PREAMBLE TO THE MELBOURNE PRINTINGS BY THE VICTORIAN AND COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTERS

1908 TO 1912 CHRONOLOGY OF THE PRINTINGS SHOWING CHANGES IN PRINTING METHODS & WATERMARKED PAPER

Crown A

Jan 1908 Crown A electro

April 1908 Crown A litho

April 1908 Crown A litho

June 1908 Crown A electro

Oct 1908 Crown A electro

Oct 1908 Crown A electro

Nov 1908 Crown A electro

Nov 1908 Crown A electro

January 1909
JB Cooke appointed
Commonwealth
Government Printer

March 1909 Crown A electro

Sept 1909 Crown A electro

Jan 1910 Crown A electro

Feb 1910 Crown A electro

June 1910 Crown A electro

July 1910 Crown A electro

Sept 1910 Crown A litho

Oct 1910 Crown A electro

Oct. 1910 printing of
6d using electrotyped
method

Oct 1910 Crown A electro

Jan 1911 Crown A stereo

April 1911 Crown A electro

1911 (May 1) Uniform
1d Postage introduced

½d Printed matter
rate introduced

April 1911 Crown A electro

June 1911 Crown A electro

Oct 1911 Crown A electro

Feb 1912 Crown A litho

Sept 1912 Crown A electro
THIN PAPER

Oct 1912 Crown A stereo
optd ONE PENNY

Dec 1912 Crown A electro
THIN PAPER

January 1913 saw the introduction of the Uniform Commonwealth issue , the Kangaroo & Map series

Stocks of the ½d remained in use until mid 1914. Significant stocks of the 2d remained and were eventually destroyed

PREAMBLE TO THE MELBOURNE PRINTINGS BY THE VICTORIAN AND COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTERS

1902 TO 1907 CHRONOLOGY OF THE PRINTINGS SHOWING CHANGES IN PRINTING METHODS & WATERMARKED PAPER

V crown

1902 Initial printings using Lithography by the Victorian Government Printer

Jan 1902 V crown litho

Feb 1902 V crown litho

Aug 1902 V crown litho

Sept 1902 V crown electro

Dec1902 V crown litho

Mar 1903 V crown electro

May 1903 V crown litho

From September 1902 onwards the 1d was Electrotyped by the Victorian Government Printer

From1902 to 1906 the 2d was Lithographed by the Victorian Government Printer

June 1903 V crown litho

July 1903 V crown electro

Jan 1904 V crown electro

Jan 1904 V crown litho

May 1904 V crown electro

Aug 1904 V crown litho

Sept 1904 V crown electro

April 1905 V crown litho

Crown A

May 1905
Waterlow & Sons
Crown A watermarked paper introduced

May 1905 Crown A electro

Aug 1905 Crown A electro

Aug1905 Crown A litho

Sept 1905 Crown A litho

Feb 1906 Crown A electro

Feb 1906 Crown A litho

February 1906 was the last printing of 2d value by the lithographic method

Sept 1906 Crown A electro

Oct 1906 Crown A litho

Nov 1906 Crown A litho

March 1907 Crown A electro

March 1907 Crown A electro

July 1907 Crown A electro

Aug 1907 Crown A electro

Oct 1907 Crown A electro

VICTORIAN & COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTING METHODS
1902 TO 1912 LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING METHOD

In his paper *"Technique of the Tasmanian Pictorials"* published in 1931, JRW Purves demonstrated that the lithographic printing method was employed to produce the 1d and 2d values when the Victorian Government Printer assumed responsibliltiy for producing Tasmanian stamps. As they did not possess recess printing equipment capable of using the De La Rue steel plates, transfers were taken from the plates recently returned from De La Rue to produce lithographic stones of 60 units.

