

## 2.0 Inter-colonial Steamers and the First Steam Packet Contracts 1851-56

### Historical overview

After much agitation from the colonists for a steam packet contract to the Australian Colonies, in 1852, the British Admiralty hedged their bets by awarding mail contracts to two independent companies operating on two entirely different routes. This section is represented by the different routes and extended passages taken by each company within the following categories:

2.1 Intercolonial mail

2.2 Via Cape of Good Hope

2.3 Via Cape Horn

2.4 Overland via Southampton

2.5 Overland via Marseilles

2.6 Other routes and destinations

### 2.1 Inter-colonial Steamers - Inter-colonial Mail

#### Historical overview

The first steamers were in operation between Sydney and the Hunter Valley ports in the early 1830's, however, the first inter-colonial steamer service was an extensive of these operations to Brisbane in 1842. It was not a regular service until the following year, with a similar, but intermittent service between Sydney and Melbourne. A regular steamer service was not available until 1845 between Van Diemens Land and Victoria; and between South Australia and Victoria until 1849. There was still a preference to send mail overland until the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851. So although there were steam ships operating between the colonies, very little mail was carried.

With the introduction of the new steamship contracts in 1852, it is surprising how little intercolonial mail is recorded for the quicker passage between the colonies. During the steamship period, mail was predominantly carried by the first available sailing ships. With the exception of Western Australia, sailing ships were virtually leaving on a daily basis. The early steam contracts generally only picked up the mail on a monthly basis, with covers using the contract option being quite rare.



Melbourne, Victoria 5.4.1853 to Rosedale, Van Diemen's Land

**Single Rate:** Prepayment of 5d comprising 2d inland and 3d ship letter for a ½ oz inter colonial ship letter to Tasmania.

**Postal markings:** "5" manuscript in black comprising 4d for the inwards ship letter fee and 1d inland postage from Launceston to Rosedale to be paid by the recipient.

"CAMP TOWN/1 Apr. 53." handstamp in black representing the arrival of the entire at Campbell Town, the closest post office to Rosedale.

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Melbourne 5.5.1853 per "Clarence" to Launceston 11.4.1853; overland to Rosedale. (over 6 days).

Ex Perry

**Note:** This cover originated from an inland town with the prepayment of the 2d inland rate, but was not cancelled until it's arrival in Melbourne on the 5.4.1853.



## 2.1 Inter-colonial Steamers

## Inter-colonial Mail



Geelong, Victoria 19.5.1853 to Sydney, New South Wales

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Geelong 19.5.1853 overland to Melbourne. Departed Melbourne 26.5 per "Waratah" to Sydney, arriving 27.5.1853. (8 days).

Ex Perry

### Inter-colonial mail to Western Australia via the Steam Packet service

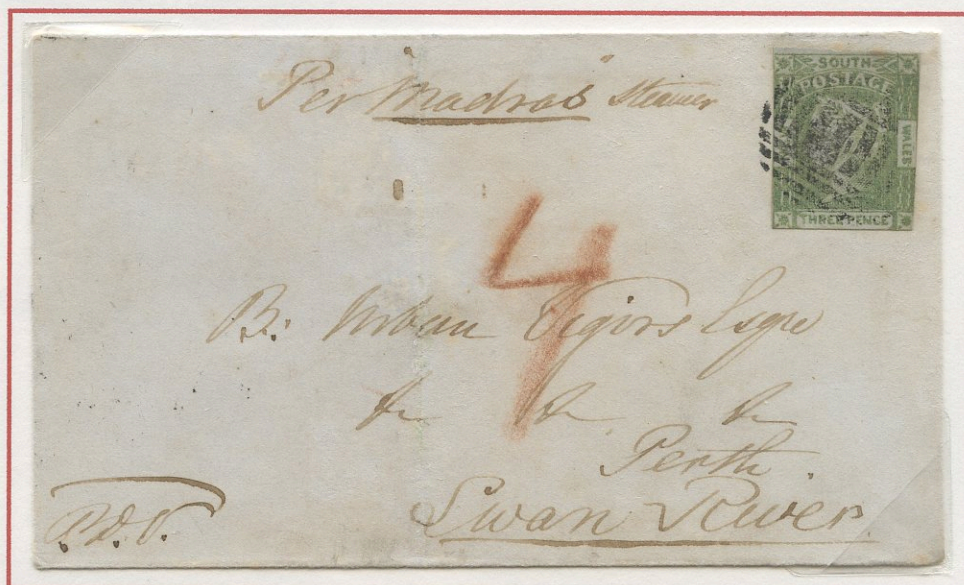
Western Australia was the most remote Australian Colony relying on intermittent sailing ship schedules to communicate to the outside world. The introduction of the steamer contracts provided a regular monthly service between the colonies, however, it is surprising how little mail has survived from this period.

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz inter colonial ship letter to Western Australia.

"4"(d) manuscript in red denoting the incoming ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

**Note:** This is believed to be the earliest steamer contract cover between the colonies and Western Australia recorded.



Sydney, New South Wales 25.1.1854 to Perth, **Western Australia (E)**

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 25.1.1854 per "Madras", via Melbourne 30.1, Adelaide 2.2, to King Georges Sound 6.2.1854; overland to Perth. (14 days).

Ex Palmer

**Three imperforate frankings from New South Wales to Western Australia are recorded**





Adelaide, South Australia 2.1.1855 to Geelong, Victoria

**Single Rate:** Prepayment of 6d for a ½ oz inter colonial ship letter to Victoria; “4”(d) manuscript in black crossed out.

**Postal markings:** “RETURNED FOR POSTAGE” handstamp in black applied in Adelaide for the additional 2d postage for the 6d ship letter rate to Victoria; “PAID ADELAIDE” datestamp of the 2.1.1855 confirming correct prepayment of 6d; Butterfly “14” in red applied at Melbourne.

**Route - Private sailing ship:** Departed Adelaide 3.1.1855 per “Bosphorus” to Melbourne 6.1; overland to Geelong, arriving 8.1.1855. (6 days).

