814, the "Broxbornebury" and the "Surry".



3 August 1814



# THE FIRST POST OFFICE

## Van Diemen's Land under New South Wales Jurisdiction

Van Diemen's Land was under New South Wales jurisdiction from first settlement until separation on 19 December 1825. Isaac Nichols appointed a Deputy Post Master at Hobart in 1813, the *Sydney Gazette* announcing that: -

### POST OFFICE SYDNEY

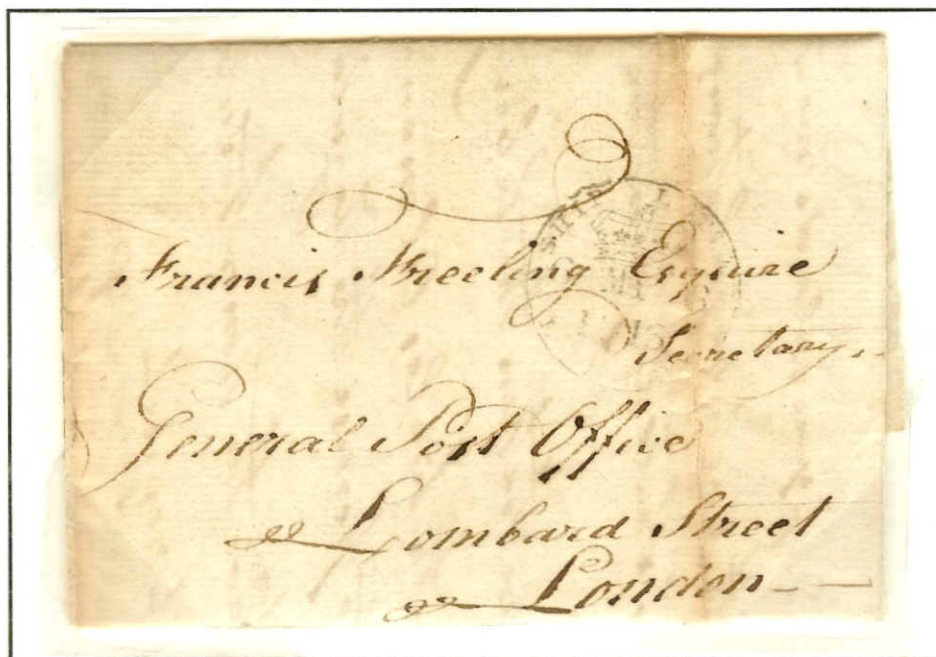
"Notice is hereby given that, I, the undersigned, have appointed Mr James Mitchell of the Derwent, my Deputy (by the approbation of His Excellency the Governor). Mr Mitchell will in future act accordingly and receive all letters and parcels etc., which may arrive at the Derwent, charging the established fees agreeably to His Excellency the Governor's General Orders on that Head bearing date of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Day of June 1810.

Sydney, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1813  
Isaac Nichols".

## First Outwards Mail organised by the Post Office in VDL

Mitchell's duties included the handling of the mail arriving in the Colony, but there appears to have been no arrangements for mail leaving Van Diemen's Land at this time. Outwards ship letters were organised for the first time when Mitchell arranged for a mail to be sent to London direct by the whaler "Jefferson" in October 1815.

### Only recorded cover from this voyage



23 September 1815

Letter headed "Hobart Town, Island of Van Diemen, South Pacific Ocean, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> 1815", written by James Mitchell to Francis Freeling, Secretary of the General Post Office in London.

Mitchell writes "that being appointed Deputy Post Master of this Island ... as this is the first Mail or Public conveyance from this Island ... to have the Packets or Mails, separately made up for Port Jackson and this Island".

Reverse endorsed "A separate bag shall in future be made up for Hobart Town. J. Newbury."

### Rate

Allowed free as official mail, both in Van Diemen's Land and Great Britain.

### Route

Sent per American whaler "Jefferson", sailing on 5.10.1815 direct for England, arriving at Gravesend on 6.5.1816.

