# South Australia's 'POSTAGE' long stamps

**Purpose/scope:** This exhibit aims to show examples of each of the more than ninety discrete printings identified for these stamps which were letterpress printed in Adelaide from 1902, then in Melbourne from 1909 to 1912.

**Plan:** Following this title page there are two main parts, further subdivided as follows:

| **Thin 'POSTAGE' series, 1902-04** (frames 1-3) | **Thick 'POSTAGE' series, 1904-12** (frames 4-8) |
|---|---|
| **Proofs and Specimens**, pages 2-4<br>**The issued stamps**, pages 5-43, first in order of increasing denomination, within which they are treated chronologically<br>**Official stamps**, pages 44-48 | **The issued stamps**, pages 49-108, first in order of increasing denomination, within which they are treated chronologically<br>**Official stamps**, pages 109-128, also in order of increasing denomination |

**Background:** The first series used the key plate which De La Rue had supplied in 1886 for the colony's high-value 'POSTAGE & REVENUE' stamps (see next page). After Federation in 1901 those functions had to be separated, so all 60 of those words were excised from the plate and the word 'POSTAGE' in **thin** letters was applied by overprinting. When that plate became worn new plates were made in Adelaide, with 'POSTAGE' in **thick** letters now part of the design.

**Treatment:** Most printings are represented by mint and used stamps, with a preference for multiples. The exhibit contains over fifty covers or parcel labels representing about 40% of all printings. Because these stamps were intended for higher postal charges it follows that covers are generally scarce, and rare or unknown for denominations over eight pence.

In his book on the subject (the main reference herein) Purves assigned letters 'A', 'B', 'C' etc. in chronological order for *all* printings of *every* denomination in *both* series. That simple device has also been applied in this exhibit, except that the letters are in **black** for the first series and in **magenta** for the second.

The Official stamps ('SA' and 'OS' perfins) have been placed at the end of each series. For the second series they follow the same layout as before, but the smaller number in the first series required a more pragmatic approach. To avoid much text repetition, only the letters have been used to identify printings of the Official stamps.

**Rarity and Importance:** Items considered the *most* significant have been given a **blue** backing. Apart from these there are many large mint multiples which are inherently scarce. The exhibit shows over 60 'value page numbers', from a total of about 500 recorded over the 94 printings. Among the Australian states this numbering system was unique to South Australia, and was important in identifying the paper maker, for showing the order of printings, and for estimating printing quantities.

**Research:** Has included identification of each printing based on shade, paper type and overprint setting. Shade variation *between* printings was often very subtle, and shade *depth* often also varied *within* a printing. Further research has been made on the four 1903 printings where the perf 12½ gauge was used, with some updating of Purves' work (references 1 and 4). A study and identification of the stereo value sub-types has been made for several printings. About 80% of the stamps have been 'plated', limited mainly by plate wear, postmarks or official punctures.

**Main references:**

(1) *South Australia: The 'Long' Stamps of 1902-1912*, J.R.W. Purves F.R.P.S.L.
(2) *The Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue: Kangaroos and the Early Federal Period*, 1901-12, Brusden White
(3) *The Melbourne printings of the South Australian Long Postage Stamps*, Geoff Kellow ('The Shilling Violet' No.66)
(4) *South Australia's Perforator Gauging 11½-12½*, Harry Lower ('The Shilling Violet' No.67)
(5) *The Gary Diffen Collection of Australian Colonies Errors*

# Thin 'POSTAGE'

## Proofs and specimens

**Original De La Rue die proof on thick glazed card:**

From the die used to prepare the 'POSTAGE & REVENUE' key plate – one of **four known examples**

**De La Rue imperforate key plate proofs on gummed unwatermarked paper:**

The key plate contained 60 clichés in 10x6 format. There were **only two sheets** of these proofs.

### The plate modification:

To adapt the plate for the thin 'POSTAGE' series, the 'land' (i.e. the printed part) was excavated from all 60 'POSTAGE & REVENUE' tablets, *leaving a 'frame' line only 0.15mm thick.* The empty tablets then had the word 'POSTAGE' inserted by means of an 'overprint' plate containing 60 separate electrotypes of that word.