The only example of the “RETURNED FOR POSTAGE” handstamp recorded



Fryar's Creek, Victoria 17.5.1855 to Noarlunga, South Australia

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Melbourne 29.5.1855 per “White Swan” to Adelaide 31.5; overland to Noarlunga, arriving 31.5.1855. (14 days).

*Ex Geitenbeek, Winchester*

The only intercolonial cover with the 1/- Registered stamp recorded



## Prepayment of 6d Too Late after the closure of the mails

**Double Rate:**

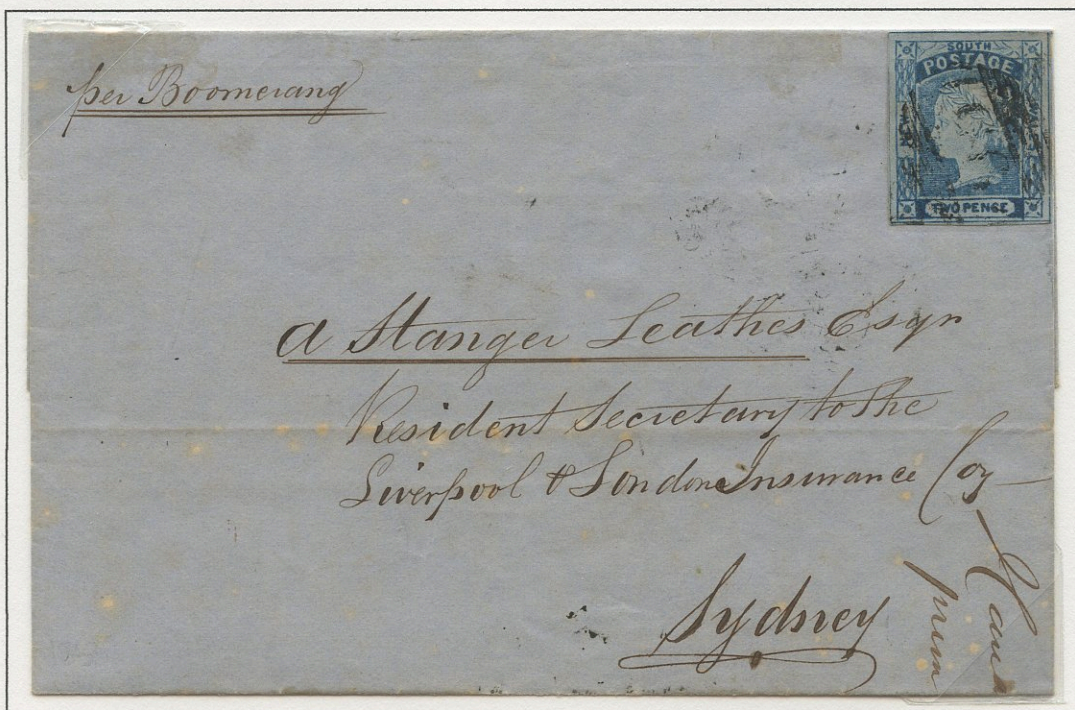
Prepayment of 1/- comprising 6d for a 1oz inter-colonial ship letter plus 6d Too Late fee to New South Wales.



Melbourne, Victoria 29.10.1855 to Sydney, New South Wales

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Melbourne 29.10.1855 per "Telegraph" to Sydney, arriving 1.11.1855. (3 days).

## An unusual double rate inter colonial letter

**Single Rate - Under paid:**

Prepayment of 2d and under paid 4d for a ½ oz inter-colonial ship letter of 6d to New South Wales.

Brisbane, Moreton Bay District 19.12.1855 to Sydney, New South Wales

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Brisbane 19.12.1855 per "Boomerang" to Sydney, New South Wales, arriving 21.12.1855. (2 days).





Port Adelaide, South Australia 27.3.1856 to Sydney, New South Wales

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Adelaide 27.3.1856 per "White Swan" via Melbourne, to Sydney, arriving 4.4.1856. (8 days).

**Single Rate:**

Prepayment of 6d for a 1 oz inter colonial ship letter to New South Wales.



Penola, South Australia 20.11.1856 to Melbourne, Victoria

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Adelaide 24.11.1856 per "Burra Burra" to Melbourne, arriving 26.11.1856. (2 days).

**Single Rate:**

Prepayment of 6d for a 1 oz inter colonial ship letter to Victoria.



## 2.2 The First Australian Colonial Mails Carried by Steam - 1851

Via Cape of Good Hope

### Historical overview

The first steam ships to arrive at the Australian Colonies were Royal Navy ships which were detached from the East Indies Naval Station to protect British interests primarily in New South Wales, before the formation of the Australia Station in 1859. Occasionally, Royal Navy steamships were called upon to carry mails on their journey home.

In accordance with British Admiralty requirements, all mail carried by Royal Navy vessels were treated as Packet mail. Incoming ship letters were charged at 1/-, rather than the 8d private ship letter rate.

### Carriage by a Royal Navy steamship - treated as a packet letter

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

“1/-” manuscript in black representing the incoming packet letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

#### Postal markings:

“**PACKET LETTER**” in red denoting the envelope was upgraded to the packet letter service;

“**CR**” denoting the letter was carried by the Caledonian Railway Company.



Sydney, New South Wales 18.8.1851 to Arbroath, Scotland

**Route - Royal Navy steamship:** Departed Sydney 18.8.1851 per H.M.S. “Havannah” via Rio de Janeiro, to London 14.11; by rail to Arbroath, arriving 15.11.1851. (89 days).

*Ex Druce, Forster*

The earlier of the two Sydney View covers carried by Royal Navy steamships recorded

The earliest cover carried by a steamship from the Australian Colonies to a foreign destination



## 2.2 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56 - Via Cape of Good Hope

### Historical overview

The first contract was awarded to the Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Co. for the route via Cape of Good Hope. However, after their steamers suffered numerous mechanical defects and frequent weather damage, the contract was terminated in April 1853. They were replaced by the General Screw Steamship Company until the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1856.