Re-entry in right ½d at positions 6 & 12 on the De La Rue printings

Re-entries appears in the same position on the lithographic printings by the Victorian Government Printer

Re-entry in foot of '2' re-appearing in the lithographic printing

The Agent General wrote to De La Rue on 17 September 1901 advising: "I am directed by the Agent General for Tasmania to inform you that he has received a telegram from the Honourable the Premier of Tasmania stating that it has been decided to print all future issues of Tasmanian Postage Stamps in Victoria, and giving instructions that the postage plates belonging to the State Government should be forwarded to Australia for the above-mentioned purpose as early as possible.
I propose calling at your works tomorrow afternoon with the key of the Safe to hand you what is required."

VICTORIAN & COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTER PRODUCTION METHODS

1908 THREE PENCE & 1910 SIX PENCE DILSTON FALLS ELECTROTYPED ZINC DIE PREPARATION

The Head of the Engraving Department at the Victorian Government Printing Office was Mr. J Oliver who was interviewed by JRW Purves in the course of preparing his 1931 paper on the printing methods for the Pictorials. Oliver allowed Purves access to images of the progressive zinc dies in his possession showing the various stages of production.

3d Spring River
Zinc block after etching, before asphaltum removal.
Note black clouds.

3d Spring River
Zinc block with protective coating removed.
Note white clouds.

3d Spring River
Zinc block final stage after 'clean-up' by engraver
Note detail in clouds.

6d Dilston Falls
Zinc block after etching, before asphaltum removal.
Note dark trees.

6d Dilston Falls
Zinc block after etching, further lightening of trees

6d Dilston Falls
Zinc block near final stage after 'clean-up' by engraver
Note detail at base of Falls.

Progressive proofs for the 1908 3d Spring River & 6d Dilston Falls electrotyped printings photographed at 125% actual size by Mr. J Oliver, Head of the Engraving Department at the Victorian Government Printing Office.

The printing plate of 60 units was produced using a zinc line block as the die, rather than an engraved steel die. The line block was made from a photo-negative of a London printing issued stamp by the photo-etching process. A photo-sensitive coating on a zinc block was exposed to the photo-negative and developed. Some surfaces requiring fine lines were protected by a coating of asphaltum. The block was placed in an acid bath for etching of the design. Proofs were pulled at stages of the process and photographed as shown above.

The printing plate of 60 was produced from blocks of four such zinc line blocks clamped together to form a plate produced from fifteen of those units.

VICTORIAN & COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTER PRODUCTION METHODS

1908 3D SPRING RIVER ZINC DIE PREPARATION BY THE ELECTROTYPE PRINTING METHOD

After Federation and the new Commonwealth Government's decision to support manufacturing in Australia the Victorian Government Printer was charged with producing stamps for Tasmania and Western Australia in addition to their existing obligations to print Victorian postage stamps. The lithographic and electrotyped printing methods then in use met the needs for cost effective high volume production. 1d and 2d values were the most needed values and initially were both produced by lithographic method with a transfer to the electrotype printing process for the 1d value in September 1902.

Progressive proofs for the 1908 3d Spring River electrotyped printing struck during the etching and hand engraving stages of the production of the zinc line-blocks.

They show the dark appearance of the upper strike resulting from the remaining asphaltum still to be removed.

The zinc line-blocks were produced by a combination of photographic and etching processes with a proof struck from the De La Rue die photographed onto sensitised zinc which was then etched in an acid bath.

The fine lines of that design were protected from the acid by a coating of asphaltum which was later removed by hand engraving.

The plates were constructed of units of four such zinc dies to make a plate of 60 units.

Only recorded example. ex JRW Purves

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS
FULLY AND PARTIALLY IMPERFORATE ISSUES

Stamps printed by the Victorian and Commonwealth Printer were perforated using either of two perforating machines operated at the Melbourne works. The single line machines had differing gauges, namely 11 and 12.5. The machine used for each printing or part thereof depended on work flow. When a mis-perforated sheet was found it was sometimes corrected on the other machine or was missed entirely. Occassionally a make-shift correction was performed. We thus find a wide range of variations of perforations in the Melbourne printings.

They are shown here in a summarised form explaining the process rather than showing all known variations on all values.