### Markings

Unpaid "SHIP LETTER / LONDON" (6.5.1816).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### Van Diemen's Land under New South Wales Jurisdiction

#### The First Handstamps

Rates were promulgated on 20 September 1822 requiring that "postage on all letters and Packets to be paid at the Office where they are recorded for Transmission, and they will be stamped with the Mark of the Town from which they go". Handstamps were issued at Hobart, Launceston and George Town.



30 December 1822

#### Rate

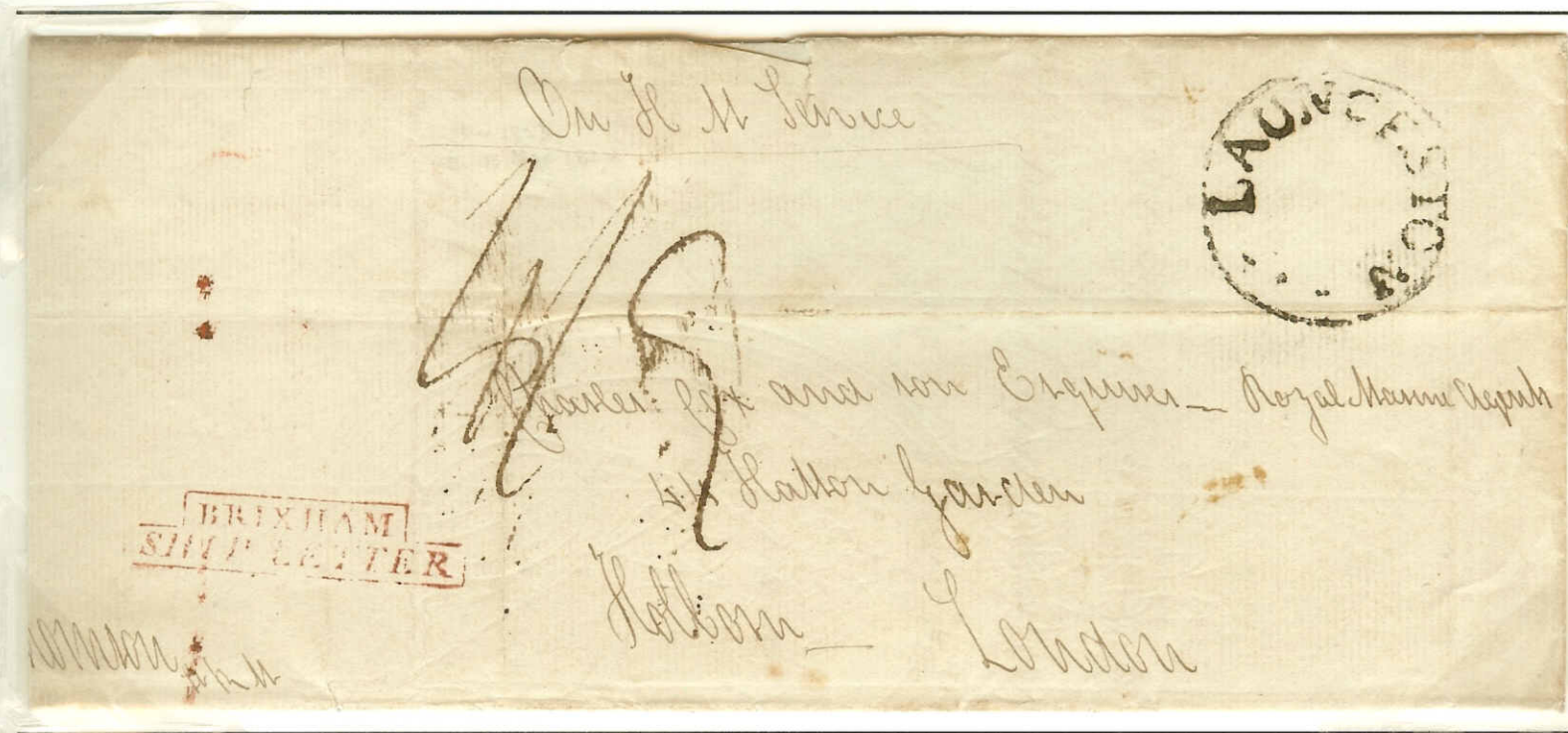
One shilling signified by handstamp.

