



# Market Matters:

## *It is all in the postmark...*

**By Glen Stephens**

As I often say in this column .. "knowledge is power".

The rather ugly looking cut to shape Tasmania (Van Dieman's Land) 1854 4d "Courier" shown nearby is worth about \$10 normally. This one appears to have a very large tear or crease through it - neither mentioned in the lot description.

As most collectors know this stamp (along with the GB 1854 "embossed" issue) is largely valueless if the corners are "cut-to-shape" as this one is.

Nonetheless, and despite being cut into the design at side it auctioned May 15th at Prestige Philately in Melbourne for way above estimate - at \$1,811, when the "buyer fees" and taxes were added.

"Why does a \$10 stamp become \$1,800 more valuable" you might well be asking. And so you should.

The postmark is the key here, as it has a clear strike of the Tasmanian barred numeral "72". Not that this is so easy to see when the stamp is turned the "correct" way up.



*Ugly stamp sells for \$1,811!*

This is where the "knowledge" comes into play. "72" was allocated to Norfolk Island, when the harsh penal colony was set up there, and administered initially from Hobart Tasmania.

The "72" canceller finally arrived on Norfolk in July 1854. The government brig carrying it - the "Lady Franklin" initially sailed December 16, 1853, but was forced to turn back owing to a mutiny of the convicts on board. This cancel had only a short working life on Norfolk Island.

In May 1855 the last convicts were removed and Norfolk was presumably uninhabited until the descendants of the

mutineers from the "Bounty" arrived April 8 1856 from Pitcairn Island. Norfolk Island was removed from Tasmanian postal administration in October 1856, and reverted to New South Wales control.

How does one know all this? Well there are 2 excellent large handbooks on the "Postal History and Postal Markings of Tasmania", authored by Bill Purves et al. I typed a set into my current internet listing for \$85, and to my mind these are absolutely essential books to own if you have any interest in Tasmania postmarks or markings.

Many circular postmarks on the common 1899 "Pictorial" series are worth several \$100s each - some possibly into the 4 figure region. Likewise often very valuable are the many manuscript cancels of wavy lines, squiggles, wiggles, cross hatching, signature scrawls and graffiti tags which many folks assume are worthless fiscal cancels. Not forgetting also the "2nd allocation" of numerals that are mainly found of the small QV heads issues.

Collecting Tasmanian postmarks is a great passion for many, and many a time I have plucked a cancel worth \$100s from childhood albums or junk lots. Generally on very common letter rate stamps otherwise valued at literally pennies each. It takes a little practice and study to remember the scarce ones, but having books like these makes it quick and easy to check against.

Luckily I have always had a retentive memory for postmarks of this state as they have always fascinated me. The only serious collection I was ever tempted to form was a complete showing of all the Tasmania circular datestamps and instructional markings of this period. I made some decent headway, and then sold it when made an "offer I could not refuse"! My sideline collection of \$100 banknotes did however swell considerably from this transaction.

I once visited a very glamorous stamp shop in Copenhagen. Leather lounges, and coffee machine, and very genteel and up-

market surroundings and fittings. Virtually the only thing Australasian in the store (indeed the city!) was a large stockbook or two of 1000's of Tassie pictorials all neatly arranged into little lines sorted per value. And all priced at about full catalogue, which I think was about 10c-20c each.

I nonchalantly selected about 30 pictorials with nice strikes. I guessed wrong on a few of them of course, but about 15-20 of those postmarks paid for my round trip airfare from Australia. And a few hotel nights as well! I remember there being a few nice examples of classics like "Springs", "Lady Bay" or "Honeywood" among them. Clearly I was the only person in 100 years to glance through these stamps who had any clue about Tasmania postmark rarity.

If you ever see unremarkable sounding circular Tasmanian datestamp names like "Ridgeway" or "Bronte" or "North Franklin" or "Scottsdale West" etc on the low value Tasmanian Pictorials in a junk lot or dealer bulk stock - each will be worth several \$100s to you for nice clear strikes.



It would be just like finding a used £2 Roo for 10c in a junk box or circuit book.

*Postmark sold for \$820*

### **Other State postmarks pricey too**

The examples given above from Tasmania are by no means isolated cases. The same May 15th Prestige Philately auction obtained excellent prices for a range of Victoria and NSW postmarks.

Illustrated nearby is a barred numeral "156" from "Running Stream" on a 2d Diadem that otherwise would be worth a couple of dollars. This stamp sold for \$820 on an estimate of \$400.

Much more modern .. and much more valuable - is the 1935 cover also shown nearby. Many collectors and dealers would

not place much importance or value on this piece.

A 2d red KGV head on cover is quite unremarkable, being the letter rate at the time, and billions of these 2d red stamps were used for that purpose.

It sold for \$2,037 based on an estimate of only \$300. Nearly 7 times the fairly sensible (to me!) looking pre-sale estimate.

Why? Well clearly the "Quarantine" cancel is unusual. I will readily own up to my own enormous ignorance here and admit if it were in my stock and you offered me \$50 for it a month back you'd be the new owner. And I would have had a large grin on my face at the same time. Most other dealers would if they were honest, admit the same - in my opinion.

The sale catalogue advises only 3 other covers are recorded with this cancel. "RMS Aorangi" arrived with cases of smallpox aboard and this cover - indeed all mail on board was fumigated, hence the small corner clips.

Like many things publicised in this column, many other examples may exist out there and come on to the market as the owners have no idea of their real value until they see the prices obtained in the present market. Keep your eyes open for anything from NSW with "Quarantine" cancels!