### The first Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co. voyage from the Australian Colonies

#### Double Rate:

Prepayment of 6d for a 1oz ship letter to England.

"2/manuscript in black for double the inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

The only multiple of the 3d Third Printing recorded on cover



Melbourne, Victoria 22.9.1852 to Malton, England

**Route - Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 28.9.1852 per "Australian" via Mauritius 11.11, Table Bay 27.11, and St. Vincent 23.12 to Plymouth 11.1.1853; by rail via London 12.1, to Malton, arriving 13.1.1853. (106 days).



Melbourne, Victoria 30.10.1852 to Bordeaux, France

**Single Rate:** "3"(d) manuscript in red for prepayment of a ½ oz ship letter to England; "1/-" manuscript in black for the incoming packet letter fee; Unpaid from England to France; "15"(decimes) handstamp in black comprising the British incoming ship letter fee plus internal postage to be paid by the recipient.

**Postal Markings:** "COLONIES/ &c ART 13" in red applied at London for underpaid mail to France.

**Route - Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 11.12.1852 per "Sydney" to London 18.3.1853; by steamer to Boulogne; by rail to Paris 19.3; by rail to Bordeaux, arriving 20.3.1853. (99 days).

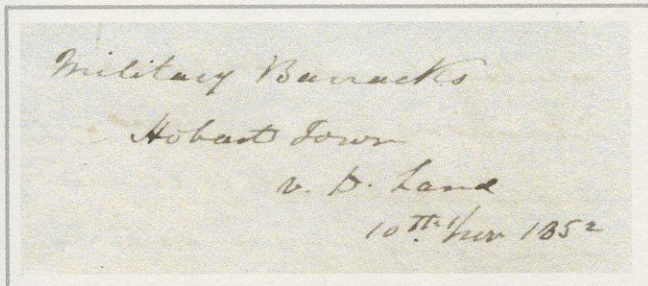


## A Rare Non-concessional Officer's Letter

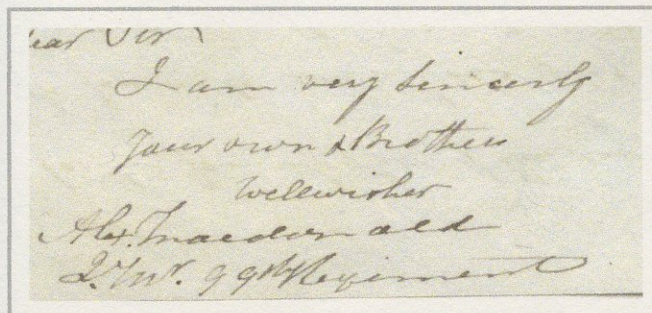


Hobart, Van Diemen's Land 10.11.1852 to Blairgowrie, England

**Route:** Overland from Hobart 10.11.1852 to Launceston. **Private sailing ship:** Departed Launceston 15.11 per "Clarence" to Melbourne; **Non-contract steamship - Gibbs, Bright Line:** Departed Melbourne 4.1.1853 per "Great Britain", via Table Bay, to Liverpool 2.4; by rail to Blairgowrie, England, arriving 4.4.1853. (81 days).



Scan of the enclosed letter headed "Military Barracks, Hobart Town".



## Reason for Non Concessional Postage:

The 1d concessional postage rate was only available to enlisted soldiers and not available to officers. The letter was written by Lieutenant Alex MacDonald of the 99th Regiment.

## Single Rate:

"4"(d) manuscript in black for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

"8"(d) manuscript in black for the inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.



## 2.2 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

### Via Cape of Good Hope

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

Unpaid to Nova Scotia.

“1/6” manuscript in black credit to Great Britain comprising the 8d incoming letter fee plus 10d transatlantic postage crossed out at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“2/2” manuscript in black rerated at the Nova Scotian currency depreciated rate at Halifax comprising the Great Britain fees plus internal postage to be paid by the recipient.



Melbourne, Victoria 21.5.1853 to Halifax, Nova Scotia (E)

**Route - Non-contract steamship - General Screw Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 22.5.1853 per “Harbinger”, via Mauritius, Port Elizabeth, and St. Vincent, arriving Southampton 18.8.1853. **Cunard Line:** Departed Liverpool 20.8.1853 per “Europa”, arriving Halifax, Nova Scotia 29.8.1853. (100 days).

The earliest cover from Victoria to Nova Scotia recorded

Mail forwarded from Tasmania to capture the steamer mail service from Melbourne

#### Single Rate:

“4”(d) manuscript in black for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

“8”(d) manuscript in black for the inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.



