

Book Review
The 1866-71 Lithographed Stamp Duty Adhesives of Queensland
by Dave Elsmore

Dingle Smith



It is for many reasons a particular pleasure to review this publication, now available on ozrevenues.com web site.

First, the publication is especially apt as November 2016 is the sesquicentenary of the issue of this series, the first stamp duty adhesives of Queensland. Secondly, the publication provides a fitting tribute to the pioneering work of the late Francis Kiddle in bringing the attention of the world of philately to the fascination of early Australian States revenues. Thirdly, and by no means least, the study of all aspects of the production and printing of these early lithographed stamps is a truly masterful piece of philatelic research. The study is a splendid example of the tenacity and skills of number of leading philatelists over a period of nearly a hundred years.

Attention was first drawn to the issue by A.F. Basset Hull but the major advance was in a series articles by Eric Mann in 1942. On his death the material was acquired by J.W. Purves, the doyen of Australian research philatelists at that time. He added further to the study and on his death the material was purchased by Frances Kiddle who had earlier obtained additional material from the Kay collection. Frances then collaborated with Dave Elsmore who had additional examples of multiples of the 1866-71 stamps. Dave has now provided, after some 75 years, a major update of the work of Mann and others who have owned and worked on this material.

Queensland, initially part of New South Wales, was proclaimed a Colony in December 1859. At that time the population (excluding Aborigines) was slightly less than 30,000. Postage stamps were initially supplied from the United Kingdom but in November 1862 printing commenced in Brisbane using the plates and dies transferred from Perkins, Bacon & Co. in London.

In 1866 'An Act to Impose Stamp Duties' was passed in Queensland and this necessitated the production of revenue stamps. Queensland was unusual in that these and the contemporary postage stamps were produced by 'The Engraving and Lithographic Branch' of the Queensland Government which until 1893 was a completely separate agency to the Government Printer. This came about because Thomas Ham and his partner William Knight had, as a private company, printed the first Queensland postage stamps and it was fortunate that such engraving and lithographic skills were available in the fledgling colony. Ham became the first head of the Engraving and Lithographic Branch followed by Knight who remained in that position until his retirement in 1898.

The lithographic process followed was complex. Separate stones were used for each value although the Queen's head was the same but the remainder of the design, the 'frame', provides many minor variations. Intermediate stones were used to form an array or 'transfer group' of 20 subjects (5 x 4). The 1d and 20/- were exceptions with a transfer group of 40. These transfer groups were repeated to produce the sheet make-up. The first printing of all 9 values was in sheets of 150 stamps with 6 transfer groups of 20 stamps and groups of 10 (5 x 2) at the bottom of the sheet. Later printings were in sheets of 120.

The pioneering work of Mann attempted to describe the distinguishing features of each of the individual stamps for each of the issued values. The notation he used for each value was alphabetical from A to S. Mann was successful in reconstructing the transfer group of 20 for the 1d value but he lacked sufficient examples of multiple pieces to construct the transfer groups for the other values. Dave Elsmore with the aid of largely unpublished studies by Purves and Kiddle, has managed to extend Mann's findings to the transfer groups for most of the other values.

It is difficult to describe the detail in words alone and the new study provides excellent illustrations to clarify the sheet make-up in terms of the arrangement of the transfer groups. Especially commendable are the illustrations for each value that show the location of the multiple pieces employed in the sheet reconstructions. Dave would be delighted to hear from anyone who has additional 'missing' multiples.

This is only part of the story as there are added complexities. These are due to the change in sheet format for later printings, although for the 2/6 and 6/- value there was only a single printing. After October 1868 the printings were on watermarked paper and for the 1/- there was a emergency printing In 1871 on distinctly thinner unwatermarked paper. Other aspects of the issue are also described such as the distinctive changes in the shade of colour for individual values, differences in perforations and the like. Illustrations of proofs for both the issued stamps and the unissued 3/- and 7/- values are included.

In summary, a study that is truly amazing in its detail. It is a tribute to the work of a series of outstanding philatelists over very many years. Congratulations to Dave in adding to this and bringing it together in a single comprehensive and excellently illustrated monograph. For collectors of Queensland revenues, the publication provides the opportunity to check your holding of the first Duty Stamps against this comprehensive account. For others who do not collect Queensland it is a work of philatelic scholarship to read and admire.