#### Route

Across country to Hobart. The mail left Launceston every Monday via the "High Road" through South Esk, Wanstead, Sorrell Springs and Green Ponds, arriving the following Friday.

#### Markings

The first "LAUNCESTON" handstamp (used 1822-1826).



22 August 1823

**Rate:** Charged 8d for an outwards ship letter. Ms. "4/9" denotes UK inwards postage due, being for the triple rate (three times 8d ship letter plus 11d mileage). Total 2/- ship letter plus 2/9 inland mileage.

**Route:** Per ship "Regalia", sailing on 8.10.1823 for England direct via Rio de Janeiro, arriving on 14.3.1824.

**Markings:** First "LAUNCESTON" handstamp, "BRUXHAM / SHIP LETTER" and London date-stamp (15.3.1824).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

Van Diemen's Land under New South Wales Jurisdiction

### The First Handstamps



10 August 1823

**Rate:** Charged 8d for an outwards ship letter. Ms. "1/4" denotes UK inwards postage due consisting of 8d ship letter plus 8d mileage.

**Route:** Per ship "Skelton", sailing on 5.9.1823 for England direct via Rio de Janeiro, arriving on 13.2.1824.

**Markings:** "HOBART TOWN" handstamp (used 1822-1824), "PORTSMOUTH / SHIP LETTER", and London date-stamp (13.2.1824).

e.

### The Second Type Hobart Town Handstamp

#### Rate

Charged 8d for an outwards ship letter.

Ms. "1/4" denotes UK inwards postage due consisting of 8d ship letter plus 8d mileage.

#### Route

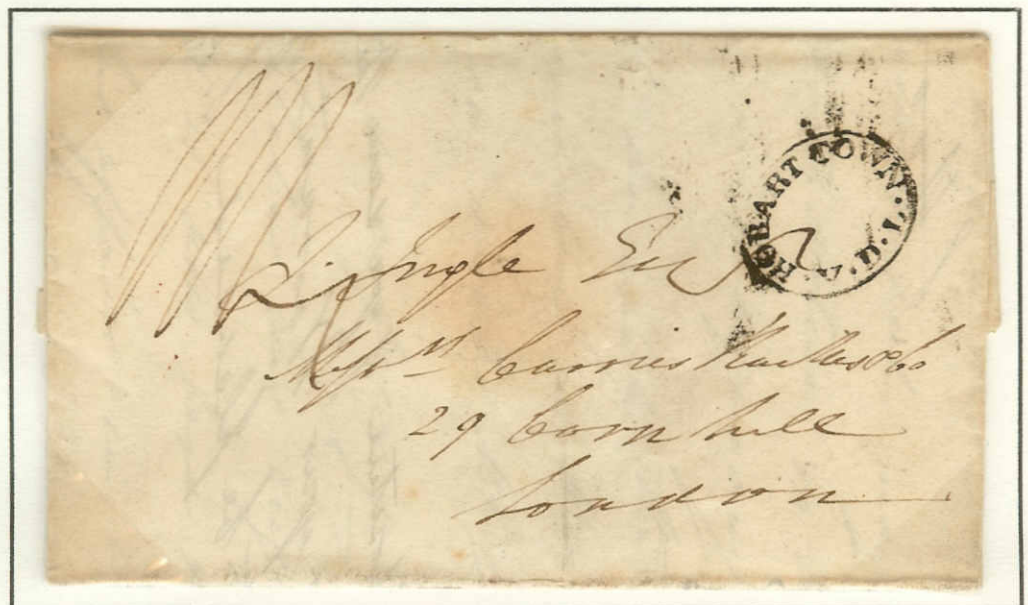
Per ship sailing for England direct.

#### Markings

The second type "HOBART TOWN / V.D.L." handstamp (used 1824-1832).

Four examples are recorded used during the N.S.W. period.