Hobart, Van Diemen's Land 8.8.1853 to London, England

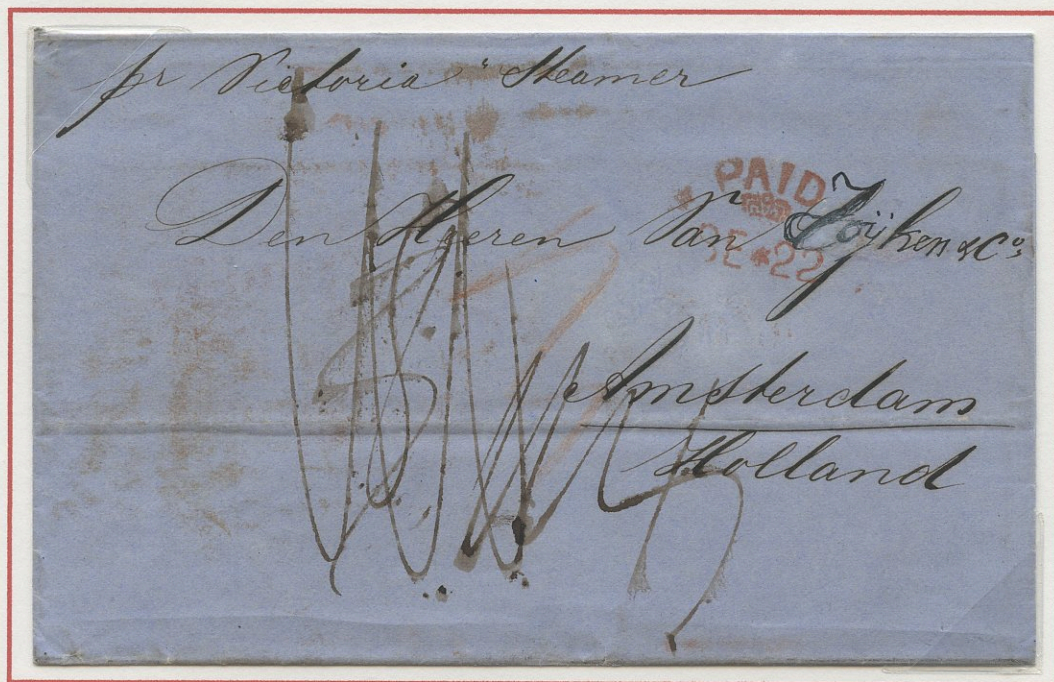
**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Hobart 13.8.1853 per “Tasmania” to Melbourne; **Non-contract steamship - General Screw Steamship Co:** departed Melbourne 24.8 per “Argo”, via St. Vincent 13.10, to Plymouth 27.10; by rail to London, arriving 28.10.1853. (81 days).

**Note:** With the discovery of gold, the contract steamship mail service called from Melbourne. There were no scheduled stopovers to Tasmania. Timetables for mail departures from Melbourne were well publicised by “The Courier” newspaper in Hobart, and a good proportion of the mail was forwarded to Melbourne.



## 2.2 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

### Via Cape of Good Hope



Melbourne, Victoria 24.9.1853 to Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Route - Non-contract steamship - Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 17.9.1853 per "Victoria", via Cape Town 4.11 and Cape Verde Islands to Falmouth 10.12; by rail to London 12.12; by steamer to Ostende; by rail to Amsterdam, arriving 14.12.1853. (81 days).

One of the earliest cover from Victoria to the Netherlands recorded

#### Single Rate:

"6" manuscript in red for prepayment of a ½ oz ship letter to England.

"8"(d) manuscript in black for the inwards ship letter fee;

"15"(centimes) comprising the English ship letter fee and forwarding to France to be paid by the recipient.

#### Postal markings:

"COLONIES/ &c ART 13" in red applied at London for underpaid mail to France.

Three examples of this handstamp recorded on mail from South Australia.



Port Adelaide, South Australia 28.9.1853 to Bordeaux, France

**Route - Non-contract steamship - Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co:** Departed Adelaide 29.9 per "Victoria" via Table Bay 4.11 and Cape Verde Islands to Falmouth 10.12; by rail to London 13.12; by steamer to Calais 14.12; by rail via Paris 14.12 to Bordeaux, arriving 15.12.1853. (78 days).

The second earliest cover from South Australia to France recorded



## 2.2 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

## Via Cape of Good Hope

Mail forwarded from Tasmania to capture the contract steamer mail service from Melbourne



Launceston, Van Diemen's Land 5.7.1854 to Hamilton, England

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Launceston 18.7.1854 per "Lady Bird" to Melbourne. **Contract steamship - General Screw Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 22.7 per "Queen of the South", via St. Vincent to Southampton 14.10; by rail to Hamilton, arriving 15.10.1854. (81 days).



Melbourne, Victoria 12.12.1854 to Edinburgh, Scotland

**Contract steamship - General Screw Steamship Co:** Departed Melbourne 9.1.1855 per "Argo", via St. Vincent 27.2 to Plymouth 15.3; by rail via London 17.3 to Edinburgh, arriving 18.3.1855. (68 days).

*Ex Perry, Besancon*

**Note:** Victoria raised the ship letter fees to 6d for a ½ oz ship letter on the 1.5.1854, and did not participate in the 6d all in packet rate introduced on the 1.10.1854. Great Britain introduced the "retaliatory rate" on the 20.6.1855, two months after this cover was delivered. This cover falls in to the small two month window period where it was pre-paid at the Victorian increased rate of 2/- for a 1oz ship letter, but only taxed for the recipient at 6d for a ½ oz ship letter.

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 4d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

"1/-" manuscript in black for the contract steamship inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 2/- for a 1 oz ship letter to England.

"6"(d) handstamp in black for the contract steamship inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

**An unusual Victorian "retaliatory rate" cover**



## 2.2 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

## Via Cape of Good Hope

### The three Australian Contract steamship voyages of 1856 sent during the Clipper period

With the British Admiralty requisitioning all steamships for the Crimean War, nearly all the mail delivered during 1856 was sent via clipper ships. However, there were three contract steamship voyages from the Australian Colonies during this period.

The first was the "Hellespont" which left Melbourne on the 18.2.1856; and two voyages by the "Royal Charter", one leaving on the 25.5.1856 and the other on 17.1.1857. Mail from these contract steamship voyages is very scarce.

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 6d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

Unpaid from England to the Kingdom of Prussia.

"6" manuscript in black for the 6d ship letter prepayment to England;

"10"(decimes) manuscript in black credit to Belgium for forwarding through the closed Prussian mail service;

"12"(silbergroschen) manuscript in blue comprising the Belgian fees and internal postage to be paid by the recipient.

#### Postal Markings:

"PAID AT MALDON" in red to indicate the prepayment.



Maldon, Victoria 8.5.1856 to Lubben, Kingdom of Prussia

**Route - Victorian contract steamship - Liverpool & Australian Steam Navigation Co:** Departed Melbourne 25.5.1856 per "Royal Charter" via Cape Town 16.6 to Liverpool 12.8; by rail to London 14.8; by steamer to Ostend; by rail via Aachen to Lubben, arriving 17.8.1856. (101 days).