*Why is this worth over \$2000?*

### Victoria Postmark Catalogue

I have not had a chance before to comment on another superb book released in fairly recent times on Victoria State postmarks. "Numeral Cancellations of Victoria" by Hugh Freeman & Geoff White is volume #17 in the superb R.P.S.V. "J.R.W. Purves Memorial Series".

This is a massive and very heavy hardbound book, weighing in at 420 large size A4 pages. It is without doubt in my mind THE most comprehensive and easy to follow book on any of the state's postmarks. Bill Purves would indeed be immensely proud to see this issued in "his" series.

For any reader looking for an exciting new challenge this is one to take up. These postmarks are found in 99% of cases on

cheap letter rate stamps. They also are widely found on Australian Kangaroo and KGV stamps up until 1917, when the PO reprimanded Postmasters (again) for still using them but they were in fact used right up until 1935.

Many common 1d stamps have cancels that sell for \$100s. The 1d orange "1697" illustrated nearby was in the same auction as the Tasmania and NSW and sold for over \$400. And that is only "RRR" rated. The "RRRRR" are clearly much tougher and a "NNR" rating ("number not recorded") obviously trumps that again. Value without that cancel - about 2¢!

Victoria issued 2100 numeral postmarkers, between #1 (Melbourne) and #2100 (King Valley - issued November 1906). Of these 2100 numbers - despite an army of collectors scouring the earth over several generations - some 74 different numbers have never been sighted.

Many numbers of course exist in a myriad of styles, variants, designs and sub-types. All are clearly illustrated and rarity rated in this book. Even some from Melbourne #1 that most of us would regard as "common as muck" are rated "RRRR" as they are unusual designs or sub-types.

Hugh Freeman certainly has had a mass of material to sift through in his decades long search. I first met him 25 years back when he ran Status Stamp Auctions along with Barry Cooper. He had owned Auctions in Sydney well before that time as well. Hugh later went on to manage Stanley Gibbons Auctions in Australia for many years, and still calls their public auctions.

Despite handling probably many millions of stamps from Victoria the fact 74 numbers still are unseen to Hugh Freeman and other specialists offers a challenge to all readers of this article. Hugh used to run large ads in overseas magazines advertising to buy the elusive numerals he still sought. I recall seeing his ads in Stanley Gibbons Part 1 catalogues for this material.

This book illustrates around 2000 actual cancels on stamps and covers - not drawings as other state handbooks have used. The central section is in full colour. Reproduction quality of illustrations is quite superb, and the detail and background to the listings is exhaustive.



All cancels are rated in 8 specific rarity classes - or "non-rated"

*This 1d stamp realised over \$400.*

meaning they are reasonably to very common.

The book also rates rarity and illustrates the earlier "Butter-fly" and "Barred Oval" cancels - also a very useful data base on it own.

EVERY dealer in the world should own this book, and it goes without saying ALL collectors of Victoria need to have one too. Stumble across even one half decent cancel in your lifetime and it is more than paid for.

The hard-bound A4 book comprises over 420 pages, with eight colour plates. Price is \$A150, and a deluxe limited edition (maximum 50) half-bound in leather, with raised spine and corners and hand-marbled end papers is also available for \$250.

Stamp dealer literature stockists should have copies or contact - Publications Manager, Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, PO Box 642, Toorak 3142. email denapier@netspace.net.au

### 1956 cover gets \$1,825 on eBay

This possible FDC illustrated has just sold for more than a fine used £1 Brown and Blue Kangaroo will cost you.

The cover was offered on eBay and sold May 312 for \$US1,259.56. The winner bidder was "austcovers". The underbidder at \$US1234.56 was a collector using the eBay handle "blackwood-inn". Seller was "wbarri" from San Jose California. Who must be a very happy chappie as the first bid was a paltry 99¢!

I have showed this scan to 4 large dealers and all agree they would have gladly taken \$100 or less for it had they had it in stock. One said \$10 and he'd have been delighted.



*Sold for more than a used £1 Roo Bi-Colour*

"austcovers" is Melbourne collector Frank Pauer ... co-author of a massive FDC catalogue to be released very soon with 1000s of colour images.

I asked Frank why he had paid such an astounding sum for this item. He replied: "It is the only one recorded to date for the 3½d No Watermark Booklet pane. There was no official release date but Brusden White has it as July 1956."

Pauer continued: "This FDC was done by Haywood Parish, who was working in the Sydney GPO and there is no other 3½d booklet pane on FDC out there. This is the first anyone has seen. Haywood Parish has done most of the no watermark stamps on cover of which I have 7 and no other covers exist for those FDC either. There could be one out there for the booklet pane but you think we would have seen it by now. If an earlier FDC does come out in the open then this one is worthless".

From the eBay scan it appears to me to be an August 1 postmark, so I just hope the ACSC is incorrect with their "July" issue date! The eBay seller did not describe the item as a "FDC" at any time. The ACSC says that the earliest known date of use for

### The "pioneer" collectors in any field face many problems.

the 3½d no watermark was July 2, 1956. I am curious that with a franking of 1/9d already on the cover that the sender did not send it registered mail.

Rosenblum is even vaguer saying only "in July". And whether booklets were issued at same time as sheet stock no-one seems to know, and that clearly is important here.

This is the dilemma with much peripheral material such as booklet panes and coils etc - the precise issue date was not always announced, and keen collectors play Russian Roulette buying such pieces. The "pioneer" collectors in any field face many problems. If any reader has any info

to shed on this matter of dates please contact me.

#### Alaska Bound

As you read this I will be returning from a few weeks in and around Fairbanks Alaska on the Arctic Circle. My third visit there, and I just love the area. A long trip via Asia and Europe - in fact the flight over was 50 hours in airports and planes with no hotel en route. Four continents in a "day" - quite literally!

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