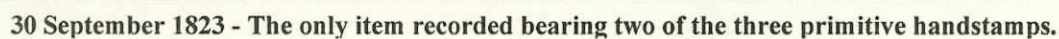
On reverse: "SHIP LETTER / BRIGHTON" and London date-stamp (27.4.1825).



26 October 1824

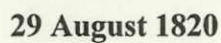


## Van Diemen's Land under New South Wales Jurisdiction



**Route:** Per private ship to London, via Hobart, arriving 17.6.1824.

### Missionary Letter sent by whaler via Macquarie Island and St. Helena



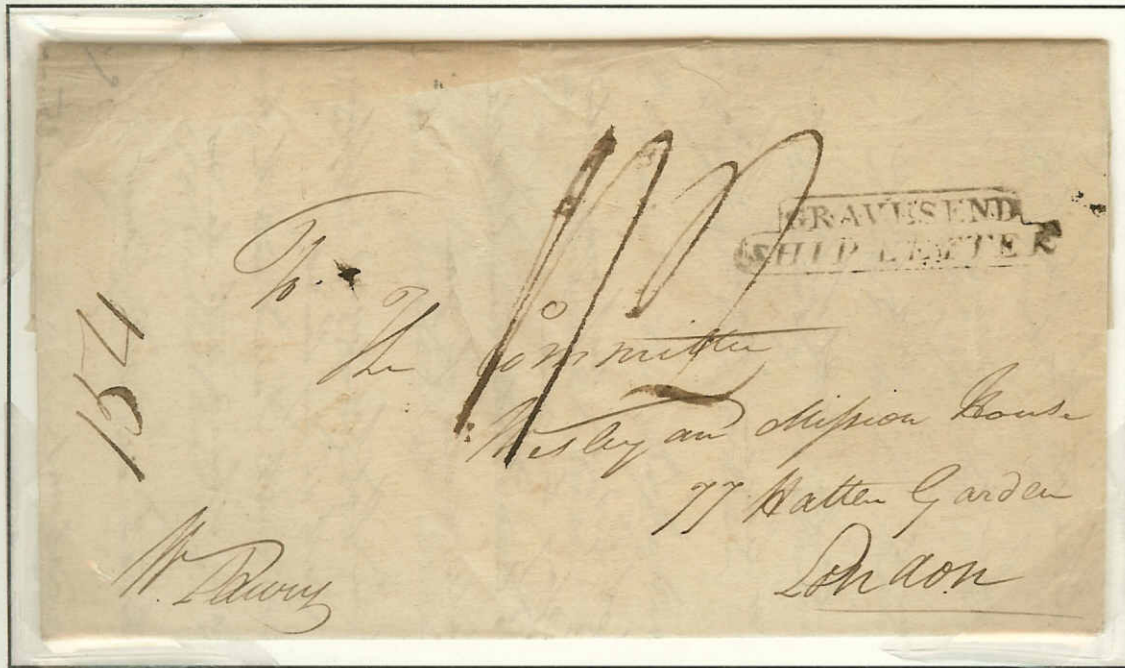
**Markings:** "LIVERPOOL / SHIP LETTER" and London date-stamp (26.3.1821).



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### The "Silent Period" (No Postal Markings), 1819-1828

The Post Office at Sydney remained in the charge of Isaac Nichols until his death on 8 November 1819, following a long illness. Isaac Nichols appears to have ceased using the first Sydney handstamp due to his illness, the latest recorded usage being on 29 March 1819. His successor, George Panton, was not issued with any handstamps until 1828.



9 June 1819

Missionary Letter sent by whaler



7 September 1820

**Rate:** Charged 8d under 3 June 1820 Table of Rates. On arrival in the UK rated "1/2" due, consisting of 8d ship letter and 6d inland letter.  
**Route:** Entire headed "Sydney", written by Rev. Walter Lawry. Per Whaler "Tuscan", sailing on 9.9.1820 for England with a cargo of whale oil.  
**Markings:** "SHIP LETTER / GRAVESEND". On reverse: London date-stamp (5.2.1821).