One of the earliest covers from Victoria to the Kingdom of Prussia recorded



Kilmore, Victoria 24.5.1856 to Kalk Bay, Cape of Good Hope

**Route - Victorian contract steamer - Gibbs Bright** as agents for the **Liverpool & Australian Steam Navigation Co:** Departed Melbourne 25.5.1856 per "Royal Charter" to Cape Town, arriving 16.6.1856. (23 days).

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 6d for a ½ oz ship letter to the Cape of Good Hope.

"8"(d) manuscript in black for the incoming ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

#### Postal Markings:

"TOO LATE" handstamp in red applied at Melbourne. The envelope was not considered for the private sailing ship "Grafton" and transferred to the contract steamer "Royal Charter" which had a stopover at Cape Town.



## 2.3 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56 - Via Cape Horn

### Historical overview

**Contract steamers:** The UK Postmaster General agreed to single voyage contract for months when a contract steamer was not available. Originally these were to cater for the demise of the Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co. contract. However, there were months when neither the General Screw or P&O Lines were able to supply steamers to fulfil their mail commitments, and the single voyage contracts became a lot more regular.

**Non-contract steamers:** During this period, it was not uncommon for non-contracted steamers to carry the mails to England. They generally sailed via the Cape Horn route.

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 5d comprising 2d inland and 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

“8”(d) manuscript in black for the inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.



St. Kilda, Victoria 1.12.1853 to the England

**Route - Non contract steamship - Eagle Line:** Departed Melbourne 4.12.1853 per “Great Britain to Liverpool 14.2.1854; by rail to Lincoln, arriving 15.2.1854. (76 days).



Adelaide, South Australia 5.9.1854 to Kirkwall, Scotland

**Route - Private sailing ship:** Departed Adelaide 5.9.1854 per “Bosphorus” to Melbourne. **The General Screw Steam Shipping Co:** Departed Melbourne 10.9.1854 per “Croesus”. She broke both propeller blades before rounding Cape Horn and proceeded under sail to Ascension Island 15.11; via St. Vincent 29.11; to Southampton 14.12; by rail via London 15.12 to Kirkland, arriving 20.12.1854. (110 days).  
Ex Forster

### Double Rate:

“6”(d) manuscript in red for prepayment of a 1 oz ship letter to England;

“8”(d) manuscript in black for the incoming ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

The only example of Valentine's Universal Brotherhood envelope mailed from the Australian Colonies recorded



## 2.3 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

### Via Cape Horn



Melbourne, Victoria 7.9.1854 to Breslau, **Kingdom of Prussia**

**Route - The General Screw Steam Shipping Co:** Departed Melbourne 10.9.1854 per "Croesus". She broke both propeller blades before rounding Cape Horn and proceeded under sail to Ascension Island 15.11; via St. Vincent 29.11; to Southampton 14.12; by steamer to Ostende; by rail via Aachen 16.12 to Breslau, arriving 18.12.1854. (108 days). *Ex Davis*

**The earliest cover from Victoria to the Kingdom of Prussia recorded**

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 6d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

Unpaid to the Netherlands.

"3"(d) handstamp in red applied at Sydney for credit to Great Britain for a non contract steamship;  
"2/-" manuscript in black debited by Great Britain to the Netherlands;  
"100"(cents) manuscript in black comprising the British fees plus internal Dutch postage to be paid by the recipient.



Sydney, New South Wales 25.10.1854 to Amsterdam, **Netherlands**

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Sydney 25.10.1854 per "Hellaspon" to Melbourne. **Non contract steamship - Eagle Line:** Departed Melbourne 28.10.1854 per "Great Britain" to Liverpool 24.1; by steamer to Amsterdam, arriving 27.1.1855. (95 days).

**One of the earliest covers from New South Wales to the Netherlands recorded**



## 2.4 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56 - Overland via Southampton

Mail forwarded from Van Diemen's Land to capture the steamer mail service from Melbourne



### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 4d for a ½ oz ship letter to England;  
“1/-” manuscript in black for the incoming packet letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

Launceston, Van Diemen's Land 8.5.1854 to London, England

**Route - Private steamship:** Departed Launceston 11.5.1854 per “Black Swan” to Melbourne. **P&O Line:** Departed Melbourne 25.5 per “Madras” to Galle 25.6; “Ganges” 26.6 to Suez 14.7; overland to Alexandria; “Tagus” 22.7 via Malta 27.7 to Southampton 7.8; by rail to London, arriving 7.8.1854. (91 days).

Ex Forster, Sato

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 8d comprising 4d inland and 4d for a ½ oz ship letter to England;  
“4d” manuscript in black representing the inland postage from Guildford to Perth;  
“1/” manuscript in black representing the British incoming packet letter fee to be paid by the recipient.

### Postal Markings:

“PAID/GUILDFORD” handstamp dated 17.7.1854 representing the prepayment;  
“Missent” manuscript in black for when the letter was missent to Chatham before delivery to Gravesend on the 7.10.1854



Guildford, Western Australia 19.7.1854 to Northfleet, England

**Route:** Departed Guildford 19.7.1854 overland via Perth to King Georges Sound; **P&O Line:** Departed King George's Sound 4.8 per “Norna” to Galle; “Bentinck” 28.8 to Suez 17.9; overland to Alexandria; “Nubia” 22.9 via Malta 26.9 to Southampton 5.10; by rail to Chatham 6.10; by rail to Gravesend, arriving 7.10.1854. (80 days).

Ex Gartner, Walkley



## 2.5 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56 - Overland via Marseilles

The earliest cover with advertising printed on the front from Victoria recorded

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

Unpaid from England to the United States of America.

### Postal markings:

"75"(cents) handstamp in black comprising 51cents (2/3d via Marseilles); 3 cents British inland; 16 cents British packet and 5cents inland postage to be paid by the recipient..