1908 1d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE ALL SIDES

1908 2d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE AT BASE

1906 3d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE AT TOP

1907 2d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE AT RIGHT

1903 ½d lithographed
IMPERFORATE ALL SIDES

1909 1d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE AT BASE

1911 1d electrotyped
IMPERFORATE AT LEFT

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS
PATCHES, REPERFORATIONS AND KNIFE CUTS

When missing or misplaced rows of perforations were found a correction was sometimes made by patching with a strip of paper and re-perforating the row. On rare occasions a simple knife cut was applied the allow separation at the stamp counter.

1911 4d lithographed
mis-perforated, patched and corrected with a knife cut between.

1905 1d electrotyped
Mis-perforated between, patched and corrected with a knife cut

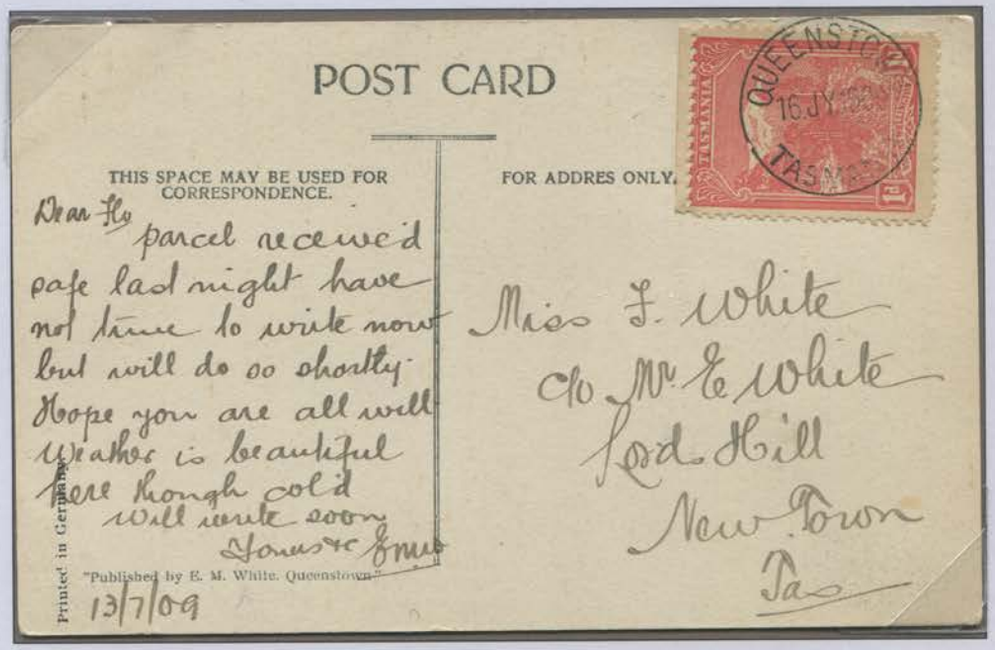
1910 ½d electrotyped
mis-perforated between and re-perforated.

1908 ½d electrotyped
mis-perforated at base, patched and corrected with a knife cut.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS
PATCHED & KNIFE CUT PERFORATIONS USAGE

Instances of patched and re-perforated stamps are found sporadically from 1904 to 1910 on the electrotyped printings.

1904 (Sept 19) Launceston to Hobart showing repaired perforations along top of both stamps replaced by knife cuts



1909 (July 16) Queenstown to New Town with stamp showing with patched perforation at top and with knife cut correction.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS

PATCHED PERFORATION ROWS & RE-PERFORATION IN A DIFFERENT GAUGE

Machines with different perforation gauges were used by the Victorian and Commonwealth Printer. On the occassions when a line of perforations was missed the error was corrected using the other perforating machine. Sometimes the mis-placed line of perforations was patched. Mixed and compound perforations comprising 11 by 12½ gauges as separate rows resulted.

1907 1d electrotyped - misplaced row gauging11 patched & correcting row gauging 12½

1909 1d electrotyped - misplaced row gauging11 patched & correcting row gauging 12½

1906 2d lithographed misplaced row gauging 12½ patched & correcting row gauging 12½

In all instances of double rows of perforations, whether it is gauge 11 or 12½, the corrected row occurs in the second or third row from the left or right edge of the sheet given that the vertical and horizontal formats were fed into the perforation machine the same direction.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS

RE-PERFORATION OF A CORRECTING ROW IN A DIFFERENT GAUGE

The mis-placed row was not always repaired with a patch, in fact patching was unusual. Compound perforations are found in all values in a wide range of combinations and on most printings from 1902 to 1912.