## Specimen sets for U.P.U. distribution and for sale to collectors:

In May 1904 the thin 'POSTAGE' set cancelled-to-order with the 'GPO ADELAIDE' cds of 'MR 29 04'was distributed to U.P.U. members. Other dates exist on sets for sale to collectors.

## U.P.U. set with additional Receiving Authority handstamp:

Between 1895 and 1910 U.P.U. specimen stamps sent to Lisbon for distribution to Portuguese Colonies were further handstamped 'ULTRAMAR' (overseas) in Lisbon prior to despatch.

Ex McCredie. *Sismondo 2002 certificate for values 8d to £1*

# The issued stamps

## Printing:

The stamps were letterpress printed in Adelaide by 'the Printer of Stamps'. Of the 28 different printings, 25 were on paper supplied by **De La Rue**, the other three (all perf 12 – see later) on paper supplied by **Detmold**.

For both papers the **watermark was Crown over 'SA'** (narrow spacing)

## The perf 11½, 12½ machine:

This single-line perforator supplied by Perkins Bacon in 1867 had a total line length of 21⅛ inches, with 7⅜ inches from the *left* end gauging **12½**, the remaining 13¾ inches gauging **11½**. This machine was used on **22** out of the 28 thin 'POSTAGE' printings, and **for 18 of those *only the right hand end* (perf 11½) was used** [(i)].

## 3 pence perf 11½ (A[(ii)], Nov. 1902 – *olive-green*) De La Rue paper

25

3

4

59

See note (iii) → 59

60

35

9

1

note (i) There are other *rare* instances where part of the 12½ line was used to correct a perf line inadvertently omitted
note (ii) For *each denomination* Purves [reference (1)] used letters **A, B, C** etc. to indicate the order of printing
note (iii) Sheet positions represented by the numbers 1.....60

**B**, 10 Feb. 1903 – *pale olive-green* De La Rue paper

10 *

9 10 *

19 20

***The De La Rue **"value page numbers"** were colour-coded according to the value for which printing was intended. Depending upon availability of supplies, the stamp printer in Adelaide was not always able to adhere to the denomination shown on the sheets.

**14** value page numbers have been reported for this printing

31 33

41 43

51 53

Note: For part of this printing the overprint was in a deep olive shade:

30

damaged "A" of "POSTAGE"

9 10

**B** (*continued*)**:**

7 38 45 51

*olive-green* overprint *deep olive* overprint

49 50

Paying the registration fee on an interstate letter to Hobart (*deep olive* overprint)

# 3 pence perf 11½, 12½ (C, 27 Aug. 1903 – *pale olive-green*) De La Rue paper

This was *one of the four* printings (see p.5) where the **perf 12½** gauge was employed. It seems that during 1903 the perforator malfunctioned, so a more complicated process of perforation was needed [see ref. (1), *Appendix*]. The **green** lines alongside the stamps below indicate lines of perforation gauging **12½**.

Note: broken 'A' of 'POSTAGE' (no. 30)

**6** value page numbers have been recorded for this printing

**inverted** 'ULTRAMAR' (see p. 4)

This printing provides the **only example** in the thin 'POSTAGE' series of stamps **perf 12½ all around**

## 3 pence perf 12* (D, 8 Apr. 1904 – *deep olive-green*) Detmold paper

*This new treadle-operated, single-line perforator specially designed for the 'long' stamps, was brought into use in September 1903 for the six final printings of the four most-used values – 3d, 6d, 9d (1 each); 4d (3).

**28** value page numbers have been recorded for this printing, but not the lower one

**Note:** Detmold's used the same colour, a *brownish-vermilion*, for all value page numbers regardless of value.

**D** (*continued*):

Two singles, with additional 5d, paying 3d registration fee plus
8d postage for a 1½-2oz letter, Mount Schank to Hobart, 12 May 1905.

Paying 3d registration fee on a ½-1oz letter to London, 5 Apr 1905 (postage 4d*)

*Letter postage rate to the United Kingdom was reduced from 2½d to 2d per ½oz **4 days earlier** (on 1 Apr 1905).