### "First Day Cover" of the "Silent Period"

Entire headed "Sydney", ex Methodist Missionary Archives. Rigo de Righi noted in "Philately from Australia" (December 1962) that all letters in the Missionary archives from NSW dated from 9 June 1819 (this cover) onwards bore no NSW markings whatsoever.

#### Rate

Charged 3d by Nichols. Ms. "1/2" in black denoting UK inwards postage due, consisting of 8d ship letter and 6d inland rate.

#### Route

Per whaler "Foxhound", sailing from Sydney on 13.6.1819 for London.

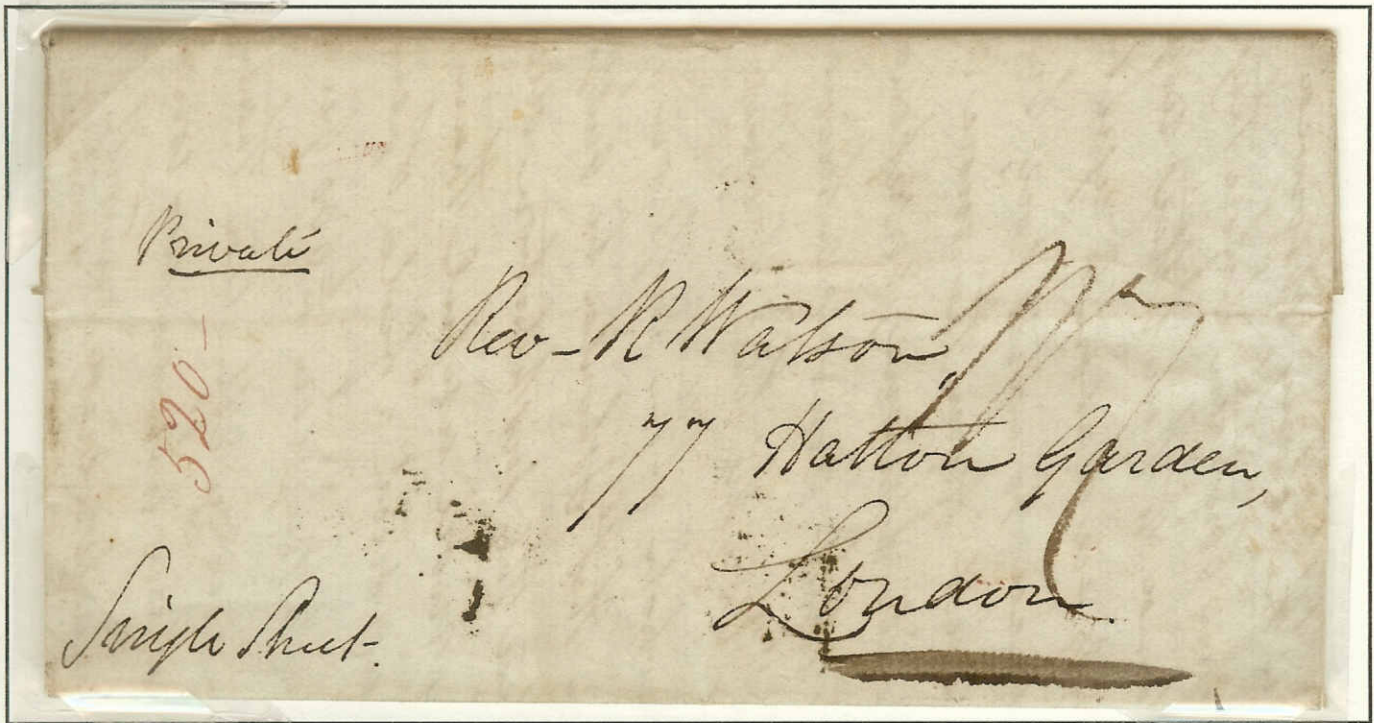
#### Markings

"GRAVESEND / SHIP LETTER". On reverse: - Ms. Receipt notation "Recd. 3rd December 1819".