1908 ½d electrotyped - second vertical row gauging 12½ with the remaining rows gauging 11

1908 4d lithographed generally gauging11 with first three vertical rows gauging12½ resulting from a correction of missed perforations.

1910 6d electrotyped 12½ vertical and 11 horizontal

1910 (Oct 12) Hobart to Victoria with 1d pair perforated generally 12½ and gauge 11 between pair.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS
MULTIPLE ROWS OF PERFORATIONS ON SHEET MARGIN

Perforation rows at the edge of the sheet were occassionally missed or mis-placed resulting in double and triple rows of perforations.

1905 1d electrotyped all rows gauging 11 with a double row at left margin.

1912 ONE PENNY on 2d stereotyped all rows gauging 12½ with a double row at right margin.

1904 1d electrotyped 12½ all round with extra row at base gauging 12½

1907 1d electrotyped THREE ROWS AT BASE all gauge 11 ONLY RECORDED EXAMPLE

1908 ½d electrotyped 11 all round with extra row at base gauging 12½

1909 3d electrotyped 12½ all round with extra row at right gauging 11

1909 2d electrotyped 12½ all round double row at right.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS
MULTIPLE ROWS OF PERFORATIONS ON SHEET MARGINS

Perforation rows at the edge of the sheet were occassionally missed or mis-placed resulting in double rows of perforations on one or two sides.

1908 ½d electrotyped all rows gauging 11 with additional row at base gauging 12½

1903 ½d lithographed gauging 12½ all round and a grossly mis-placed row of perforations at base gauging 11 with small holes

1909 3d electrotyped all rows gauging 12½ with a correcting row at right margin gauging 11.

1905 2d lithographed 11 all round with extra rows at base AND side gauging 11.

1905 1d electrotyped perforated 11 all round double row at top.

1908 4d lithographed perforated 12½ in large holes with additional row at left gauge 11.

MELBOURNE PERFORATION METHODS

PARTIAL RE-PERFORATION OF ROWS AT MARGINS OF SHEET

It is believed that the initial missed rows of perforations occured on sheets at the bottom of the stack when the pins failed to fully penetrate the bottom sheet. These sheets show rows where the perforating pins have only partly pierced the paper. Corrections were made to correct this omission.

1911 4d lithographed all rows gauging 12½ with a correcting row down third row gauging 12½ and only partially completed.

1909 1d electrotyped all rows gauging 11 with additional row at base gauging 11 only partially completed.

1912 ONE PENNY on 2d stereotyped all rows gauging 11 with additional row at base gauging 11 only partially completed.

PERFORATION CORRECTIONS CARRIED OUT IN HOBART
USE OF THE HOBART PERFORATING MACHINE GAUGING 11.8 (12)

When sheets were received at Hobart with rows of perforations missed in Melbourne they were corrected in Hobart using the Walch & Sons perforator which gauged 11.8. This was an infrequent occurrence and examples are scarce and only known recorded on the higher printing volume values, namely ½d, 1d and 2d.

1905 2d lithographed perforation gauging 11 and 11.8 at base

1907 2d electrotyped all rows gauging 12½ with top row perforated in Hobart gauging 11.8 repairing a partially unpunctured row.

1904 2d lithographed perforation gauging 11 and 11.8 at side.

1908 ½d electrotyped perforation is gauging 11 and 11.8 at base.

1912 4d lithographed 11 all round perforated 11.8 at base.

1902 1d lithographed 12½ all round with extra row gauging 11.8 at left. EARLY EXAMPLE

1904 1d electrotyped 12½ all round with extra row gauging 11.8 at base.

1906 1d electrotyped 12½ all round perforated 11.8 at base.

1909 1d electrotyped 11 all round perforated 11.8 at base.