**D** (*continued*):

**variety: imperforate at right**

40

**12** examples recorded;
but not mentioned by Purves [ref. (1)]

**variety: grossly misplaced overprint**

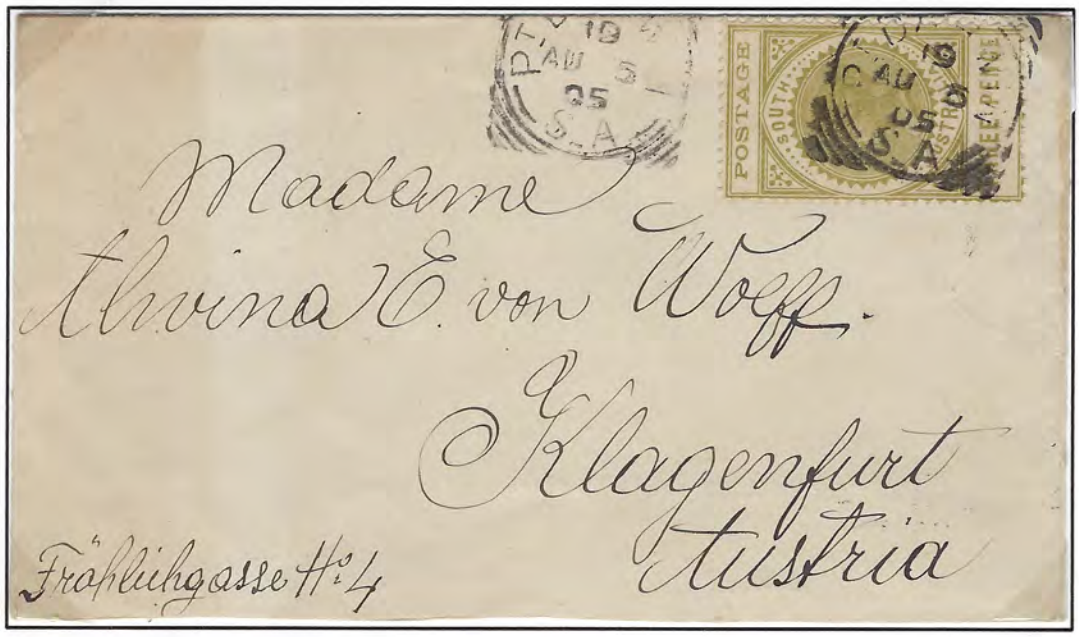
19

only one sheet recorded,
in which this variety occurred 50 times

45 46

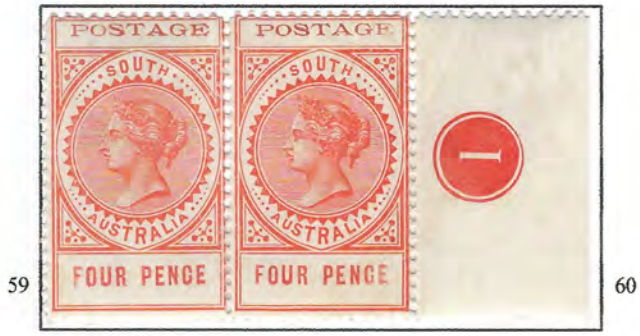
21 22

34 35




overpaying by one halfpenny the 2½d postage from **Port Darwin** to **Austria**

## 4 pence perf 11½ (A, 29 Nov. 1902 – *red-orange*) De La Rue paper




damaged 'T'