**Note:** The envelope has a impressed cameo at the upper left for the merchants Newell, Hooper and Stevens.



Melbourne, Victoria 27.9.1853 to Boston, United States of America

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Melbourne 17.9.1853 per "Shanghai" to Galle 31.10; "Bombay" 13.11 to Suez 29.11; overland to Alexandria; "Euxine" 8.12 to Malta 12.12; "Vectis" 12.12 to Marseilles 14.12; by rail via London 17.12 to Liverpool. Cunard Line: Departed Liverpool 24.12 to Boston, arriving 6.1.1854. (101 days).

Ex Harris

### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 5d comprising 2d inland and 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to England.

### Postal markings:

"2/3" manuscript in black comprising 1/5d for the incoming packet letter rate to England plus French transit of 10d for a ½ oz ship letter via Marseille to be paid by the recipient



Maiden's Punt, Victoria 8.9.1853 to Deptford, England

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Melbourne 27.9.1853 per "Shanghae" to Galle 31.10; "Bombay" 13.11 to Suez 29.11; overland to Alexandria; "Euxine" 8.12 to Malta; "Vectis" 12.12 to Marseilles 14.12; by rail from Marseilles to London 17.12; by rail to Deptford, arriving 17.12.1853. (106 days).





Sofala, New South Wales 22.11.1853 to Birmingham, England

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 26.11.1853 per "Chusan" to Galle 29.12; "Oriental" 14.1.1854 to Suez; overland to Alexandria; "Himalaya" 4.2 to Malta 7.2; "Vectis" 7.2 to Marseilles; by rail from Marseilles to London 13.2; by rail to Birmingham, arriving 14.2.1854. (80 days). *Ex Palmer*

**Note:** Although correctly prepaid for a private ship letter to England, this envelope was placed in the contract steamer mail via Marseilles, and therefore, under paid. It was unusual that it was not sent on the cheaper route via Southampton.



Adelaide, South Australia 25.9.1854 to Cheapside, London, England, redirected to Woolwich

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Adelaide 28.9.1854 per "Madras" to Galle 20.10; "Bengal" 29.10 to Suez 14.11; overland to Alexandria; "Indus" 20.11 to Malta 23.11; "Valetta" to Marseilles 26.11, by rail from Marseilles to London, arriving 28.11. (64 days).

A scarce redirected cover from South Australia

#### Rate - Underpaid:

Prepayment of 11d and underpaid 4d for a ½ oz ship letter of 1/3d to England;

"2/3" manuscript in black comprising 1/5d for the incoming packet letter rate to England plus French transit of 10d for a ½ oz ship letter via Marseille to be paid by the recipient

#### Postal markings:

"INSUFFICIENTLY/ STAMPED" in black applied at Sydney representing the under payment.

#### Single Rate:

"6"(d) manuscript in red denoting prepayment for a ½ oz ship letter to England;

"1/10" manuscript in black comprising 1/5d for the incoming ship letter rate to England plus French transit of 5d for a ¼ oz ship letter via Marseille to be paid by the recipient.

"1d" Great Britain stamp for the redirection fee from Cheapside to Woolwich.





Melbourne, Victoria 24.5.1854 to Glasgow, Scotland

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Melbourne 30.5.1854 per "Madras" to Galle; "Ganges" 26.6 to Suez; overland to Alexandria; "Valetta" 19.7 to Marseilles; by rail from Marseilles to London 27.7; by rail to Glasgow, arriving 28.7.1854. (65 days).  
Ex Davis

#### Double Rate:

"1/-" manuscript in red denoting prepayment for a 1 oz ship letter to England;

"2/3" manuscript in black comprising 1/5d for the incoming ship letter rate to England plus French transit of 10d for a 1/2 oz ship letter via Marseille to be paid by the recipient.



Sydney, New South Wales 20.11.1854 to Cadiz, Spain

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 21.11.1854 per "Norna" to Galle 24.12; "Bombay" 28.12 to Suez; overland to Alexandria; "Valetta" 19.1.1855 to Marseilles, by rail from Marseilles 25.1 to London 27.1; **P&O Line:** By packet steamer to Cadiz, arriving 28.2.1855 (internal endorsement inside the entire). (100 days).

**Note:** There were no postal contracts between England and Spain. The letter was held in London on arrival from the 27.1 until the London offices of Messrs. Duff Gordon & Co. paid 3/1d for the postage to their offices in Cadiz, Spain.

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 6d for a 1/4 oz ship letter to England.

Unpaid from England to Spain.

"1" in black for 1d debit to New South Wales for a contract ship letter.

#### Postal markings:

"Returned for 3/1" **Postage** in red applied at London comprising 6d incoming ship letter fee; plus 5d French transit via Marseilles; plus 2/2d for forwarding from England to Spain to be paid by the recipient.