## THE FIRST POST OFFICE

### The "Silent Period" (No Postal Markings), 1819-1828



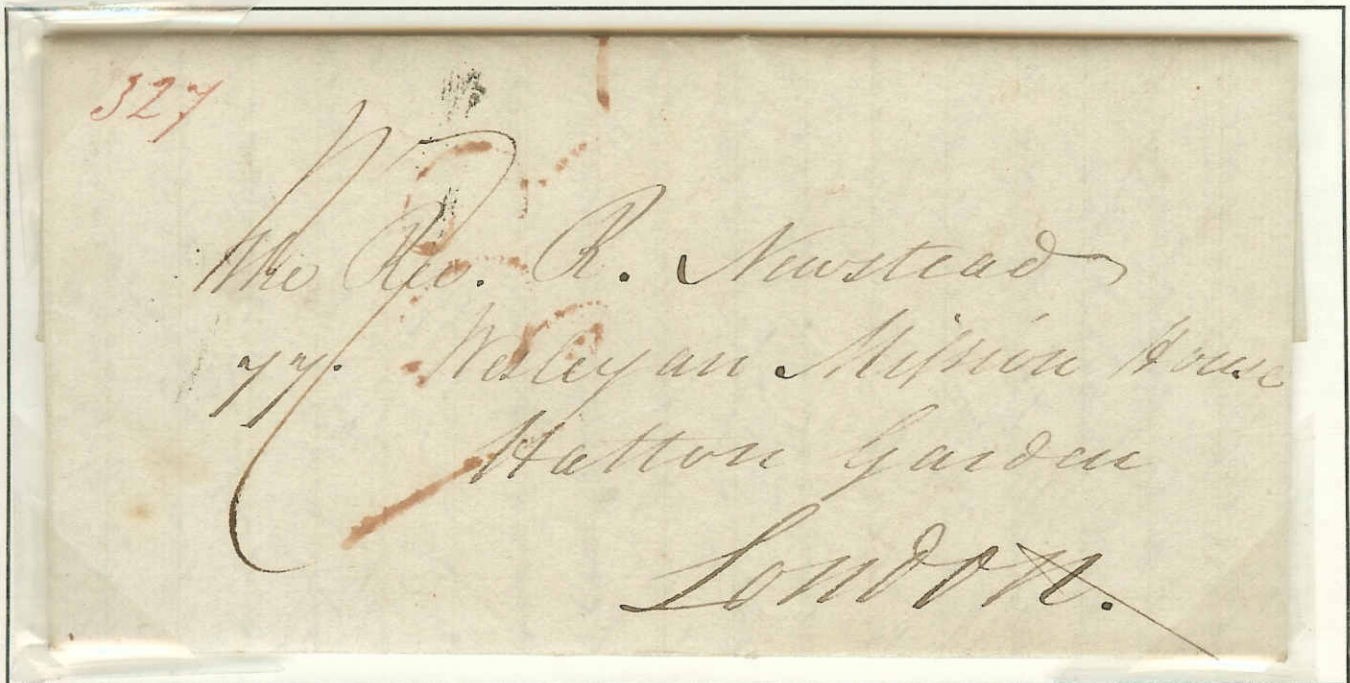
7 February 1825

Entire headed "F.O.In.", written by a Methodist Missionary. The Female Orphan Institute was at Parramatta.

**Rate:** Charged 8d by George Panton. Ms. "1/7" in black denoting UK inwards postage due, consisting of 8d ship letter and 11d inland rate.

**Route:** Parramatta to Sydney by coach. Per private ship bound for London.

**Markings:** "SHIP LETTER / PLYMOUTH". On reverse: London date-stamp (17.9.1825).



1 June 1827

**Rate:** Charged 8d under 3 June 1820 Table of Rates. On arrival in the UK rated "1/7" due, consisting of 8d ship letter and 11d inland letter.

**Route:** Entire headed "Windsor", written by a Methodist missionary. Per ship to England.

**Markings:** "SHIP LETTER / LIVERPOOL". On reverse: London date-stamp (12.11.1827).