9 10

**9** value page numbers have been recorded for this printing

4 5 14 15 21 22 31 32

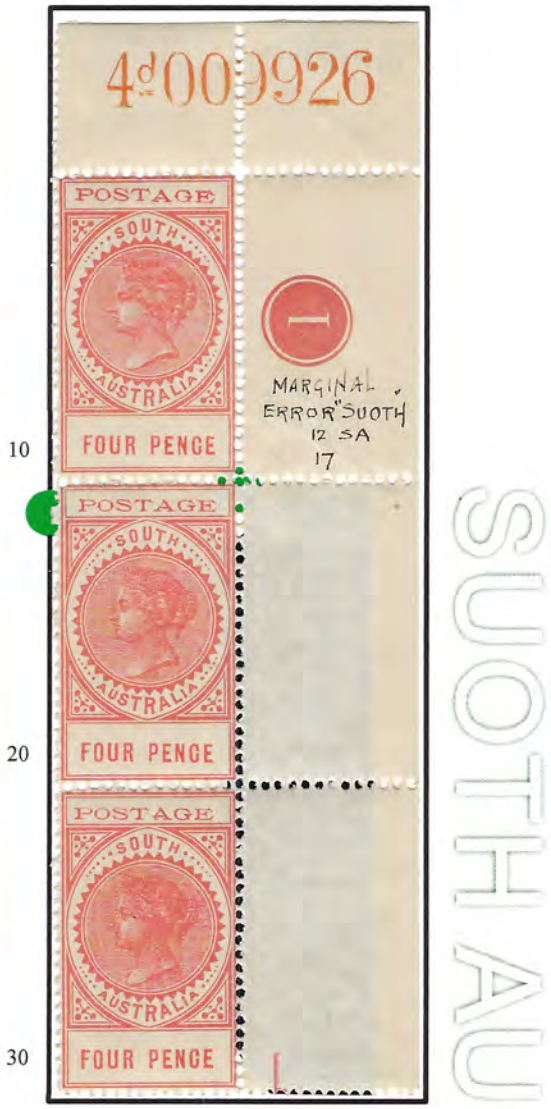
Note the very coarse impression of the left-hand block. Purves [ref.(1)] thought these may have come from the early part of the printing.

25 32 39 46

# 4 pence perf 11½, 12½ (C, 8 Jul. 1903 – *orange-red*) De La Rue paper

This was *another of the four* printings where the **perf 12½** gauge was employed (see p.5). In mid-1903 a further change occurred to the perforator: the pin where the two gauges met either fell out or was removed, leaving a **2.3mm gap** between adjacent holes. Perfs gauged 12½ to the left of this gap and 11½ to its right.

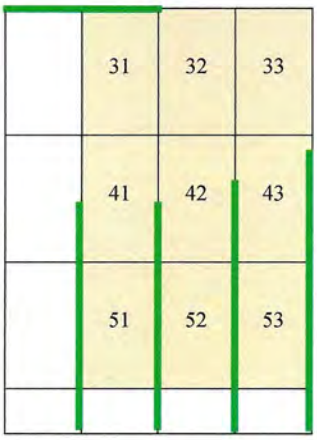
***error of marginal watermark: 'SUOTH'**




*ex Krichauff and Purves*

***5** examples known for this printing

**3** value page numbers recorded for this printing




The diagram at left indicates the plate positions on the block above left, and the green lines the sections of perf lines gauging **12½**. Five green discs behind the block emphasise the gaps between the gauges.

On the strip at right two green discs again emphasise the gaps, *above* which the perf lines gauge **12½.**

**C** (continued):

As before the green discs underneath emphasise the location of the gap between the gauges, and green lines on the diagram below show the sections of perf lines gauging 12½.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | 39 | 40 | |
| 48 | 49 | 50 | |
| 58 | 59 | 60 | |
| | | | |

11

8

4d **perf 11½ x 12½** paying postage for a ½-1oz letter to New Zealand. 3d perf 12 (D) pays registration fee

## 4 pence perf 12 (**D**, 14 Jan. 1904 – *orange-brown*) De La Rue paper

***** for the three perf 12 printings the 'value' overprint forme was an *electrotype*, comprising one 'horizontal master' of five electrotypes replicated twelve times. The twelve electrotypes clamped together made the overprint forme.

36

* *type 1*

13

*type 3*

4

*type 4*

35

*type 5*

mint examples of this printing are scarce [Purves (ref. 1)]

6

* *type 1*

12

*type 2*

38

*type 3*

14

*type 4*

35

*type 5*

with additional 1d paying combined postage (2d) + registration fee (3d)