The earliest cover from the Australian Colonies to Spain recorded



## 2.6 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56 - Via other routes



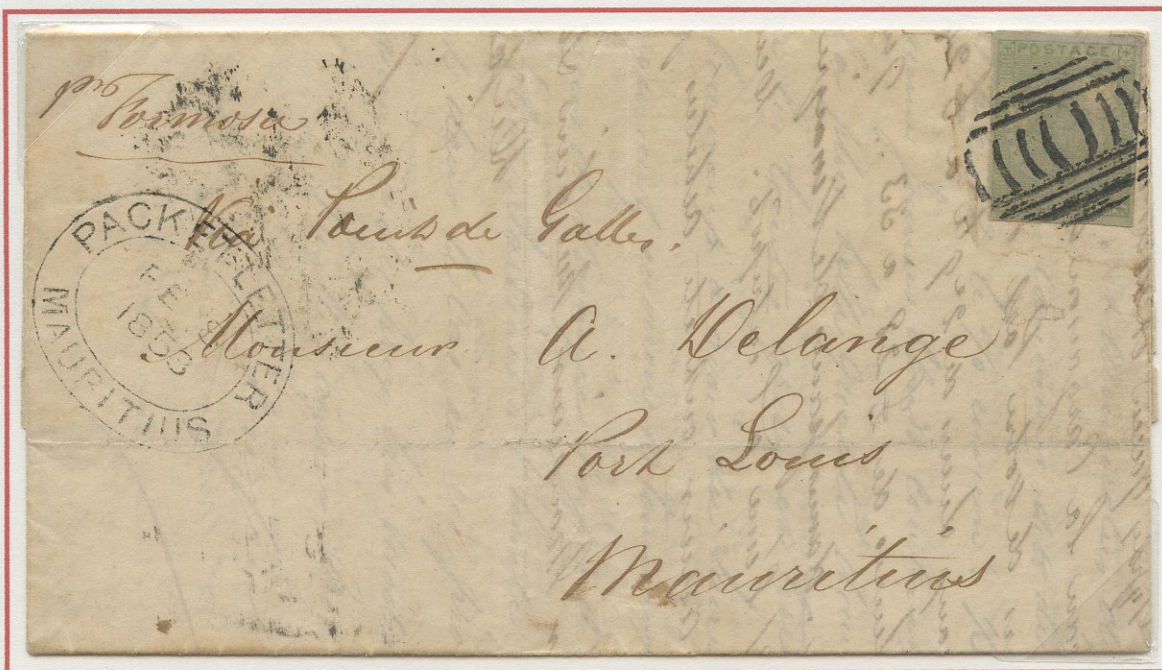
### Historical overview

With the second contract service awarded to the P&O Line, mails for the far east had a much quicker and direct route.

For the first time, Australian colonial mails could take direct advantage of this service using the one steamer service, instead of sending mail by the first available sailing ship.

From this time onwards, there is a marked increase in mail and trade with India and China.

### Via Aden



### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to Mauritius.

### Postal markings:

"**PACKET LETTER/MAURITIUS**" datestamp in black of the 8.2.1853.

Sydney, New South Wales 9.11.1852 to Port Louis, **Mauritius**

**Route - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 10.11.1852 per "Formosa" via Galle 15.12; "Oriental" 16.12 to Aden 25.12, by steamer to Port Louis, arriving 8.2.1853. (91 days).

**Note:** The quickest delivery for this cover was using the P&O service to Aden to catch the steamer service to Mauritius. Waiting for a sailing ship to the Cape of Good Hope or Mauritius may have taken months.

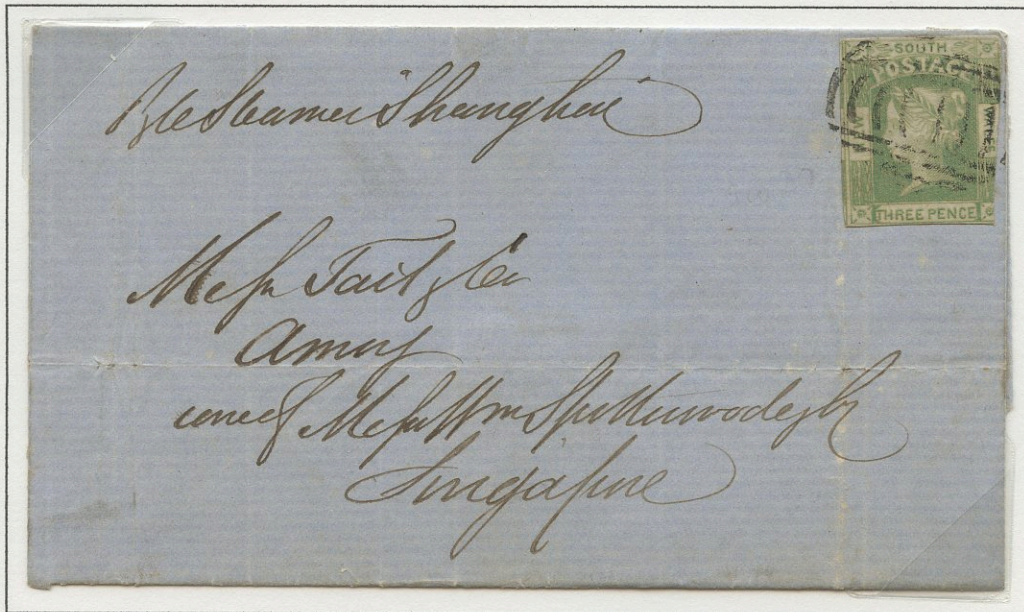
**Three Sydney View covers to Mauritius recorded**



## 2.6 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

### Via other routes

#### Via Singapore



#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to Hong Kong.

Unpaid from Hong Kong to Amoy.

**Note:** Although the P&O service ran to Hong Kong, the letter still had to be paid for the private ship to Amoy. There are no postal charges on the cover to be paid by the recipient.

Sydney, New South Wales 31.5.1853 to Amoy, **China**

**Route - Contract steamship - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 1.6.1853 per "Shanghai" to Singapore 4.7; "Erin" 15.7 to Hong Kong 22.7; by private sailing ship to Amoy.

#### Via Galle

#### Single Rate:

Prepayment of 3d for a ½ oz ship letter to Hong Kong.

Unpaid from Hong Kong to the Philippines.

"1"(reale) handstamp in black representing the inwards ship letter fee to be paid by the recipient.



Sydney, New South Wales 2.7.1854 to Manilla, **Philippines**

**Route - Contract steamship - P&O Line:** Departed Sydney 22.7.1854 per "Norna" via Galle 21.8, Penang 30.8 and Singapore 2.9 to Hong Kong 9.9; by private sailing ship to Manilla, arriving 5.10.1854. (75 days).



## 2.6 The First Steam Packet Contracts 1852-56

Via other routes

### Via Panama

#### The first steam crossing to Panama - per "The Golden Age"

The "Golden Age" was a wooden hulled coal fired paddle steamer that advertised to carry the mails by an experimental route via Panama. She broke the trans-Pacific speed record on this crossing but the cost of the voyage was ruinous. The "Sydney Morning Herald" reported that over 2,600 tons of coal was consumed, costing some £10,000, with freight and passage money raising only £10,500, for an overall loss including additional costs, of £7000 to £10,000. This was a huge sum in 1854, and no further steam crossings of the Pacific are recorded until 1866.

Per "Golden Age."

# JOSEPH RAVENSCROFT'S

## Melbourne Price Current and Shipping List,

MAY 5th, 1854.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE OF THE MORNING HERALD, 9, GREAT BOURKE STREET, EAST.

### Arrowroot—

Barnada, per lb..... 8d @ 11d  
South Sea Island..... 34d @ 6d

### Ashes—

Pot, per cwt..... 80s  
Soda..... 56s

### Biscuit—

Cabin, per cwt..... 15s @ 20s  
Ship..... 12s @ 15s  
Pilot..... 20s  
Crackers, per lb..... 4d @ 6d  
Meat, per 30 lb. tin.....

### Boots and Shoes—

Common..... 50 @ 25 disct.  
Superior..... 30 @ 50 adv.  
American..... 20 @ 40 adv.  
Inferior..... unsaleable

### Candles (in the Box)

English, per 1000..... 8/ 5s  
Colonial, per 1000..... 70s @ 83s  
American, per 1000..... 80s  
Canvas—Bleached, per yd. 1s @ 1s 1d

### Candles—

Sperm, per lb..... 2s @ 2s 3d  
Stearine, per lb..... 1s 4d @ 1s 6d  
Composition, per lb..... 1s 6d  
Colonial moulds, per lb..... 7d

### Drugs—

Acetic Acid, per lb..... 1s 2d  
Alcohol, per gallon..... 7s in bond  
Arsenic, powdered, per lb..... 2d @ 3d  
Balsam Copaiba, do..... 3s @ 4s  
Carbonate of Soda, per cwt..... 28s @ 28s  
Brimstone, roll, per cwt..... 7s  
Do, powdered, do..... 7s  
Camphor, refined, per lb..... 3s  
Cardamoms, do..... not saleable  
Castor Oil, do..... 4d @ 7d  
Do, per dozen pints..... 8s @ 11s  
Cochineal, per lb..... 9s @ 10s 6d  
Cream of Tartar, per lb..... 1s 2d  
Cubebs, E. I. do..... 9s @ 12s  
Epsom Salts, per cwt..... 1s 6d  
Gum Arabic, sorts, per lb..... 1s 6d  
Guaiacum, do..... 4s @ 6s  
Hydroid Porash..... 24s  
Jalap, per lb..... 4s 6d  
Magnesia, do..... 9d  
Oil of Aniseed..... 14s  
Do. Bergamot..... 18s  
Do. Peppermint..... 15s @ 5s  
Do. of Lemon..... 17s 6d  
Opium, Turkey..... 15s  
Quicksilver, per lb..... 4s 6d

### Gunpowder—

FFF, per dozen..... 15s @ 18s  
Do, half-lbs..... 10s @ 12s  
FF, per dozen..... 14s @ 16s  
Do, half-lbs..... 9s @ 10s  
Blasting do, per lb..... 8d @ 9d

### Hay—

Compressed, per ton..... 33s @ 38s  
Advance per cent. on invoice (well asld. 40 @ 50 pr. cent.)  
Cutlery, 30 @ 40 per ct. adv. (adv.)  
Spades..... 40 per ct. adv.  
Shovels, Miner's steel, pr doz..... 45s @ 50s  
do, American, short handled..... 50s  
do, do, long handled..... 40s @ 55s  
Axes, Collins's, handled..... 90s @ 100s  
Picks, Miner's steel, pr doz..... 65s @ 70s  
Cooking Stoves..... 50 per ct. adv.  
Camp Ovens, per cwt..... 18s @ 20s

### Honey—Per lb..... 8d

### Hops—

English, per lb..... 2s 3d @ 2s 6d  
American..... 1s 9d @ 2s 3d

### Houses—

Wood n. 2 rooms..... stocks  
do, 4 do..... of  
Iron do, adv. pr. ct. on invoice

### Oils and Oilmen's Stores—

Olive, per gallon..... 10s  
Do pints, per dozen..... 22s  
Do half-pints do..... 17s 6d  
Sauces, assorted, per doz. pt. 7s 6d @ 9s 6d  
Pickles, do, do, quarts 12s @ 18s  
Do, do, do, pints 9s @ 10s 6d  
American, do, do, quarts 12s  
Do, do, do, pints 9s  
Do, do, kegs per gal 1s  
Vinegar, per gallon..... 2s @ 2s 6d  
Bius, Colman's, per lb..... 1s 3d @ 1s 4d  
Whiting, per ton..... 15l @ 16l

### Paints, Resins, &c.—

White Lead, per cwt..... 36s @ 40s  
Black do, do..... 30s @ 35s  
Paints, assorted colors, per cwt..... 35s  
Vermillion, China, per lb..... not saleable  
Do, English, do..... 4s  
Turpentine, per gallon..... 6s  
Varnish, do..... 20s @ 25s  
Do, patent, do.....  
Pitch, per barrel..... 45s @ 55s  
Tar, do..... 40s @ 50s  
Do, American, per barrel..... not saleable  
Resin, do..... 15s @ 16s

The above scan shows the inside of the Prices Current List which is endorsed Per "Golden Age" at the upper left.



#### Prepayment - consignees letter:

There are no prepayment markings on the front of this "Prices Current List" and appears to have been sent as a consignees letter to London. The Printed Matter Rate to England was 1d.

Melbourne, Victoria 5.5.1854 to Halifax, England

**Route - Non contract steamship:** Departed Melbourne 5.5.1854 per Paddle Steamer "Golden Age" via Sydney 12.5, Papeete 29.5 to Panama 19.6. **Royal Mail Steam Packet Co:** "Magdalena" to Southampton, arriving 17.7.1854. (73 days).

The only Printed Matter item recorded from the "Golden Age" voyage to Panama